THE IMPACTS OF THE INTERNET ON SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS' RESOURCE MOBILIZATION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Applying Resource Mobilization (RM) theory, this thesis examined the influences of the Internet on a social movement organization's resource mobilization strategies. RM scholars have asserted that an SMO's capacity of mobilizing resources is confined by various structural and socio-economic constraints in a society. Among those constraints, this study focused on communication costs and mainstream media's biases and critically examined whether the Internet helped relieve those constraints.

As Internet advocates claim, the Internet appears to be cheaper, faster and better than conventional communication technologies. This case study attempted to present empirical data showing how, if any, the Internet has influenced an SMO's communication costs and newspaper coverage. Both quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this study suggest that the Internet indeed made some positive impacts on an SMO. The data showed that communication costs of an SMO with the Internet have declined over years whereas the costs of an SMO without the Internet have fluctuated over time. In-depth interviews with leaders of the SMO using the Internet indicated the Internet enabled the SMO to communicate better with audiences from different states and nationalities. In contrast, leaders of the SMO without the Internet expressed some skepticism about the effectiveness of the Internet for their
organization, citing a low rate of Internet access among the SMO's primary constituents in rural areas.

The study also examined how the SMO's Internet use has influenced mainstream media's hostility toward social movements. The results of content analysis showed that a newspaper covering the SMO using the Internet attributed the group's name in the stories more frequently than a newspaper covering an SMO not using the Internet. On the other hand, the data showed that both newspapers examined in the study have maintained a neutral position regardless of the SMO's Internet use. The data appeared to suggest that an SMO's Internet use has no significant influence on journalists' news judgments and the way they validate sources for the story.

In-depth interviews with journalists indicated that traditionally unpopular groups or unknown groups would still probably face the same skepticism and distrust from journalists. However, journalists agreed that an SMO using the Internet to deliver credible, up-to-date information on the subject in which a journalist is specialized has a better chance to be chosen as a source than an SMO not using the Internet.
Dedicated to my mother, sister and my niece, Tiffany
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Without an effective means of communication, a social movement cannot emerge, mobilize or survive. Social movement organizations (SMO) have depended on various communication channels to create collective grievances, convert outsiders, coordinate public rallies, and raise financial resources. In short, the better an SMO communicates with its constituents and financial donors, the more successful the movement will be.

However, an SMO’s communication capacity has been limited by several social constraints. According to a Resource Mobilization (RM) theory, an SMO’s access to crucial social resources is structurally differentiated (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977:250). For instance, unlike media-savvy public relations firms or prominent government officials, an SMO rarely enjoys the privilege of automatic access to mainstream media (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Molotch, 1979). Grassroots SMOs are often regarded as amateurish and less credible sources by journalists are accustomed to quoting “authorities” and sources with social power and reputation. In order to gain access to media, some SMOs often have devised deviant protests and oversimplified
slogans that obscure the fundamental issues in the movement (Molotch, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Olien, Tichenor & Donohue, 1989).

Such struggle between an SMO and media frequently results in negative consequences for the movement (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Gitlin, 1980). For some mass media scholars, negative media coverage is not a coincidence; it is a systematic social maintenance function of mass media as a social subsystem (Viswanath & Demers, 1999; Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1973; Olien, Tichenor & Donohue, 1989). Scholars have argued that media institutions as a whole function as a “guard dog” for the power holders in a society and work to preserve fundamental social norms and values. News media perform their “guard dog” duty not by blatantly silencing SMO’s voices all together, but by distributing these messages selectively using certain framing and filtering devices. Essentially, through the application of journalistic canons, radical elements in the movement are often being portrayed as deviant, unprofessional, socially illegitimate, or ineffective (McLeod & Hertog, 1992; Molotch, 1979; Gitlin, 1980). Additionally, the movement activists may “vent” their grievances in the media and may enjoy some euphoric feeling that media coverage would make the general public take their movement seriously (Molotch, 1979).

Such mainstream media’s “counter-movement” orientation is perhaps one of the main reasons why many SMOs have decided to develop their own communication vehicles, such as newsletters, newspapers, magazines and leaflets (Kessler, 1984). However, many small SMOs and young SMOs have found that a confined audience boundary and significant financial costs involved in creating and maintaining those
communication channels have been significant hindrances for the further growth and success of the movements.

One effective way of enhancing the communication process may be adopting an emerging communication technology. And with the rapid proliferation of the Internet, an increasing number of SMOs are utilizing the Internet, anticipating its unique technical properties would help relieve current communication constraints. Survey data from the Internet Software Consortium (2000) show that there are 72 million Internet domain names representing the number of World Wide Web sites worldwide as of January 2000. At least 959,827 Internet sites appear to belong to various kinds of organizations. Science magazine (Lawrence & Giles, 1998) estimated there are roughly 320 million World Wide Web pages, while their more recent study published in Nature magazine (Lawrence & Giles, 1999) estimated that there were about 800 million Web pages in the world as of February 1999.

By definition, the Internet is a collection of computers connected together so that they can exchange information with each other. The origins of the Internet can be traced back to 1969, when the Department of Defense developed Advanced Research Projects Agency (APRAnet). From the technological perspective, the Internet is apparently a quicker, cheaper and better way to communicate, compared to traditional telephone and fax communication technologies. On the Internet, digital data, such as text, audio and graphics, are transmitted as compressed binary bits; and the data are sent over any available route in the network, and then reassembled at the designated receiver’s computer (see Negroponte, 1995). And because of the structure of the Internet, users pay only local telecommunications charges for accessing the Internet,
regardless of the distance of transmission or the amount of data transmitted in the messages.

There are a number of studies suggesting that the Internet has fundamentally changed the way that many organizations do their work by introducing them to E-mail, online discussions, mailing lists and the World Wide Web (Boncheck, 1996; Li, 1990). Nevertheless, such studies have been rarely substantiated with empirical data. There are a few anecdotal cases studies focused on an individual SMO, but a systematic comparative analysis of technological impact on an SMO is relatively scarce.

The main purpose of my thesis is to present empirical evidence relevant to those claims and provide a conceptual framework for further social impact assessment research. Using data collected from actual SMOs’ financial records and a content analysis of newspaper articles, this thesis critically and systematically examined how the Internet communication technology has influenced, if at all, two separate state affiliates of an SMO, one with the Internet and the other without the Internet.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

(1) How has Internet technology influenced the ways in which an SMO communicates internally and externally?

(2) How has Internet technology influenced the ways in which journalists cover social movements? Have the journalistic routines been influenced by the SMO’s Internet use?
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This thesis is concerned with defining how the Internet has influenced, if it has at all, a Social Movement Organization’s (SMO) various communication strategies for mobilizing resources. To provide an adequate background of this topic, literature on following areas will be reviewed in this chapter: (1) the role of communication in a social movement’s formation and a resource mobilization, (2) the problems in current movement-media relationships and needs for “movement-owned” specialized media and (3) an assessment of the impact of the Internet on an SMO’s communication strategies.

Social Movements: Definition and Origin

Today, it is hard to find major social problems that do not accompany at least some form of social movement activities. In fact, social movements can be considered as one of the dominant social forces that transforms a complex modern society. For instance, behind almost any major social issue of our times, such as abortion, animal rights, environmental protection, sexual orientation, gender equality, ethnic conflicts,
gun control, and civil liberties, among many others, we can easily identify SMOs representing the collective voices of the stakeholders.

Political Responsiveness and Social Movements

A major question in this chapter is: What is a social movement and how does it emerge? According to William Gamson’s (1975) definition, a social movement is a manifestation of grievances from people who are “deprived of the basic prerogatives of mainstream members.” Gamson further stated that a social movement is “the lever by which the powerless, the ignored, the invisible, and the poor could move a nation” (1975). Thus, it can be suggested that the presence or absence of social movements or challenge groups can be interpreted as an important indicator of the permeability of a political system.

In his book *The Strategy of Social Protest* (1975), Gamson criticized Robert Dahl’s (1967) notion of a “pluralist democracy” for ignoring a darker side of American politics. In theory, a pluralist democracy can handle multiple problems simultaneously, thus it can prevent political dominance by a single powerful group or individual, while remaining responsive to the needs of its citizens and settle social conflicts peacefully. However, Gamson argued that turbulent urban riots and violent labor strikes in the United States in the 1960s demonstrates that Dahl’s pluralistic image of America may be a “half-truth.”

Gamson defined the social movements emerge from a society that has an imbalance of power between members of society within the mainstream political arena and those who are not. Gamson said an American governing system has not been
fully responsive to powerless people, and consequently they often employ non-
institutional means, or “back door” tactics as opposed to “front door” tactics, in order
to express their grievances. In some extreme cases, groups are so powerless that they
can’t even manage to generate a single visible protest.

Generally speaking, the presence or lack of social movements and protest
activities in American society can be viewed as an indicator of responsiveness of the
government and differentially allocated social power in the society.

Social Movements as By-Products of Social Strains

In a broad sense, social movements partly emerge as by-products of “sudden
increases in grievances generated by the pressures or strains of rapid social change”
(Jenkins, 1985). Jenkins (1985) stated that an economic crisis, mass unemployment,
environmental degradation, and exposure to new reference groups, among many
factors, have resulted in a radical transformation in “the intricate fabric of social
relations” and thus encouraged the formation of provided “organizational bases” for
social movements.

Smelser (1962) further identified six conditions affecting the movements’
emergence and development: (1) Structural conduciveness: the unique condition of a
particular society which can produce different opportunities and avenues for a
movement; (2) Structural strains: the underlying political or economic causes of
grievances; (3) Generalized beliefs: widely shared beliefs among targeted constituents
that are spread and confirmed by movement leaders; (4) Precipitating factors: the
specific events that trigger protests; (5) Leadership and communication: internal and
external communication channels through which the movement leadership can
coordinate and control their followers; and lastly, (6) \textit{Operation of social control}: the
manners in which established social authorities, such as elected officials, police and
media, regulate movement activities.

An important point to be made here is that considering such diverse and
complex factors contribute to the social movement formation, it is evident that social
movements should not be characterized as an eruption of irrational commotion by
unruly crowds; instead, social movement formation requires long periods of elaborate
preparation and rationally planned strategies.

\textbf{Resource Mobilization (RM) Theory}

An earlier generation of sociologists viewed a social movement as a relatively
unstructured social action driven by human emotions. A social movement was not
clearly distinguished from "emotional contagion" among aggrieved crowds who don't
follow social norms (Durkheim, 1964; Park, 1967; Blumer, 1971; Turner & Killian,
1987). A social movement, according to a "pressure cooker" model, had been viewed
as an eruption of accumulated grievances from various social strains and conflicts. A
social movement was negatively perceived as a sign of social breakdown that would
eventually harm social progress (Durkheim, 1964; LeBon, 1960). Correspondingly,
social movement leaders and adherents were frequently portrayed as socially
dislocated actors frustrated by a high level of strains and misfortune.

On the contrary, some contemporary scholars have asserted a more liberal
interpretation of social conflicts by arguing that social conflicts have been almost
always “ubiquitous” in a society, and the conflicts are omnipresent ingredients of large, heterogeneous, industrialized communities. Simmel (1955) and Coser (1956) argued that social conflicts are a “functional” factor in social change in pluralistic communities (Dahrendorf, 1959; Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1980). Especially, after the proliferation of the movements during the 1960s, the classical collective behavior approach was being fundamentally challenged by resource mobilization (RM) theory (Zald & McCarthy, 1987; Jenkins, 1983; Gamson, 1990; Oberschall, 1973; Tilly, 1978; McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

The resource mobilization approach differed markedly from classical collective behavior theory. RM theory viewed a social movement as a collective effort which employs various kinds of rationally organized strategies to achieve constituents’ social, political, economic, or cultural objectives. The RM theorists share the view of Joseph Gusfield (1970) who explained a social movement as “socially shared activities and beliefs directed toward the demand for a change in some aspect of the social order.” RM theorists tend to agree with John Q. Wilson’s (1973) definition that a social movement is a “conscious, collective, and organized attempt to bring about or resist large-scale change in the social order by noninstitutionalized means.” From the RM perspective, it is how social movements are not fundamentally different from institutionalized behavior.

McCarthy and Zald (1977) stressed that a primary focus of the RM theory is how an SMO emerges, develops, and goes about surviving in its structural constraints. In other words, RM theory is a structural-functionalist approach in that it focuses on: (1) an SMO’s organizational growth and decay, (2) why some movements are more
successful than others under what structural condition, and (3) an SMO’s effective and innovative strategies and tactics to overcome barriers to access resources. Jenkins and Perrow (1977) put it succinctly: the core issue of investigation of RM theory is identifying the factors influencing the SMO’s structurally differentiated access to social resources (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977:250).

Definition of Resource

In order to state the utility of RM theory in communication research, it is necessary to establish a clear definition of social resources. Social movement scholars have defined movement resources rather narrowly as staff members, time and money. Historically, SMOs have spent a tremendous amount of resources for direct actions, such as protests, public rallies and town meetings, for instance. However, as we live in a post-industrial society, more SMOs conduct their movement actions without a direct participation. For instance, Professional Social Movement Organizations (PSMOs) have emerged in the 1990s with “paper memberships” and an aggressive use of various emerging communication technologies, such as fax, telemarketing softwares and desktop printing programs. McCarthy’s study (1987) on the PSMO’s use of direct-mailing technology also demonstrates that how much an emerging communication technology could make an impact on an SMO’s growth and success. Emerging communication technology would seem to be an important resource for social movements. Communication technology, however, is a mixed blessing for SMOs’ resource mobilization efforts. That is, on the one hand, an SMO needs an effective communication vehicle to mobilize resources, such as membership,
volunteers, financial donations and petition letters. On the other hand, communication
technology can be a major drain on an SMO’s resources.

In that sense, an emerging communication technology, such as the Internet, has
breathed high hope into many SMOs’ leaderships because of the Internet’s potential
power to communicate with their audiences in a cheaper, faster and better way.

Another aspect of the importance of communication technology is an SMO’s
ability to communicate with mainstream media. As mass media institutions in our
society have become more dominant information distribution systems (Tichenor,
Donohue, & Olien, 1980; DeFleur & Ball-Lokeach, 1982), it became virtually
impossible for SMOs to ignore a magnitude of media in an SMO’s resource
mobilization effort. Media coverage grants not only greater reach of audiences, but
also confers legitimacy to an SMO.

In that sense, an SMO’s use of the emerging communication technology might
help facilitate journalists’ information gathering tasks, and perhaps the SMO can
attract more favorable news media coverage.

The following sections will discuss further detail about the proposed merits of
the Internet communication technology.

Social Movements and Communication

Among the various social movement scholars, RM scholars in particular have
put a heavy emphasis on the macro-structural aspect of a social movement. Because
of structural emphasis, however, RM theory has not paid much attention to the
psychological process that has taken place in individuals when they start recognizing
social strains and formulating grievances in their minds. Critics of RM theory (Klandermans, 1997; Minkoff, 1995; Eyerman & Jamison, 1991; Freeman, 1979) have pointed out that public’s heightened awareness of an SMO’s existence itself might not sufficiently explain why people were convinced to join the movement. In other words, a key question to ask here is: How do people realize that their condition is unjust in the first place? To give an example, the poorest peasants in China or exploited sweat shop workers in South Korea may not be able to realize their living conditions are deplorable until their perceptions are transformed through constant communication with movement activists. Such a transformation is much less likely to take place if some of those people in that group had failed to initiate a movement previously.

According to Piven and Cloward (1977), an even worse obstacle for a movement organizer would be people’s fatalistic beliefs. Piven and Cloward (1977) argued that sometimes the most powerless in a society are the most docile group and the least likely to label their circumstance as unfair. Most likely, they would internalize their situation as their fates and comfort themselves with a belief that their situation would be better than they would ever find anywhere else.

Mills (1959) defined such a limited cognitive capacity of some public group as a deficiency of “sociological imagination,” and contended it is a rather universal phenomenon of modern society. He wrote:

...Men do not usually define the troubles they endure in terms of historical change and institutional contradiction.... Seldom aware of the intricate connection between the patterns of their own lives and the course of world history, ordinary men do not usually know what this connection means for the kinds of men they are becoming and for the kinds of history-making in which they might take part (1959:4).
Mills argued that many social injustices and inequalities had not been noticed by the general public because most people would make comparisons only with others who belong within their own "private orbit" or with others who think very much alike. In order for movement to succeed, the movement leaders should help people create a rational understanding of their illegitimate circumstance (Mills, 1959).

Recently, this cognitive transformation of movement participants' social perspective has received a great deal of attention from a certain group of social movement scholars. For example, various social movement scholars introduced a variety of different concepts including "transvaluation" (Piven & Cloward, 1977), "cognitive liberation" (Ash-Garner, 1977), "ideological packages" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987), "frame alignment" (Snow, Burke Jr., Worden, & Benford, 1986), and "collective identity" (Melucci, 1989) in order to explain essential processes of movement participation and mobilization.

In contrast to the structural emphasis of RM theorists, Eyerman and Jamison (1991) argued that the communication is a dominant activity of a social movement. They said that the environmental movement groups have been highly successful with communicating with their audiences about the needs for transforming conventional beliefs about environmental conditions that no longer hold truth. Because it is often difficult for the general public to understand controversial environmental issues without scientific background knowledge, movement activists try to translate esoteric scientific concepts into more popular language that people can easily understand. In other words, an essential function of environmental movements today is to transform
scientific knowledge, traditionally monopolized by group of scientists, into public knowledge.

In summary, the literature on communication and social movement reviewed in this section shows that communication is increasingly a critical task for an SMO especially when an SMO is trying to transform the general public’s attitude to realize the problems they have encountered. An effective communication vehicle can enable SMO activists to achieve following tasks: (1) to sensitize deprived people to realize injustices in their circumstance, (2) to convince people that a problem is alterable, (3) to give confidence to people that the movement group is very capable of altering the problem, and (4) to convince people that participating and contributing to the movement will benefit both their own interest as well as the interests of the general public.

importance of Social Structure and Communication Network

Communication is a dynamic force that supports intricate interactions in a society (Pye, 1963; Simmel, 1955). That is, people learn of and respond to their immediate surroundings and their society through constant communication process. People, in general, obtain up-to-date information about a society primarily through face-to-face communication and/or media use. People then may formulate their opinions independently or using a frame of reference taken from other members of the social cluster. And, from the social movement perspective, a fruitful task for social movement organizers would be developing effective communication strategies to tap
into such active communication networks and distribute the movement's message and recruit movement participants.

Turner and Killian (1987) have shown that almost every social movement has acknowledged the value of community networks for membership recruiting. The authors have suggested that SMOs' recruiting effort should be targeted at "social clusters" which consists of individuals connected to family units, friendship cliques, interest groups, political cells and other groupings (1987:186). Similarly, Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson's (1980) study of participation in a religious group found that the communication network embedded in an existing social network is the most effective conduit for the distribution of the movement message. Their study showed that the vast majority of new recruits were drawn into the religious movement through contacts with a friend or relative who previously or currently is a movement member.

Snow et. al. also noted that an SMO closely linked to larger external associations would be more successful in recruiting members than the SMO that is structurally more isolated and secluded. Freeman's (1979) comparative study of an older and a younger chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW) demonstrated the importance of a pre-established supportive social network. Freeman stated that the rapid growth of feminist protest activity by younger NOW chapters was possible in part because of the presence of already well-established feminist organizations.

In summary, the literature presented in this section presented some examples that a communication network that is intertwined with social clusters of friends, family, or religious groups should be the primary source of SMOs' movement
resources, and the absence of such a network would be a major constraint for the successful development of social movement.

**Mass Media and Social Movements: Functions and Dysfunctions**

As our society has shifted from a communal to an industrialized society, people’s means of communication also has changed (Dewey, 1927; Park, 1923; Simmel, 1955). An informal, interpersonal communication channel has become an increasingly inadequate means of communication for people who are living in a rapidly expanding and bureaucratizing society. The role of interpersonal communication gradually dwindled as more people obtained their information from mass media, and, for example, even people living in a small neighborhood nowadays have to rely on weekly community newspapers or newsletters to find out about various activities taking place in their neighborhood (Park, 1967; Janowitz, 1967). Tichenor, Donohue, and Olien (1980) encapsulated the impact of social development on people’s communication behavior as follows:

As society becomes more diverse and complex, there is a growing expectation that the information agencies, particularly the mass media, will deliver information and interpretations through the use of experts and news analysis (1980:15).

Without mass media use, people living in a highly diversified and bureaucratized society would make very little sense of what is going on in the society. As DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1975) put it, “people are, to a varying degree, dependent on the mass media for supply of information that is essential to the conduct of their lives” (p. 260). From a social movement perspective, mass media today are
highly influential social systems capable of creating shared grievances, or collective awareness by saturating audiences with the movement’s message (Molotch, 1979; Gitlin, 1980).

On the other hand, messages distributed by mass media have certain limitations including a lack of intimacy, emotional appeals, and interactive feedback, compared to face-to-face communication. A study showed that early predictions about the efficacy of mass mediated communication channels for social interaction were pessimistic. Because mediated channels provide less “social presence” (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976) or less “rich” (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Trevino, Lengel, & Daft, 1987) than face-to-face communication, it was argued that they might be inadequate channels to deliver often emotional and persuasive messages from movement activists.

DeFleur (1982) further noted that a receiver in face-to-face interaction could fully detect various verbal or nonverbal cues from the sender. Normally, mass media communicators, such as reporters or news anchors, simply do not receive ongoing cues from their receivers as the message is being delivered. Additionally, audiences of mass communication messages have little or no control over the pace of media presentations. In other words, a mass media channel is typically a linear and unidirectional channel with which audiences oftentimes misinterpret delivered messages in the absence of correction or aid in the feedback process (DeFleur, 1982:134).

Despite some inherent shortcomings stated here, mass media do appear to influence public attitudes and perceptions. Without mass media, all forms of social movement resource mobilization and recruitment efforts would have to take place
using face-to-face, interpersonal communication which can consume enormous time and expenses. When movement leaders wish to reach an audience, they must spend time to visit each individual’s home or deliver public speech in the town plaza. In a society where the mass media are fully developed, movement activists can reach millions of geographically dispersed potential members and resource contributors at once.

As this literature shows, today’s bureaucratized and diversified society has grown ever more dependent on the information distribution services of professional journalists. However, the mass media institutions’ powerful dominance of information flow in a society seems work as a double-edged sword for SMOs. The following section will discuss the functions and dysfunctions of mainstream media for the social movements.

**Functions of Mass Media in Social Movements**

Kielbowicz and Scherer’s (1986) study on the media coverage of the civil rights movement in the 1960s revealed some interesting insights. The authors found that nationally televised news coverage of civil rights protests instantly brought long-suppressed grievances in the South to national attention. National network television was a relatively new communication technology in that time period, and is distributed unprecedented exposes of highly sensitive political issues that southern local newspapers were reluctant to report (Monroe, 1967:94). In other words, for the first time, national television coverage of the civil rights movement interconnected many audiences dispersed geographically (Lange, Baker, & Ball, 1969).
Similarly, Gitlin (1980) stated that it was unprecedented television news that delivered graphic accounts of a brutal repression of civil rights in the South to the living rooms of northern liberals, helping the movement activists mobilize financial resources from northern liberal sympathizers and lobby for the political support from the national government.

In addition, Gitlin noted that especially for “Freedom Riders,” a group of student civil rights workers in dangerous areas of the Deep South in the early 1960s, media attention on their activities provided political protection against violent threats from local sheriffs and many other local counter-movement forces (Gitlin, 1980:243). For movement constituents and adherents, such a media spotlight can also serve to cultivate a “fraternal deprivation” or “I-am-not-alone” feeling among audiences whose own experiences resemble televised depiction of social problems (Molotch, 1979).

Movement-Media Interaction

Relationships between mass media and movements are very complex symbioses (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). The mass media are perhaps “most wanted” communication vehicles by many SMOs to construct a favorable “societal context” for their issues (Molotch, 1979). Mass media are, however, are “guard dog” institutions protecting the social norm of powerful members of society (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1973, 1995; Viswanath and Demers, 1999). On the other hand, they are relatively “open” social maintenance system that sometimes support the causes of protesters and social reformers and widely publicize their grievances to obtain anti-establishment goals.
In *Deciding What’s News*, Gans (1979) pointed out that powerful political figures and organizations have significantly easier access to the media than those who lack a social reputation or privilege. A Gans’ study showed that one of the major advantages that powerful members of a society have is that they can even request a press conference and pre-arrange their media coverages. A similar advantage is that they can supply either newsworthy spokespersons or celebrity figures for reporters whenever it is necessary.

Many media scholars have shown that journalists almost always have more quantity of information than they can actually report (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Lippman, 1922). Consequently, they must make “news judgments” to filter excessive amounts of information they have gathered, and pick up only materials that they value as accurate and newsworthy. Also, another criterion of news judgment is how easily a certain issue could be reduced to fit in a limited amount of airtime or a news hole.

Considering the amount of time and energy journalists must spend for processing the news, a reputable supplier of “ready-to-use” news items would greatly relieve the journalists’ burden of producing a daily supply of news “from scratch.” For instance, a reputable “newsmaker” can set up prescheduled news events, such as press conferences, speeches, festivals, rallies, marches, and ceremonies. These events are called media events or pseudo-events because the principal purpose, or only purpose, of them is to be covered by the news media (Gans, 1979; Boorstin, 1971).

Generating such media events on a regular basis requires a significant amount of resources from the organizations. And such a prohibitive expense for media events discriminately provides media access to resourceful government offices or large
conglomerates with media relations specialists and spokespersons (Gans, 1979; Gitlin, 1980; Molotch, 1979; Sigal, 1986; McLeod & Hertog, 1992).

As a consequence, when SMOs with less power and prestige wish to gain access to the media, oftentimes they might try to stage “interesting” or “unforeseen events.” (Molotch, 1979; Gamson, 1990; Wolfsfeld, 1991). And, as Gitlin’s study of the group, Students for Democratic Society (SDS), illustrates, prolonged use of those deviant tactics can undermine the public image and the legitimacy of a movement in the long run and eventually destroy a movement.

Dysfunctions of Media Coverage

At this point, it is beyond question that mainstream media coverage can influence social movements, for instance, by heightening the public’s awareness of the grievances and boosting the morale of movement activists. However, media coverage can also yield negative outcomes that can seriously undermine the movements (Gitlin, 1980; Kielbowicz & Scherer, 1986; Turner & Killian, 1987; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Molotch, 1979).

In his book *The Whole World Is Watching*, Gitlin (1980) provides a rich account of how a complex movement-media “tug-of-war” eventually led to the demise of the Students for Democratic Society (SDS). In short, the SDS was destroyed by: (1) the organizational leadership crisis caused by a sudden membership surge, (2) increased militant protests by younger generation SDS members and media backlash, and (3) co-optation of movement goals and containment of radicalism. The following section will discuss the significance of those three problems the SDS suffered.
**Organizational Crisis**

SDS first became a center of national media attention in 1965 because of an intense controversy over Vietnam War protest movement in the United States. Although previously SDS had promoted many other profound social issues, the media treated SDS as if it was a representative entity of all anti-war protesters and framed SDS as no more than a group of militant student anti-war protesters.

In addition, because of the intensive media publicity, SDS was “engulfed” by a massive influx of new members whose backgrounds and objectives were drastically different from the older generation of SDS members. As a result, SDS’ chain of command, built upon face-to-face communication network, became no longer effective in regulating the suddenly increased membership. Pressure to manage hundreds of chapters across the county via hundreds of letters and phone calls each day was simply an overwhelming administrative task for the inexperienced SDS leadership.

An even more challenging task for SDS was, Gitlin stated, cultivating professional working relationships with prestigious journalists in national news media. For the first time, SDS leadership had to come up with “official” press releases with spontaneous quotes, and constantly monitor reporters’ personal approaches to the news. The SDS leadership’s struggle to perform these unprecedented bureaucratic and professional tasks on a regular basis eventually eroded the original idealism and anti-establishment spirit. Gitlin summarized the essential aspects of negative impacts of media coverage as follows:
The media spotlight was also exposing their vulnerabilities, taking the pace of the movement’s development out of their hands, and detraeting from their ability to define the movement for themselves (Gitlin, 1980:22).

When and how to “go public” is a critical decision for newly organized groups (Olien, et. al., 1989). Premature media attention may be detrimental to movements particularly when initiating groups have not fully articulated their own problem definitions of their problems.

Heightened Militancy and the Backlash Effect

Gitlin stated that during the turbulent 1960s, everyone who joined the anti-war protests learned “how to manipulate the media by flamboyant acts like flag-burning.” But a more critical concern for the movement was an “escalating threshold” for media coverage. For example, Gitlin wrote, “If the last demonstration was counted at 100,000, the next would have to number 200,000. Otherwise, it would be downplayed or framed as a sign of the movement’s waning” (1980). An ever-increasing degree of competition in accessing the media consequently heightened the degree of violence in the protest repertoire. Gitlin said such a rising tide of militancy not only undermined the movement’s legitimacy and discouraged public support, but also warranted an excuse for the government to use brutal police force to suppress the movement.

Likewise, an early phase of feminist movements also suffered from the stereotypical images of unruly female exhibitionists who burned their bras in public. Similarly, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) tried to reassure the public that the movement has no interest in reinstating Prohibition. The literature shows how
vulnerable movements' public images are, given the power of the media to distort portrayals of groups (Turner & Killian, 1987).

The Media Institution as a Social Control System

Mass media, as a social institutions, function as social control agencies in a society (Donohue, Tichenor & Olien, 1973). Tichenor, Donohue and Olien, have proposed that media are social subsystems that control "feedback" and "distribution" of knowledge in a society in order to maintain a social stability and harmony. When conflicts occur in a society, media fulfill the maintenance function not by resisting the change or conflicts, but by managing the way that change occurs, diminishing harmful consequences (Olien, Tichenor, & Donohue, 1989: Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1973; Viswanath & Demers, 1999).

A review of the literature by Viswanath and Demers (1999) elaborated on why it is important to view media as both agents of social control and agents of social change. Viswanath and Demers argued against the traditional notion that views media as a Fourth Estate and as an adversarial watchdog or even crusading social change agents attacking or criticizing wrongdoing of powerful elites. In contrast to the popular belief, the authors argued, media operate within a larger social context, and it is this structural condition that can accelerate or decelerate social change. The key assumption of Viswanath and Demers is: “In any social system — communist or capitalist, totalitarian or democratic — the news may be seen as a crude reflection of the power structure of that society. All media serve a master.”
In general, media are reinforcers of norms and values of established power elites and dominant institutions. Adversarial reporting and other social pressure applied by media may end up serving “damage control” functions, which often serve to prevent more fundamental injury to that authority (Ettema & Glasser, 1988; Demers, 1999; Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995). From the social movement perspective, media function as a counter-movement social subsystem that contains and “cooling-out” the movement’s efforts.

SMOs’ Needs for Alternative Media

There are two distinct communication channels available to and utilized by most SMOs. First, almost every SMOs use “movement-controlled” channels, which include alternative or underground newspapers, magazines, newsletters, and radio program. Second, SMOs use “journalist-controlled” channels, such as mainstream newspaper, magazine, radio, and television. If an SMO succeeds in attracting reporters and getting coverage in the mainstream media, the SMO can attain a tremendous amount of publicity and legitimacy. In theory, given the competition among journalists for story ideas, movements that are able to supply “ready-to-use” news items can, to a limited degree, may gain success in distributing their messages through media channels. However, as various social movement studies have pointed out, such media-generated publicity oftentimes undermines the movement by “marginalizing” or “cooling out” the movement’s original message and credibility. Thus, media coverage of a social movement issue is highly unpredictable and provides often less than objective views. In other words, movement leadership cannot depend
on media to cover their rallies or forums, or predict how favorable or accurate the reporters' angles will be. As Molotch (1979:77) correctly pointed out, it is a crucial matter for SMOs to determine how they "achieve visibility and end up stronger as a result of coverage than it would have been without the coverage." Researchers Kessler (1984) and Olien et. al. (1989) observed that such an "anticipated hostility of the established media" has often forced SMOs to create their own alternative media. As long as mainstream media continue to limit their scope to "mainstream" ideas and groups, SMOs with unpopular beliefs would continue to rely on its own alternative media to reach audiences.

Those specialized media can assist SMOs' communication tasks both internally and externally. First, as internal media, specialized media function as cadre members' regulatory mechanism to maintain an internal solidarity and coordinate administrative plans. For instance, using an intra-group medium, such as a newsletter or bulletin board, an SMO member can develop and exchange new ideas, and information on movement issues (Kessler, 1984). In summary, movement leaders use internal communication channels: (1) constantly to strengthen SMOs' problem definitions and reinforce the faith in the movement among existing members, (2) to educate existing members on where to find resources they need and how to take necessary action for the growth and survival of the group, and (3) to strengthen group solidarity by encouraging interaction between senior members and new members. In addition, the role of internal communication is highly important for professional SMOs (PSMO), which consist of membership geographically dispersed and function
primarily through indirect long distance communication channels (McCarthy & Zald, 1973; McCarthy, 1987).

On the external side, alternative media are used primarily for recruiting new members and mobilizing resources. Because movement staff has control over editorial decisions, production, and delivery, “movement-controlled” media are, in fact, the most reliable communication channels available to SMOs.

At the same time, there are several shortcomings in movement-owned media. It is important to note that the majority of alternative press readers have been either existing members or already sympathizers of the movement (Kessler, 1984). First, maintaining such specialized communication media often requires SMOs an extensive membership base and financial resources to begin with (Olien et. al. 1989: 153). A study by Kessler (1984:155) illustrated that establishing and maintaining publications of the dissident press in the early 1900s was the major financial drain for dissident and other protest groups, and such pressure still exists for various SMOs today. Generally, most movement-owned media are produced under such small budgets that they would not afford to produce sufficient amounts of printed materials or broadcast messages for reaching large audiences. In that regard, it can be posited that high production costs are significant barriers to the development of SMOs’ specialized media.

Second, it is important to note that the movement-owned media’s reach is confined by not only the financial burden, but also a limited boundary of audiences. Because people form their opinions through interaction with other people in informal circles, primary social groups, and friendship networks, most people prefer to evaluate new information with those of like-minded individuals. Thus, although the alternative
media have distinctive benefit, such as accuracy and advocacy, the actual capacity to create collective beliefs among large group of public is confined within the boundary of the existing movement network.

In summary, the capacity of specialized media for external communication is limited by mainly two aspects: (1) the extent to which an SMO can finance the media costs, and (2) the boundary of an SMO’s social influence and audiences. Despite various merits of SMO alternative media, it is still unlikely for small and resource-poor SMOs to enter into competition with powerful corporations or government authorities and survive, let alone achieve their goals, without amplifying their presence and social problems via mainstream media coverages.

**SMO Communication Problems and the Merits of the Internet**

The present study has applied the RM theory to help identify problems with an SMO’s communication strategies for mobilizing resources. There are mainly two kinds of communication problems that SMOs are confronted with. First, SMO’s struggle to generate favorable coverage from the establishment media. For instance, an SMO needs to accommodate journalists’ information-gathering routines. Second, an SMO needs cost-efficient specialized media that can reach a greater size and range of audiences. Partly, lowering production and delivery cost of specialized media may help increase an SMO’s boundary of external audiences.
Cost-efficiency of the Internet

Ultimate factors that determine communication costs are: how fast messages can be delivered, and how far message can reach (Innis, 1950, 1951; Pavlik, 1998; Pool, 1983, 1990). Prior to the invention of the telegram and telephone, messages were delivered by some type of transportation mechanism restricted by geographic barriers and distance (Carey, 1969). Even if a telephone is widely available today, a large volume of long distance or international calls can easily increase costs.

In this regard, the Internet, which has rapidly developed from initially a loose collection of networked computers for military staff and researchers, can be regarded as revolutionary communication technology that can potentially have a significant impact on today’s communication landscape.

Key properties of this new medium include: (1) reduced cost of message replication (volume). Technological innovation allows user to digitize and compress various forms of “analog” messages, such as text, sound, and graphics. All of these forms of messages are translated and compressed into a digital binary bit (see Negroponte, 1995). So after the initial investment for the computer equipment, digitization enables text, sound, and graphics to be replicated virtually at no extra cost. In addition, the quality of replicated content is exactly identical to the “original” content.

(2) Reduced cost of message transmission. Geographic distances between connected users no longer incur extra cost. In other words, distance neither increases nor decreases the transmission cost between sender and receiver. Electronic mail, for example, provides inexpensive communication between individuals independent of
geographic distance. The cost of sending electronic mail messages to South Carolina is the same as the cost to send messages to South Korea. Consequently, the costs of communication via the electronic mail system is significantly lower compared to the costs of doing the same task in traditional ways, such as printing, stamping, stuffing and mailing letters.

(3) Likewise, the speed of delivery service no longer affects communication cost. Although affected by bandwidth and modem speed, Internet users can send and receive messages at a relatively fixed speed, that is, a speed of binary bits traveling through telephone lines. The users do not have to pay extra expenses for almost instantaneous delivery, unlike traditional postal delivery service. Such inexpensive delivery speed has enabled the Internet’s several popular features, such as a real time chat rooms and forums, or live streamline sounds and video.

The Internet’s Implications for SMOs’ Specialized Media

An important question to ask after reviewing the new properties of the Internet is how such a technological breakthrough would influence, if any, an SMO’s communication strategies to mobilize resources. As mentioned, prohibitive costs of specialized media have been a major constraint for an SMO’s resource mobilization. Unique properties of the Internet, particularly the World Wide Web, may allow an SMO to publish, contact, and interact with external audiences inexpensively.

A study by Bonchek (1995) examines Internet use among political interest groups. He cited Tiger Li’s (1990) case study, which looked at Chinese students using the Internet to mobilize political support. In 1989, Chinese students began lobbying
the U.S. Congress to pass legislation protecting them from reprisals by the Chinese government for political protest. The study showed that Chinese student activists used electronic mail and electronic bulletin boards to distribute leadership announcements, organize demonstrations and symposia, and provided a “comprehensive, timely, and economical source of information about China.” Li concluded in the study that without such an innovative cost-saving communication technology, Chinese students who are widely dispersed in the United States could not have been contacted, let alone mobilized. Chinese students could afford neither the money nor the time that would have been required for making phone contacts with more than 100 organizations at one time.

Based on premises and background literature reviewed in this chapter, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H 1: Compared to an SMO without the Internet, an SMO utilizing the Internet would have to spend fewer resources for communicating with internal and external audiences.

Impact of Internet Technology on Journalistic Routines

The review of literature indicates that the journalism industry has inherent structural and organizational constraints. Obviously, no journalist can handle the infinite number of potentially newsworthy events without a reliable screening system (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). Given there is a limit on newspaper space or airtime, or “news hole,” it seems obvious there has to be some kind of editorial process in order to reduce numerous potential news events down to
only a few stories a day. Besides the constraints on the “news hole,” a production deadline is another major constraint in the news industry. Under deadline pressure, journalists have to stop seeking information, write a story, and submit the copy to editors and a printing press.

And, partly because of pressure from such a scarcity of resources in the newsroom, journalists are forced to favor information supplied by authorities while disregarding unpopular SMOs’ voices. Sigal (1987) noted:

To satisfy the requirements of turning out a daily newspaper on deadline with a limited budget and staff, editors have to assign reporters to places where newsworthy information is made public every day. Reporters need sources that can provide information on a regular and timely basis; they are not free to roam or probe at will (1987:16).

With that regard, this study posits that SMOs use of the Internet may help accommodate journalists’ information-gathering process. The second and third hypothesis are based on the literature reviewed:

H2: Compared to an SMO without the Internet, an SMO utilizing the Internet will be more frequently mentioned as a news source by journalists.

H3: Compared to an SMO without the Internet, the news coverage of an SMO utilizing the Internet will be more favorable.

Summary

In social movements, the resources are indispensable fuels for movement formation, survival, and success. As the Resource Mobilization theory proposes, causes and grievances alone cannot initiate social movements, let alone succeed. And
in contemporary society, mobilizing various resources requires increasingly sophisticated communication strategies and technologies. This review of literature identified two main communication channels SMOs utilize and corresponding constraints for each channel. First, "journalist-controlled" channels have a very powerful impact on the public’s view of social issues, but more often than not, these channels function as social control agents preserving power holder’s interests. Second, "movement-controlled" channels are confined both structurally and economically. Powerholders in society once again can afford greater publicity and influence public opinion through their own communication channels, such as commercials and newsletters. In this regard, this thesis will examine how adoption of the new communication technology may influence SMO’s communication strategies.
A Comparative Case Study

This thesis employed a comparative case study method, which allowed me to systematically compare two Social Movement Organizations in the Midwest. According to Smelser’s (1973) definition, the comparative method is a substitute for the experimental method. The comparative case study is frequently used in the analysis of historical data, and in the comparative analysis of national units, regions, cities, communities, and other sub-national units.

Smelser suggested that compared to the experimental method, comparative case study suffers significant disadvantages. In an experiment, the investigator is able to manipulate the situation, or the independent variable itself, therefore it is feasible to isolate precise, relatively uncontaminated relations between independent and dependent variables. Also, in an experiment, a researcher can control what comes “before” and “after” the experiment; thus making it easier to identify the causality.

A comparative case study, however, works with mostly historical data, accumulated from organizational activities that have transpired without reference to
the scientific purposes of the investigator. Smelser (1973) further noted that such limitation with control of variables is not an uncommon problem for comparative study researchers. Smelser wrote:

Most data in the social sciences are historical; they are the precipitates from the flow of social life that transpires without controlled experimentation. Furthermore, even if the investigator actually wishes to establish control groups for the study of many social variables, he is prevented from doing so for many variables -- such as suicide and crime rates -- by ethical and practical considerations. The social scientist is therefore presented with given data (Smelser, 1973:47).

Nevertheless, the comparative case study is still effective and widely applied research methodology in social science. If two or more societies have important variables in common, such as cultural traditions or political orientation, the methodology can treat these common characteristics as "parameters," and study the effects of other variables as if these common characteristics, or "parameters" were not in operation. Smelser called such method "heuristic assumption" accomplished by "making believe that other things are being equal" (p55).

Therefore, the comparative case study allows the researcher to generate scientific and meaningful data by "continuously and systematically transforming conditions into parameters and variables, by systematically combining and recombining them...."

Smelser wrote:

Nevertheless, this method provides the investigator the same kind of service as the experimental, statistical, and comparative methods, systematically to render operative conditions into parameters to merit the isolated investigation of a limited number of selected operative conditions (Smelser, 1973:55).
Selecting Two SMOs

For this case study, I chose to compare a pair of social movement organizations in the Midwest. The Ohio SMO has been using the Internet technology since 1995, whereas the Indiana SMO has not adopted the technology as of the time of this research conducted in 1999. Both SMOs are affiliates of a nationwide organization headquartered in Washington D.C. The SMO has affiliates in all 50 states.

The first step in the data collection was to locate an active social movement organization with multiple chapters in the United States. I conducted a "Yahoo!" Internet directory search under titles listed as "social movements" and "the causes and issues" themes. Of the many SMOs listed on the directory, I located an SMO with well-developed nationwide hierarchical structures and a long history of activism in order to ensure a higher likelihood of finding two state chapters that are in close distance geographically as well as politically.

The next challenge was to select a pair consisting of one SMO using the Internet and one not using the Internet. The SMO without the Internet was taken as the control group, and was compared to the SMO using the Internet technology. If both SMOs had already adopted the Internet technology, the comparison would not be possible.

Initially, I contacted the SMO chapter located in Ohio. The Ohio SMO referred me to a State Organizational Development Coordinator of the SMO in its national headquarters in Washington D.C. The coordinator's opinion was deemed to be a reliable guidance since the person was responsible for maintaining the nationwide
directory list of state chapters and communicating with all state chapters on a regular basis. The coordinator indicated to me that several chapters in the Midwest, including Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin, were equally strong in movement activism, and therefore would make a comparable pair. The coordinator conducted a brief survey of the Midwestern chapters, and came up with its state affiliates in Indiana and Ohio.

The history of the two organizations showed the Ohio SMO has been aggressive with technological innovation and has been operating its own World Wide Web site since 1995. On the other hand, the Indiana SMO has not been interested in Internet technology and does not have a World Wide Web site or organizational E-mail domain names. However, the coordinator said that both SMO chapters have almost the same strength and enjoy similar political support from state legislatures and grassroots support in the respective states. For instance, the coordinator said both states have succeeded in electing legislative officials who favor the SMOs' movement agenda. In fact, Ohio and Indiana are two of a few states in the county that passed legislation that supports their social movement goal. As for the degree of pluralism and economic structure, both states contain fairly large industrialized and pluralistic urban cities, such as Indianapolis, Gary, Columbus, Cincinnati and Cleveland, as well as less populated, homogenous agricultural small towns.

Controlling for Issue Variable

In a strict sense, the effectiveness of Internet technology can be best measured by comparing a pair of comparable SMOs that are identical in all other aspects, but
differ only in terms of the Internet usage. Unfortunately, in the real world, such a controlled experimental condition is very difficult to find since SMOs do not exist in a social vacuum. In fact, many SMOs have invariably different goals and ideologies, and SMOs might have developed communication strategies that are deemed to be most effective in the unique circumstances. Thus, if I chose to compare two SMOs representing two different social agendas, it would be extremely difficult to single out the impact of the Internet from many other factors that might have played a role in influencing the SMO’s communication costs. Therefore, this study controlled for SMO’s social issue factor by selecting two state affiliates of a single nationwide SMO. In this comparative analysis, the “issue” became a constant variable and was ruled out as an intervening variable.

Controlling for Logistic Variable

Even when two SMOs share the same movement issue, their communication strategies can vary depending on their logistics. SMOs in different locations may have to deal with different population sizes, education levels, ages, types of major industries, political atmospheres, and the degree of community pluralism, among many other contexts. Thus, it would be best to compare two SMOs located in states that share the maximum degree of structural similarities. For instance, comparing Kentucky with California would yield little meaningful data because of drastic differences in community structures. On the other hand, comparing an Ohio SMO with a Michigan or Indiana SMO would yield a more meaningful comparison because of comparable political atmosphere and many other structural similarities.
Hypothesis 1 and Listing of Variables

H 1: Compared to an SMO not using the Internet, an SMO utilizing the Internet would have spent fewer resources for communicating with its internal and external audiences.

An SMO’s use of the Internet as an internal and external communication device is considered as an independent variable in Hypothesis 1, while the dependent variable is the SMO’s financial expenditures for conducting communication tasks. More specifically, the independent variable is the SMO’s use of the electronic mail system for communicating with administrative staff and members in and out of the state, and use of a World Wide Web site for delivering internal publication materials, such as minutes of internal meetings and the organization’s newsletters. Further, the independent variable also includes the use of electronic mail to respond to external public audiences’ questions and various kinds of information requests, and use of the World Wide Web site to distribute persuasive messages, such as sound effects, still photographs, and animation video clips to external audiences.

The dependent variable in this hypothesis is the financial expense for carrying out various communication tasks, or simply put, expenses for the SMO to stay in touch with members. To operationalize the dependent variables, three indicators were identified: (1) SMO’s telephone usage cost, (2) printing cost, and (3) postage and shipping cost, which were derived from the categories used by the Internal Revenue Service Form 990, an income tax return document for not-for-profit charitable organizations.
In-depth Interviews

The two SMOs’ current presidents, one former president, a treasurer, information technology manager and Webmaster were interviewed. I was able to attend the Indiana SMO’s board of trustees’ meeting in a suburb of Indianapolis. The in-depth interviews were conducted to gather information about the SMO’s communication expenditures and other supplementary data on the SMO’s Internet use. All interviews were conducted face to face and lasted approximately one hour. Interviews were tape-recorded and all interviewees were informed of their right to remain anonymous. Interviewees were also told that they could go off the record or could ask me to stop recording if any question made them feel uncomfortable.

Locating Financial Data: IRS Form 990

Collecting a piece of information that may reveal sensitive financial information of an organization is not a simple task. My attempts to access the financial data failed a couple of times since the financial data are almost always tightly controlled by the organizations’ leadership. It was clear that the control of financial information is a top priority of SMO leaderships, especially when the organization competes with other SMOs or the opponents.

Eventually, the financial data were collected from the Internal Revenue Service Form 990, a federal income tax report that every tax-exempted organization in the U.S. is required to file. The IRS Form 990 was the most accessible and reliable data source because it is a public record and SMOs are required to disclose the last three years of forms for the public inspection under the open records law. Additional data
for the first hypothesis were collected through in-depth interviews with the two SMOs’ presidents and other leaders.

The actual names of the SMOs were withheld in this study upon the SMOs’ request. Such a compromise was a necessary price for gaining an access to the great bulk of financial information. Also, the anonymity gave a sense of security to SMO’s cadre members when they were interviewed.

Analyzing Scheme for Communication Cost

It is only when a member/audience size of two SMOs are equal that we can compare the exact dollar amount of communication expenses of the two SMOs. But when the size of the SMOs are not comparable, it is necessary to devise some kind of denominator to even out the difference between the two. By looking at the dollar figures alone, we would not be able to “weigh the scale” to see which SMO spent fewer resources than the other because, for instance, a bigger SMO might have spent more resources to serve a greater number of members and audiences. In other words, a communication cost analysis should compare how much the communication costs “weigh” in proportion to the organization’s total expenses. Fundamentally, because the SMO’s communication expenses are measured proportionally, it enables us to compare communication costs among SMOs of any size.

Further, the proportionally calculated communication cost would also help create more accurate over-time cost change comparisons. The proportional communication cost incorporates the changes of both communication costs and organizational expenses at the same time. For instance, if communication costs
declined by 30 percent over time, but the general expenses also decreased by 30 percent during the same period, the 30 percent decrease would not mean any real change in terms of proportion.

Hypotheses 2 and 3

H2: Compared to SMOs without the Internet, SMOs utilizing the Internet will be more frequently mentioned as news sources by journalists.

H3: Compared to SMOs without the Internet, news coverage on SMOs utilizing the Internet will be more favorable.

The second hypothesis expected that an SMO’s use of Internet technology would help the SMO attract more media attention, and the SMO’s name would appear in news media as a source more frequently than the SMO without the Internet. The hypothesis also expected that the SMO using the Internet to communicate with reporters would receive more favorable coverage than the SMO without the Internet. The independent variable is the SMO’s use of the Internet when the SMO communicates with the mainstream media who regularly cover the movement and legislative issues in statehouse and court systems. The dependent variable is the frequency the SMO’s name appears in newspaper articles about the social movement’s issues and favorable treatment of the movement issues.

Comparative Content Analysis

To test the second hypothesis, the content analysis method was chosen. According to Holsti (1969), content analysis is a multipurpose research method that is
objective, systematic, and inferential. Holsti added, “all content analysis is concerned
with comparison, the type of comparison being dictated by the investigator’s theory”
(Holsti, 1969:5). Thus, given the comparative nature of the hypothesis as well as the
source of data being the newspaper stories, the content analysis was deemed to be
most effective method to gather the data for the second hypothesis.

Data were generated from content analysis of 65 newspaper articles published
in two large metropolitan daily newspapers where the two SMOs are located. The
newspapers chosen for this study, The Columbus Dispatch and The Indianapolis Star,
are comparable both geographically and politically. Both of them are located in the
state capital and extensively cover statewide legislative issues. Daily circulation of the
Dispatch is about 280,000 and 400,000 on Sundays. Similarly, the daily circulation of
the Star is about 268,000 and 390,500 on Sundays. The Dispatch newsroom consisted
of about 50 reporters and the Star has about 40 reporters. Both newspapers are
published by independent publishing companies owned by private families. In
addition, both Indianapolis and Columbus are “one-newspaper” cities with only one
daily metropolitan newspaper.

While the two newspapers in this study share similarities in many ways in
terms of circulation, size of staff, family ownership and proximity to the state capital,
there are a number of potentially intervening variables that needed to be controlled to
improve the internal validity of the comparative analysis. For example, if one
newspaper published far more stories on social movement than the other newspaper
did, the data generated by the content analysis would be less likely to yield meaningful
inference about the SMO’s access to the media. In order to control the scale of
newspaper coverage of the movement, a broadly defined single keyword search was conducted in the each newspapers’ electronic archive system. The keyword search was repeated for 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998 and 1999. Interestingly, the result of the five-year search indicated that both newspapers published the greatest number of movement-related stories during 1995, when an approximate total of 1,000 movement-related stories were found in *The Columbus Dispatch* and *The Indianapolis Star*.

Subsequently, only the staff-written hard news stories were picked from the pool of 1,000 stories. All wire service stories, letters to the editor, opinion columns and news briefs were omitted from the population. Such a screening process was an important measure to ensure only stories that were written by professional staff reporters whose journalistic practice reflects the newspaper’s organizational news-making practices and routines.

After the screening process eliminated all but 26 articles from *The Columbus Dispatch* and 51 stories from *The Indianapolis Star*, those selected stories were coded without probability sampling process. The unit of analysis was the whole article itself. All stories were coded twice by the investigator.

Holsti pointed out the dangers that the investigator’s subjective predispositions might contaminate the content of the documents under analysis (Holsti, 1969:4). To prevent such bias, the explicit set of rules, or coding scheme, was developed and its reliability was tested. Two professional working journalists were trained and asked to code five randomly selected *the Dispatch* articles (19%) and 10 randomly selected *the Star* articles (25%). The pilot coders were recruited as volunteers and were prevented from knowing the hypothesis in the study.
In comparing the coding among the two pilot coders and the investigator, an overall agreement of 77 percent was achieved. A three-coders agreement rate was 82 percent for SMO’s appearance and 71 percent for favorable coverage. In comparing the coding between the first coder and the investigator, an overall agreement of 78 percent was found. Agreement was 93 percent for name appearance and 80 percent for favorable angles. Intercoder reliability between the second coder and the investigator showed an overall agreement of 65 percent. Agreement was 80 percent for name appearance and 66 percent for favorable angles. Because the coder agreement rate between the second coder and the investigator was particularly low on the favorable angle questionnaire, the investigator reevaluated the coding instruction and paid more caution on that questionnaire when actual coding was conducted. The intercoder reliability was calculated by dividing the number of coding agreements with the total number of coded stories.

The time frame of the analysis was limited to 1995, the year when both Ohio and Indiana legislatures dealt with controversial bills and the particular social movement issue quite successfully generated extensive newspaper coverage almost throughout the whole year.

Constructing Coding Schemes

The analysis examined the frequency an SMO’s name was mentioned in the stories as a journalistic source, and to find out whether the stories contained an angle favorable toward the SMO’s position. The coding scheme was fairly clear and simple since the hypothesis specifically assumed two questions. The coders were asked to
determine how frequently the SMO’s name appeared in the stories and how favorably the story portrayed the SMO’s movement issue and attitudes. A simple dichotomized category asked coders whether the SMO’s name was mentioned or not mentioned in the story. Likewise, the presence of a favorable angle in the story was coded by simple “yes” or “no” categories. However, when coders felt that the story covered the issue without showing any favorable slant to the SMO, they were provided with the category choice that the story was “neutral.”

Besides these two major questions, two other questions were included in the coding scheme in order to establish a larger contextual background of the coverage. The coding asked if the major topic of the story was about the movement’s political or social loss or gain. If the story did not provide enough information to determine the outcome, the coders could code the story as “indeterminate.” The coding scheme also asked what the main subject matter of the story was. For example, coders were asked to determine whether the story was about a legislative issue, a political candidate’s stance on the issue, a feature story portraying an individual’s breakthrough, or movement protestors’ controversial strategies and tactics. Coding categories were intended to be exhaustive, and the coders were allowed to record unexpected subjects. Also, when more than one category fit into the description of the subject of the story, the coders could select all categories that applied.

In-depth Interviews

The in-depth interviewing technique was employed to supplement the data generated from the content analysis. The second hypothesis suggests that
technological advancements of the Internet can help better accommodate journalists' information needs.

Two journalists with each of *The Indianapolis Star* and *The Columbus Dispatch* were selected for the interview. Both interviewees have extensive journalistic experience in covering the social movement issues and knowledge of controversial social and political conflicts that usually take place in state legislatures and court systems. *The Star* reporter wrote 12 stories (30 percent of all stories) on the movement subject in 1995, while *the Dispatch* reporter wrote 14 stories (53 percent of all stories) about the same movement issue while she was covering the Ohio statehouse.

Both interviews were conducted on the telephone; and each interview was estimated to last approximately less than one hour. Interviews were recorded but interviewees were informed of their right to remain anonymous. Interviewees were also told that they could go off the record or could ask me to stop recording if any question made them feel uncomfortable.

The journalists were asked about organizational constraints when covering social movements in general. This section dealt with issues such as limited time, news hole space, maintaining objectivity, ideological conflicts, and how the organizational constraints interfered with covering social movements. The next part of interview dealt with communication technology issues. It asked how the Ohio SMO used the Internet technology when the SMO talked to the press, if the SMO used it at all, and what kind of advantages journalists believe the Internet has over traditional communication technology. In addition, the interview asked if the availability of the
Internet communication technology facilitated locating news sources. Did the Internet help the journalists correspond with sources? Did it offer better access to the SMOs? Has such technological change influenced in any way how the stories were written?

On the other hand, since the Indiana SMO has never adopted the Internet, the Indiana journalist was asked to provide a personal assessment of news media coverage of the movement issue in general, what type of public relations techniques the Indiana SMO has been using, and how much the Internet technology could potentially improve the quality of media coverage of the social movement's issues.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study investigated the relationship between utilizing Internet communication technology and a social movement organization’s resource mobilization efforts. Research questions that this thesis attempted to address were, first, how has Internet technology influenced the ways in which an SMO communicates with its members and adherents as well as the general public? Compared to an SMO without the Internet, does an SMO utilizing the Internet spend fewer resources producing and disseminating its movement messages to a large audience? Here, the essential question is: Is the Internet a cost-saver? If so, what is the empirical evidence?

The second research question was: How has Internet technology influenced the ways in which journalists cover social movements? Have the journalistic routines been altered by an SMO’s Internet use? Did the SMO with the Internet appear more frequently in the stories than the other? Did the SMO with the Internet receive more favorable coverage than the other? What do journalists who actually covered the movement have to say about the utility of the Internet? Is it easier to cover the SMO with the Internet than the other?
Hypothesis I

The first hypotheses posited that an SMO utilizing the Internet would spend fewer financial resources for producing and disseminating movement messages to internal and external audiences.

H 1: Compared to an SMO not using the Internet, an SMO utilizing the Internet will spend fewer resources for communicating with its internal and external audiences.

The first hypothesis was tested with two kinds of data: an SMO’s communication-related expenses and in-depth interviews with the SMO’s leadership members.

PHASE I: COMMUNICATION COST ANALYSIS

Analyzing IRS Form 990

One of the findings in the study was that both SMOs being examined for this study divided their operations into the two separate entities to comply with Internal Revenue Service’s income tax filing requirements. Both the Indiana and Ohio SMOs established educational foundations and reported their charitable donation income under the 501(c)(3) category, which grants a tax-exemption status to an SMO. Because 501 (c)(3) status prevents an SMO from conducting any political activities, such as making political contributions, hiring lobbyists to influence state legislatures or endorsing political candidates, the SMOs also established corporations in order to file their income tax under
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expense Categories on Form 990</th>
<th>Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Facsimile and voice calls, both long distance and local.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage/shipping</td>
<td>Include bulk mailing service fees, postal stamps cost, and UPS and Federal Express services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing/publications</td>
<td>Primarily consisted of newsletter printing costs and donation letters that solicit financial contributions from potential donors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS Form 990

Table 4.1: Description of SMO's communication expense categories as available on IRS Form 990

income. Nevertheless, as far as this study is concerned, such a distinction was deemed to be irrelevant. Regardless of their tax filing status, both entities consumed the organization's pool of financial resources by sharing office spaces and staff. Therefore, in this study, I simply listed these figures without taking these figures into consideration for final analysis.

Both SMOs studied in the thesis documented their costs in accordance with the categories developed by the IRS. As Table 4.1 shows, those categories are, (1) telephone costs, (2) postage/shipping costs, and (3) printing/publications costs. While valuable, those categories were so broadly defined that it was difficult to sort out where all those dollars were spent exactly. To compensate for this incomplete data, a number of in-depth interviews with the organizations' cadre members were conducted. I interviewed the organizations' presidents and treasurers, Webmaster and information technology manager, and attended the board of directors' meeting to gain an accurate
perspective on the inner workings of the organizations’ communication financing.

Findings from the interview will be presented in the second phase in this section.

Communication Cost of Indiana SMO (without the Internet)

An analysis of the Indiana SMO’s communication expenses has yielded the following findings. Figure 4.1 demonstrates that all three categories of communication expenses of the Indiana SMO showed drastic fluctuations over a four-year period. Particularly, the printing/publications category showed a drastic increase while other expenses showed modest decreases.

In 1996, the Indiana SMO reported spending $10,687 for telephone costs, and another $11,051 for a new collapsed category called “printing/publications/postage/shipping.” In this particular year, the Indiana SMO collapsed two separate categories of “printing/publications” and “postage/shipping” into a single category. The explanation for this modification is that the Indiana SMO filed a “990 EZ” form instead of “Regular 990.” The 990EZ form asks an SMO for much less comprehensive financial information than the regular 990 form does. According to IRS regulations, when organizations have gross receipts of less than $100,000 and have total assets of less than $250,000 at the end of the year, they can use the simplified form 990EZ.
Figure 4.1: Over-time trends of three communication expenses of the Indiana SMO (without the Internet)

In fact, the year of 1996 was not the only time the Indiana SMO used 990EZ forms. The Indiana SMO filed 990EZ throughout the entire four-year period. Nonetheless, I was able to obtain a copy of additional tax schedules and confidential annual financial reports from 1997 and 1998 directly from the SMO leadership at the board of directors' meeting in Indianapolis. The alternative data enabled me to reconstruct communication costs from 1997 and 1998 for the analysis, but the costs of 1996 was discarded from the final data. Without help of any follow-up documentation, I could not accurately distinguish the combined costs into three
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$7,270</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>$6,151</td>
<td>$5,680</td>
<td>Decreased by 21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and shipping</td>
<td>$7,566</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>$5,509</td>
<td>$5,802</td>
<td>Decreased by 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
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<td>MISSING</td>
<td>$11,451</td>
<td>$6,963</td>
<td>Increased by 170%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>$23,111</td>
<td>$18,445</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Over-time comparison table of three communication expense categories of SMO without the Internet.

separate categories. At any rate, Table 4.2 shows that the Indiana SMO reported spending $7,270 for telephone bill in 1995. In the following year 1997, the telephone costs decreased to $6,151.29 in 1997 and $5,680.90 in 1998. Overall, the Indiana SMO’s telephone costs have dropped gradually from $7,270 to $5,680 from 1995 and 1998, approximately a 21 percent decrease.

As for the postage/shipping expenses category, the Indiana SMO reported spending $7,566 in 1995. Because of missing 1996 data, no cost for postage/shipping expenses was included in the table. In 1997, the Indiana SMO reported spending $5,509, slightly less than 1995; and in 1998 it bounced back up to $5,802. Over the four-year period, Indiana SMO’s postage/shipping expenses had not shown noticeable fluctuation although it showed about a 23 percent gradual decrease, from $7,566 to
$5,802. Expenses of printing/publications, on the other hand, displayed the most drastic fluctuations over time. The Indiana SMO reported spending $2,565 in 1995 for printing/publications. The cost for 1996 was missing, but in 1997 the costs skyrocketed to $11,451, an almost 346 percent hike; and the following year the cost fell to $6,963, about a 40 percent decrease.

In summary, the Indiana SMO's printing/publications costs showed increase over time, from $2,565 in 1995 to $6,963 in 1998, about a 170 percent increase. The telephone costs and postage/shipping costs have shown a gradual decline over time.

Communication Cost of Ohio SMO (using the Internet)

Compared to the Indiana SMO, the data from the Ohio SMO more strongly and clearly suggested that the communication expenses, with the exception of telephone costs, have declined over three years. Figure 4.2 illustrates such findings of three-year trends of three communication expense categories. The Ohio SMO's telephone expenses have displayed the least amount of decline, being relatively stable, throughout the three-year period. In 1995, the Ohio SMO reported $12,824 for the telephone expense category, and the cost increased to $13,507 in 1996. In 1997, the cost fell to $10,302, about a 19 percent decline from $12,824 in 1995.

The expense for postage/shipping was the category that showed the most drastic drop over time. The Ohio SMO reported spending $48,376 in 1995, then it dropped about 34 percent to $31,894 in 1996. In 1997 it sunk once again approximately 34 percent to $21,028. In other words, over three years the Ohio
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication costs</th>
<th>Indiana SMO's Education Trust Fund</th>
<th>Indiana SMO's Incorporated</th>
<th>Annual Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1995</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$7,270</td>
<td>$7,270</td>
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<td><strong>1996</strong></td>
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<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and shipping</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1997</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>1998</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$597.27</td>
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<td>$5,680.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$5,802.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
<td>$2,436.78</td>
<td>$4,526.85</td>
<td>$6,963.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS Form 990

Table 4.3: Four-year summary of communication costs of Indiana SMO (without the Internet)
SMO’s postage/shipping costs have decreased almost 57 percent. Similarly, expenses for printing/publication showed a significant decline between the years of 1996 and 1997, from $39,780 to $27,588. However, the missing 1995 printing/publication cost data prevented me from making further inferences.

In summary, a comparison of the Ohio SMO’s three different communication expenses over the three-year period unmistakably indicates that the group’s communication costs have been steadily decreasing. The category of postage/shipping costs showed the most drastic and consistent drop. The printing/publications costs category showed a similar drop although the absence of 1995 data makes further inference more tenuous. The costs that showed the least drastic decline was telephone costs.

Analyzing the Data: Proportional Communication Costs

In addition to the over-time comparisons with actual figures of communication costs, the percentages of the communication costs in general organizational expenses were analyzed. Table 4.4 indicates how much “weight” the communication costs had relative to other organizational expenses. The proportional weight of communication costs can indicate more accurate information for the two following reasons. First, by incorporating changes in both communication costs and organizational expenses at the same time, I can put communication costs into a larger organizational context. For instance, if communication costs declined by a 30 percent but the general expenses
Figure 4.2: Over-time trends of three communication expenses of the Ohio SMO (with the Internet)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$12,824</td>
<td>$13,507</td>
<td>$10,302</td>
<td>Decreased by 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and shipping</td>
<td>$48,376</td>
<td>$31,894</td>
<td>$21,028</td>
<td>Decreased by 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
<td>$39,780</td>
<td>$27,588</td>
<td>Decreased by 30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS Form 990

Table 4.4: Over-time comparison table of three communication expenses of the Ohio SMO (without the Internet).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication costs</th>
<th>Ohio SMO’s Education Trust Fund</th>
<th>Ohio SMO’s Incorporated</th>
<th>Annual Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1995</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$0</td>
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<td>$12,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and shipping</td>
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<td>$42,486</td>
<td>$48,376</td>
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<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1996</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>$13,507</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
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<td>$39,780</td>
<td>$39,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1997</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>$1,819</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and shipping</td>
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<td>$21,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$27,588</td>
<td>$27,588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS Form 990

Table 4.5: Four-year summary of communication costs of the Ohio SMO (with the Internet)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>- 21%</td>
<td>- 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postage and shipping</td>
<td>- 23%</td>
<td>- 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printing and publications</td>
<td>+ 170%</td>
<td>- 30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS Form 990

Table 4.6: Comparison of changes in communication cost of two SMOs

decreased by 30 percent at the same time, the 30 percent decrease would not mean any real change in terms of proportion. Thus, without incorporating the proportional weight of communication costs in the whole budget, I would not be able to figure out whether the data would truly mean a decrease or increase in a larger organizational context.

Table 4.7 and Figures 4.3 and 4.4 demonstrate that the 1995 communication expenses of the Indiana SMO were 15.6 percent of total expenses, while the Ohio SMO used 18 percent of total expenses for communication costs. In 1996 the Indiana SMO’s proportion decreased by 11.4 percent. At the same time, the Ohio SMO’s proportion decreased to 8 percent. In 1997, the Indiana SMO’s communication cost proportion increased to 29 percent, whereas the Ohio SMO’s proportion was only 9
percent. In 1998, the Indiana SMO’s communication cost occupied 24.6 percent of total expenses. The Ohio SMO’s data for 1998 were missing.

Secondly, using the SMO’s proportional costs would allow me to control for the unequal size of the SMOs. For example, Table 4.7 shows that in 1997 the Ohio SMO had $640,210 in total organizational expenses while the Indiana SMO spent $79,772. At first look, it might seem to suggest that the Ohio SMO had more resources for communicating with more members and coordinating more activities, compared to the Indiana SMO. However, if we compare the proportion that the communication cost occupies in the organizational expenses, the Ohio SMO spent only 9 percent of its total expenses for communication tasks, proportionally far less than the Indiana SMO which spent 29 percent. Figure 4.5 summarizes all proportional comparisons of the two SMOs. Generally speaking, the proportion of the Indiana SMO’s communication cost has significantly increased over time, while the Ohio SMO’s proportion dropped in half, from 18 percent in 1995 to 9 percent in 1997.

Summary

The data above provide empirical support for the first hypothesis, which expected that an SMO utilizing the Internet would use fewer resources for communication. Other things being equal, the data gathered in this study revealed that overall communication costs of the SMO utilizing the Internet (Ohio) have gradually decreased over the last three years. At the same time, the SMO without the Internet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Indiana SMO (without Internet)</th>
<th>Ohio SMO (with Internet)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1995</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>$111,595</td>
<td>$322,518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication costs</td>
<td>$17,401</td>
<td>$61,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Communication Costs</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1996</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>$93,094</td>
<td>$1,060,091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication costs</td>
<td>$10,687</td>
<td>$85,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Communication Costs</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1997</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>$79,772</td>
<td>$640,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication costs</td>
<td>$23,111</td>
<td>$58,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Communication Costs</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1998</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total expenses</td>
<td>$74,793</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication costs</td>
<td>$18,445</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Communication Costs</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>MISSING</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: IRS Form 990

Table 4.7: Proportion of communication cost in two SMOs’ total expenses
Figure 4.3: Indiana SMO’s (without Internet) communication costs proportion

Figure 4.4: Ohio SMO’s (with Internet) communication costs proportion
Figure 4.5: Communication costs proportions of Indiana SMO vs. Ohio SMO

(Indiana) also showed a decline in communication costs over the last four years. However, the data suggested that changes in the Ohio SMO case had been more consistent and drastic than Indiana SMO, which fluctuated over time (see Table 4.4 and Figure 4.2). Yet another indicator for this hypothesis might be an SMO’s proportional communication cost. In proportion to the total organizational expenditure, the Indiana SMO’s communication costs have been on the rise over time, while the Ohio SMO’s costs have significantly decreased from 1995 (see Table 4.7 and Figure 4.5). More importantly, the gap between the Indiana SMO’s proportional communication costs and the Ohio SMO’s costs have widened over time. However,
this result is not to say that the Internet use was the only factor that caused these changes, but that use of the Internet could have contributed to the reduced costs.

**PHASE II: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS**

To supplement quantitative communication costs data, qualitative in-depth interviews with several cadre members and leaders of the two SMOs were conducted. The interviews provided some qualitative data that further supported the first hypothesis.

**Reaching New Faces with the Internet**

The first interview subject was a Webmaster who worked for the Ohio SMO on a volunteer basis. A computer software programmer in Dayton, Ohio and vocal advocate of new technology himself, the Webmaster of the Ohio SMO pointed out that the most significant contribution of the Internet communication technology has been a dramatic expansion of the SMO’s audience. Although the Web is certainly not the primary means for the SMO to reach out to the public currently, he said it has become an important communication vehicle for the group. As a Webmaster, he believes that the Internet brought a new means to communicate with people who are not already friends or members of the SMO. He likened the Internet to a new advertising medium that can reach people outside the SMO’s traditional geographical boundary. He supported his claim by pointing out several inherent shortcomings that he thought conventional media have had. For example, he said, the general public is less likely to
be reached by the organization's newsletter. In fact, he pointed out the newsletters are not intended to be an advertising tool; they are basically a medium for communicating with "friends," not the "general public."

The Ohio SMO's information technology manager, who works at the main office in downtown Columbus, shared that enthusiasm. During the interview, he said the Internet technology enabled the SMO to bridge the geographical distances. He said he was thrilled to find out that the SMO Web site's server log files could contain information about a thousand visitors from all around the world. He provided his personal experience of how the Internet assisted a person in Venezuela:

..... For example, our Webmaster just E-mailed me an E-mail address of somebody who just signed the Web guest book who is from Venezuela. My wife is from Mexico so I speak Spanish. I was able to E-mail her back in Spanish saying we can help you.

The information manager said if it were not for the SMO's presence on the Web, the SMO would have never gotten in touch with the person. Typically, most audiences in foreign countries would never have bothered to mail a letter to the SMO, not to mention making an expensive international call. But because of the Web site and E-mail, the SMO could reach the person and communicate further. However, he does realize the inherent limitation of the Internet technology. He added:

The Web is generally accessed by people who have enough money to afford a computer. I would venture to say that most of our donors would not have access to the Web. That's because they fall into the middle class category. People who access the Web most would be either people who are young and have money to have a computer or students who may not have enough money for a computer but the school provides for them.
Notwithstanding the confined demographic of the Internet users, he said he firmly believes that the Internet opened up a new window of opportunity for the SMO to deliver its movement messages to a greater audience which otherwise would have never been contacted.

One example is Web-visitors generated information that the SMO can collect from its Web server log. He said valuable information, such as Internet protocol addresses, recorded in the logs can help the SMO to configure its message delivery scheme in a more appealing way for Web site audiences. For instance, he said a drastic increase in the number of Web site visitors during the school exam seasons and a drastic drop during the school vacation seasons signaled him that the major users of the SMO’s Web site are most likely students who are doing research projects on social issues.

The information manager said he and the Webmaster are going to develop an “Internet school packet” of pre-arranged information files that are frequently requested on the Web. “It’s going to be a great time-saver,” he said. He said the same idea might work for journalists who need quick reference on the topic they are writing about.

The Internet as a Cost-Saver

The Ohio SMO Webmaster said the SMO has been running “mass market advertising,” which includes radio and TV commercials, and newspaper and billboard advertisements. “But all of those will limit you to a very short message,” he said.
The direct mail method has been probably the most reliable way to disseminate the SMO’s message to the public. However, the Webmaster said the costs for direct mail have been prohibitively expensive. “Just stamps for a direct mail piece cost a lot, and also the labor involved with direct mail costs a lot per person,” he said. “On the Internet, on the other hand, we can put as long pieces of text as we think people would read, and the cost is very small.”

An information technology manager of the Ohio SMO was equally enthusiastic about the cost-saving feature of Internet technology. He said the maintenance cost of the SMO’s Web site is about $100 a month. “For twelve hundred dollars a year, we are able to reach a quarter of a million people. The newsletter would be significantly more expensive than that,” he said.

The Webmaster of the Ohio SMO explained that buying an advertisement in a newspaper with a circulation of 10,000, which is a typical size of small town county-based newspapers, costs about $500. The unit price for the advertisement is 5 cents per issue, he said.

“But if you take a 30-second TV commercial on prime time, it will cost about a half million dollars. You are supposed to reach about 25 million viewers and the cost is 2 cents per each viewer,” he said. In comparison, the Web site costs $100 to reach about 20,000 visitors a month, “It’s only a half a dime,” he said.

Indiana SMO’s Perception of the Internet

The third interview subject was a former president of the Indiana SMO. During the interview she expressed great skepticism about the utility of the Internet.
technology for the Indiana SMO. Contrary to the Ohio SMO’s enthusiasm in expanding the audience boundaries, she said she is not certain why the group should spend resources for distributing public education materials outside of Indiana. “Why do they (information) have to be located in Indiana while they are going to be the same all over the country?” she asked. She further stated:

What can go out nationally, a national SMO puts out. What Indiana would like to put out would be of more interest to people in Indiana. But on the Internet, we may have ten thousand hits, say in six months, but how many of those people are from Indiana? What difference does it make?

She said it is a national SMO’s task to reach the whole nation or even internationally. She said, “The Indiana SMO wants to reach the people in Indiana. If we get information to other states, other countries, that’s great too. But if you live in Ohio, you really don’t care who my congressman is. I can tell you I really don’t know who your congressman is.”

Inexpensive startup costs for the Web site were one thing, she said, but long-term maintenance costs for updating Web site content was another. She said her organization is maintained by virtually all volunteers, and hiring a Webmaster was not an option. The Indiana SMO currently has only two full-time administrative assistants in its state office, while all other cadre members work on a volunteer basis. She said the organization has not been successful finding a volunteer who wants to donate technical expertise to the SMO.

Last, she pointed out that the Internet did not appear to be the most effective communication medium for her constituents in small rural villages in Indiana. She
said, “Our county people, in their home, they don’t have a computer so they don’t care if we have a Web site or not…because they can’t get to it even if we do,” she said.

Using the Internet for Internal Communication

The fourth interview subject was the president of the Ohio SMO. The interview focused on the Ohio SMO’s use of E-mail for communicating between local chapters and the state office. “Internally, I will have to say the use of E-mail is more common than getting up and going next door or to the next office saying something,” she said. The Ohio SMO has approximately a hundred chapters, the president said. And in the past, the president had to rely on a “telephone chain alert” for urgent announcements. Now, she said, the electronic mail could be used to alert members about urgent legislative issues and mobilize a prompt reaction to the local legislators. She said the traditional method using the telephone was extremely slow since the same message has to be duplicated many times verbally on the phone. It took a long time for the message to trickle down from various local presidents to local constituents. She said, “Now it goes into the E-mail and everybody across the state gets the message, assuming you have all the parts in place. I would say 90 to 95 percent of chapters in this state have some sort of access to E-mail.”

In contrast, the Indiana SMO president said the Indiana state office does not use the Internet at all for internal communication:

Most of our chapters are not on the Internet. They don’t have access to the computer. We would have to buy them computers and teach them how to use them. And that’s not practical. There are few who have computers and have E-mail addresses but not enough.
Definition of Memberships

According to several SMO staff members’ definition, “internal” membership includes movement followers and adherents who have already belonged to the SMO’s communication network and who regularly interact with other members. Being an internal member can mean that their names are listed in the SMO’s mailing database so that they can be called to contribute volunteer service as well as receive up-to-date information about the movement issues through SMO newsletters and other publications. According to one source, internal members generally may not want to talk about the importance of their movement issues per se; rather they will talk about strategies and practical matters such as a new location for the next board meetings, drafting financial reports, planning new events, techniques for getting volunteers, and sharing success and failure stories.

On the other hand, external audiences consisted of a larger number of various kinds of public, which could be broken down into four categories: friends, opponents, “the undecided” and journalists. The friends are those who agree with the movement’s cause but have not actually identified themselves as movement members. Examples of the friends group can be members of certain religious organizations, members of political parties, and other SMO members who share the SMO’s movement goals. The opponents generally are people who belong to an SMO with an opposing view and are critical of the movement’s cause. The undecided people, or “mushy-middle” people, are the indifferent general public who are neither supportive nor against the movement issues. Interviews with SMO cadre member revealed that
the undecided public is the majority of the population and it is the primary target of
the SMO’s advertisement campaigns and education efforts.

The journalists are a quite different kind of external audience, who are less
likely to become a member or donate their time or money. However, the SMO said
maintaining a close working relationship with journalists is one of the most important
tasks of an SMO because of the crucial role that the mass media play in development
of social movements.

Summary of Findings from In-depth Interviews for Hypothesis I

In short, the findings from the in-depth interviews with key leadership
members of the two SMOs provided further support for the first hypothesis. Internet
technology seemed to have made a profound difference on ways that the Ohio SMO
communicates with its internal and external audience. Although the Ohio leaders
could not substantiate their enthusiasm and expectation with any quantitative data,
several anecdotal accounts and individual perceptions about the emerging new
technology seem clearly to indicate that the Ohio SMO is greatly satisfied with its
Internet use. They gave examples of how the Internet helped them save time and
expand their audience boundaries internationally. From the perspective of the Indiana
SMO, the effectiveness of the Internet as a communication vehicle is still under
suspicion. The Indiana SMO’s former president feels that the Internet has not
penetrated to the grassroots population in rural villages in Indiana. The Indiana SMO
also was not convinced that as a local organization, the Indiana SMO should invest its
financial resources to make public education materials available on the Web site. The
lack of volunteers with technical expertise was one of the reasons the Indiana SMO did not start using the Internet.

The first hypothesis expected that an SMO utilizing the Internet would spend fewer resources to communicate with internal and external audiences. The Ohio SMO’s cadre members appear to agree with the hypothesis very strongly. Their perceptions also appear to be consistent with the finding from the cost analysis, which displayed a gradual decline in communication costs of the SMO with Internet over three years.

Hypotheses 2 and 3

H2: Compared to SMOs without the Internet, SMOs utilizing the Internet will be more frequently mentioned as news sources by journalists.

H3: Compared to SMOs without the Internet, the news coverage on SMOs utilizing the Internet will be more favorable.

The second and third hypotheses expected that the Internet technology would help an SMO attract more and better media coverage because the Internet technology supposedly can relieve existing structural and organizational constraints in the newsrooms. Technological innovations of the Internet, such as the low cost of message reproduction and delivery supposedly provide journalists with better tools for reporting social movements. Specifically, the second hypothesis expected that the name of an SMO using the Internet would appear in news media more frequently than the SMO without the Internet. The third hypothesis expected that the SMO using the
Internet would receive more favorable coverage than the SMO without the Internet. The independent variable in this hypothesis is the SMO's use of the Internet when the SMO communicates with mainstream newspaper reporters who regularly cover movement issues and legislative procedures in the statehouse and court systems. The dependent variables are the frequency of incidence that the SMO's name appears in newspaper articles on social movement issues, and the presence of a favorable news frame on the movement issues.

Frequency of SMO's Name Attribution

The data generated from content analysis found only partial support for the second hypothesis and failed to support the third hypothesis. The content analysis examined only the staff-written hard news stories about the movement issue. All wire service stories, letters to the editor, opinion columns and news briefs were omitted from the analysis. Table 4.8 indicates that the Indiana SMO's name was mentioned in 10 percent, four of 35 stories, of the total movement-related stories published in The Indianapolis Star. The Ohio SMO's name appeared in 19 percent, or five of 26 stories, in The Columbus Dispatch (see Figure 4.6). Despite the overall low rate of appearance, the Dispatch stories attributed the Ohio SMO's name more frequently as a source than the Indiana newspaper did. The reason for such a low frequency of the appearance of an SMO's name will be discussed in the next section.

As for the journalists' framing of the SMO's position, Table 4.8 shows that both newspapers maintained a predominantly neutral position in movement coverage.
Figure 4.7 shows that 84 percent of the Star stories maintained a neutral position, while 70 percent of the Dispatch stories maintained a neutral position (see Figure 4.8).

In-depth Interviews

The in-depth interviewing method was employed to supplement the data generated from the content analysis. It is the expectation stated in the second hypothesis that the Internet can help better accommodate journalists’ information needs. Theoretically speaking, the Internet technology may relieve journalists’ organizational constraints by providing easier access to powerful research databases and inexpensive communication with sources around the world on electronic mail.

Two journalists with The Indianapolis Star and The Columbus Dispatch were selected to be interviewed. They were chosen because of their extensive journalistic experience with covering the particular social movement under examination in this study. Also, they appear to have a lot of experience in covering controversial social and political conflicts that usually take place in the state legislature and court systems. The Indianapolis Star reporter wrote 12 stories, or 30 percent, on the movement subject of all stories published in 1995, while The Columbus Dispatch reporter wrote 14 stories, or 53 percent, about the same movement issue while she was covering the Ohio statehouse.

Indiana Journalist Interview

The first interview subject was The Indianapolis Star reporter who has been employed for seven years. The interview was conducted over telephone and lasted about 45 minutes. In 1995, she was a statehouse reporter covering various hotly
contested legislative issues, including the issues that the SMOs in the current study were both heavily involved with. The Indiana journalist said neither her newspaper nor the SMO had Internet access five years ago. The primary means of communication was basically fax and telephone. “And of course,” she added, “good old face-to-face interviews, that’s the best way to do stories.”

One of her stories about the movement included various comments from experts in Mississippi, Ohio and Kentucky. When asked about how she developed those sources from in and out of Indiana, she said she used the Yellow Pages directory and called relevant offices and businesses in those states to get comments. If she couldn’t find the right person in that state, she would call public information officers in headquarters in Washington D.C. for further referrals.

The Indiana journalist said the ability to find a reputable source for the story is a very important journalistic skill. She said a social movement often involves volatile issues and there would be people on both sides acting as spokespeople.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COVERAGE</th>
<th>Indianapolis Star Stories (n=39)</th>
<th>Columbus Dispatch Stories (n=26)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The SMO’s name not mentioned</td>
<td>35 90%</td>
<td>21 81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The SMO’s name mentioned</td>
<td>4 10%</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39 100%</td>
<td>26 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favoritism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Favorable to the SMO side</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
<td>3 11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Favorable to the SMO’s opponents</td>
<td>3 8%</td>
<td>5 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Neutral viewpoint</td>
<td>33 84%</td>
<td>18 70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39 100%</td>
<td>26 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewpoint</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The SMO is <em>gaining</em> social support</td>
<td>21 54%</td>
<td>11 42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The SMO is losing social support</td>
<td>5 13%</td>
<td>2 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Indeterminate</td>
<td>13 33%</td>
<td>13 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39 100%</td>
<td>26 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Legislative process</td>
<td>23 59%</td>
<td>17 65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Political candidate’s position</td>
<td>3 7.5%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Feature story on personal hardship</td>
<td>1 2.5%</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Protestors’ controversial strategy</td>
<td>0 0%</td>
<td>4 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Others</td>
<td>12 31%</td>
<td>5 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>39 100%</td>
<td>26 100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Comparison of data from two newspapers coverage of SMOs
Figure 4.6: Comparison of frequency Indiana and Ohio SMOs’ names appeared in the movement-related stories in two newspapers
Indianapolis Star

8%
8%
84%

Favorable to SMO
Favorable to opponents
Neutral

Figure 4.7: Indianapolis newspaper’s slant toward the social movement

Columbus Dispatch

19%
11%
70%

Favorable to SMO
Favorable to opponents
Neutral

Figure 4.8: Ohio newspaper’s slant toward the social movement
She said oftentimes a successful movement group hires its lobbyist to influence the state legislative process. In her experience of covering the social movement issue in the legislature, she often relied on a lobbyist from the movement group for comments, especially under a close deadline. The Indiana journalist said:

You know, covering state government is very high speed and very crazy. Sometimes, I try to call just one person and try to get a response. That's not to say someone else wouldn't have a chance. We always try to quote the other side.

Even if the Indiana SMO had the Internet capability, she said she would still prefer doing interviews using traditional media. The Indiana journalist said:

......If you need a quote about specific issues, using the Web site is not going to help you. Their Web site may not have anything on it specifically about what you are writing story about. It's just a bunch of information on how to contact them. You really need to talk to a person in order to get a quote when the quote is fresh, like the next day.

For instance, they may not update information about what happened in the legislature at 11 p.m. They may not have a quote. If I cover something that happened between 11 and 11:30 at night, I am not going to jump on to the Web site, running around looking for information because there is not going to be a quote there for me. I better get on the phone and call someone.

The Indiana journalist said she likes to report in the “old fashioned way.” When she gets on the Internet, she said she had to deal with “a bunch of computer buttons to push” and loses a “human touch.” She said she always tries to capture “the mood of the event,” such as tension among the state legislators and their exhausted
faces. The best way to capture spontaneous reactions from sources is, she said, through the face-to-face interview and participant observation.

The Indiana journalist said the Internet is a very powerful "research tool" for the background of issues or even for finding previous stories from other newspapers. At the same time, the Internet does not seem to be an effective interviewing communication tool, she said. With the Internet, she said, she cannot fully absorb the information from her source. She said the source is the most crucial ingredient in journalistic reporting since a source often decides the dominant theme of the story depending on what he or she says or refuses to say. She said a reporter’s preconceived framework often times needed to be modified if the sources express different positions.

In summary, the interview with the Indiana journalist revealed that the Internet is perceived as a useful research tool for journalists, however, it is difficult to determine that the SMO’s use of the Internet technology has made any significant impact on the way journalists cover the social movement. The Indiana journalist stated in the interview that she feels that the computer-based communication technology Internet has not made really significant changes to journalists’ use of intimate and synchronous means of communication, such as telephone or face-to-face conversation for information gathering and interviewing.

Ohio Newspaper Interview

Another interview was conducted with a statehouse reporter at The Columbus Dispatch. The reporter has been with the newspaper for 12 years, and at the time of
interview, it has been the fifth year she has been covering the Ohio statehouse. My interview followed basically identical format and method as the one with the Indiana reporter. The interview was conducted over the telephone, and it lasted about 45 minutes. The entire interview was recorded with the permission from the subject.

The Ohio journalist said the Ohio SMO had full Internet technology in 1995, however, only occasions did she actually used the Internet for miscellaneous correspondence with the SMO's communication director on E-mail. Although not frequently, she requested information or asked informal questions via E-mail, she said. But as far as she can recall, the Ohio SMO never aggressively utilized its Web site to influence her coverage or directed her to visit other Web sites that they might help the group's efforts.

The Ohio journalist said any information she received via E-mail was informal and "off the record." Information she had used for the stories was gathered by traditional face-to-face interviews or telephone interview with sources or some printed reference materials they provided.

In addition, she said, it seemed that it was rather the Ohio SMO's opposition group that more aggressively used its Web site to influence the media. In one case, the opposition group contacted her to visit its Web site containing public opinion poll data. The poll results showed the American public supported of the group's position, and she judged that it was the group's attempt to pass her information that might help legitimize the movement's cause.
She said that the Web site content is as good or reputable as the hosting organizations are. She said she feels definitely more comfortable using materials from independent research institutions or foundations. She said:

If you can find people that just collect the data, different government groups like the Center for Disease Control, I am pretty comfortable with stuff they provide....Sometimes they (sources) are more conservative or more liberal or whatever...which is fine. You try to make sure you balance with the group that is the other way.

Also, to obtain some better insights, she would also try to find researchers and professors in major universities that have done studies in particular areas. For instance, she said, she routinely uses the Web site of the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL) based in Denver, Colorado. The NCSL gives her a national perspective on what other states have done about particular issues, such as charter schools or trigger locks, she said.

NCSL has a website which has real interesting articles, kind of let you know what the trends are and things like that. Because once it happens in one state, it is happening everywhere. Nothing is new here. You can find out about a lot of stuff and see how predictable everything is.

She added that in some cases, she finds some clues from the Web sites on what kind of source she might be looking for. “You look to see what other people have written and whom they are quoting, whom they are finding, so-called experts in the field,” she said.

The Internet, she said, is a wonderful research tool. She said she has bookmarked a number of Web sites on her computer. “I am interested in children’s
issues a lot. So I check a Children’s Defense Fund Web site frequently to see what issues they are talking about. Same is true with a charter school movement. There is some charter school Web sites that I will check.” She said:

I have bookmarks on all these issues in my computer at work, and I just bookmark decent organizations so that I can easily check their Web sites a couple of times a week. You almost kind of use it as a clip service or referral service. Just trying get things in my head and trying to keep up with things, just like a clip service, you know.

Public relations firms are one of the most aggressive users of the Internet, she said. She said she receives E-mail messages several times a week from a local hospital association that contain embedded hyper links to various newspaper articles written about the association or area of interest. She said the newspaper coverage on the group by some reputable national and international media greatly enhances the reputation and credibility of the group.

On the other hand, the Internet made it a lot easier for journalists to monitor what their competitors are reporting. She said she has bookmarked a lot of the big newspapers’ Web sites in Ohio. “It helps you keep up with stuff. It helps you feel like you are more plugged in, a little easier way,” she said.

Prior to the Internet, she used to rely on a clip service provided by the Ohio governor’s office, or she would make a telephone “roll call.” Now with the Internet, she said, “It just seems that there are more things you know about, making everything smaller and closer.” She said she feels as though she did not know about so many different groups before the Internet. “I mean, I definitely call more national organizations now than before,” she said.
She said this convenience could mean that an SMO that has a Web site may have a better chance to get some interview phone calls from the reporters covering that area of interest. She said she often uses the Web site as a starting point and makes telephone calls to the organization. The Ohio journalist likened having a good Web site presence to having a good PR person.

Just like anything else, it's easier for you to make yourself known. You know a company that has a good PR person is going to maybe get more publicity or better publicity or whatever they are after. Where the company that has none, you know, isn't.

She said the Internet is a valuable tool for reporters who face journalistic constraints such as deadline pressure and a limited amount of time for conducting background research on a reporting subject. She said:

You know, reporters have so much time, so if there is an organization that makes themselves known to you through whatever means including a Web site.... More and more reporters are doing research just like any other businessperson.... at their desk. So the easier it is to find out about something and you get access to something, the more likely you are going to use it.

Nevertheless, as a journalist, she is usually skeptical of less-known grassroots groups even if they have a Web presence. “You need to be careful and make sure the Web sites are who you think they are,” she said. “I don’t really deal with individual Web sites. I tend to deal with more organizations.” She said:
If the National Association of Charter Schools tells me there are two hundred charter schools operating in the United States this year, well, OK, you know, you take their word for it. But if some individuals out there saying there were 20 million partial birth abortions done, you know, I would tend to call Center for Disease Control or something like that. You have to kind of consider the source.

Unless it is an organization she is familiar with, she said she would remain skeptical about any individual source on the Web. “But I wouldn’t hesitate to call any organization on the Internet that looked interesting. But if I can’t contact them then I can’t use it,” she said.

She said questionable credibility and accuracy of Web site content often causes a problem for journalists who are spending time on the Internet searching for an answer. She said, “You gotta be careful, I mean, anybody can put anything. It could be easier to say things enough so people take it as true. So you have to be really careful that you don’t eventually start believing all these stuff.” She said, “I don’t think I would take anything off from the Drudge report or something like that. That kind of stuff, you can’t use it for story. You have to kind of be careful because there is a lot of garbage out there, really a lot of garbage out on the Internet.”

In general, she said she has a mixed feeling about the Internet. While the Internet provides reporters with fast and easy access to reputable sources, searching for specific answers on the Internet can be time-consuming. “I mean sometimes you spend so much time reading through crap. Or anytime you go on Internet, it’s like you start out doing this, and next thing you know is you are buying clothes for your kids. You know, you just kind of wander. So it’s pretty distracting too.” She said, “That’s why it is a kind of double-edged sword because it can monopolize a ton of your time.
Just like any time you log on, you can sit there forever and wander and not really get to do what you wanted to do.”

Summary of Interviews

The views expressed by the Ohio journalist had some contrasts and similarities with the view of the Indiana journalist. It seemed the Ohio journalist was more well versed with the Internet than the Indiana journalist and was able to elaborate on various aspects of advantages and shortcomings of the Internet. While her journalistic principles, such as skepticism over unknown sources, is consistent with the Indiana journalist, the Ohio journalist expressed more interest in contacting and perhaps using sources located on Internet after the verification. She defined the Internet as an additional window of opportunity for those who are attempting to attract reporters’ attention. She pointed out that an SMO with Internet presence might have a better chance to get an interview request than an SMO without the Internet. She said that an SMO’s Web site would not be a direct source of information; instead, it can at least be a starting point for reporters to conduct further interviews.

Also, she emphasized the potential impact of PR firms or interest groups that supply a constant flow of information to reporters via the Internet. She said a reporter covering a special beat constantly tries to stay abreast on the various issues, and the Internet changed her way of conducting background research and browsing for potential story ideas. Another advantage of the Internet is that it made it easier for her to monitor news coverage of several competing newspapers around Ohio. Compared
to conventional clip services or fax press releases, the Internet facilitates faster, cheaper and easier ways to search, retrieve and store the information.

In summary, the interview indicated that the journalists have maintained the same journalistic values when they were reporting about the movement with the help of the Internet. Based on their opinion, it is probably true that traditionally unpopular groups or unknown groups would still face the same skepticism and distrust from the journalist regardless of the Internet use. The journalists would still make telephone calls to confirm the accuracy of the information the SMO is trying to deliver on the Internet. The journalists will also check whether the group is trying to manipulate the media to serve the group’s interests. Both journalists interviewed expressed their concerns about dealing with “invisible” sources on the Internet. It seems journalists are as stringent about background verification on the sources on the Internet as other sources “off-line,” if not more. In other words, reporters’ traditional journalistic values, news judgment and accumulated knowledge on the reporting subject would still determine the coverage. Journalists may “know” about an SMO on the Internet, but may not “trust” the medium enough to seek an interview and use it in a story. Conversely, the sources that already enjoy credibility appear to benefit from Internet, thus bolstering their pre-existing advantages.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Theoretical Framework

This study has applied resource mobilization (RM) theory to define the significance of Internet communication technology in social movements. RM theory posited that success and failure of social movements are largely dependent upon SMOs’ structurally differentiated access to social resources (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977:250). Similarly, McCarthy and Zald (1977) stressed that the primary focus of RM theory is on how a social movement organization emerges, develops, and goes about surviving within its structural constraints.

Applying the RM framework, this study explored several implications of the Internet communication technology in social movement organizations’ resource mobilization efforts. Also, this thesis put a special emphasis on functions of communication strategies and tactics in social movements. Fundamentally, it was posited that the better the movement group communicates with its prospective stakeholders and financial donors, the more successful the movement will be. Social movement scholars have found that an SMO’s capacity of developing and expanding
its constituent basis is confined by several structural and socio-economic constraints. Of those constraints, this study focused on communication costs and mainstream media bias and critically examined how a newly introduced communication technology helped alleviate those constraints.

From a technological perspective, the Internet is supposedly a quicker, cheaper and better way to communicate, and a number of existing studies on the Internet pointed out that such technology might relieve an SMO’s communication constraints (Boncheck, 1996; Li, 1990). Such a claim has a seductive charm but rarely has been substantiated with empirical data. The purpose of this study was to locate empirical evidence to verify that claim. While there are a number of outcome-based, anecdotal case studies focused on individual SMO’s, a systematic and comparative analysis of the impact of the Internet on SMO’s is relatively rare.

This study asked: How has Internet technology influenced the ways in which an SMO communicates with internal and external audiences? How has the Internet influenced the ways in which journalists cover social movements? Have journalistic routines been altered by an SMO’s Internet use?

Implications of the Findings

In this study, the data clearly demonstrated that the communication costs of the two SMOs have differentially changed over a period of time. The communication costs of the Ohio SMO (utilizing the Internet) have decreased constantly over a three-year period whereas the costs of the Indiana SMO (without the Internet) showed inconsistent fluctuation over a four-year period. Most important, the Indiana SMO’s
proportional communication costs have been on the rise over time, while the Ohio SMO’s costs have significantly declined. Both SMOs’ communication costs were calculated in proportion to each group’s total organizational expenditures.

The study also found that the name of the SMO using the Internet appeared more frequently in the newspaper than the SMO without the Internet. The content analysis examined staff-written news stories dealing with social movement issues from The Indianapolis Star and The Columbus Dispatch. As for the journalists’ framing bias on the movement issue, the study showed that both newspapers maintained predominantly a neutral position in the movement coverage.

The data suggest a partial but meaningful effect of the Internet communication technology. Based on findings in this study, the following hypotheses are constructed for future projects.

An SMO’s Internet use has made no significant impact on journalists’ news judgments and ways they validate their sources for stories. It appears that a traditional journalistic norm is being applied, regardless of kinds of communication technologies being used.

HYPOTHESIS: An SMO promoting an unpopular ideology or critical of the existing power structure of society will be ignored by mainstream journalists, regardless of the SMO’s Internet use.

Also, the in-depth interviews with journalists indicated that an SMO that utilizes the Internet to deliver a consistently credible, up-to-date information package
on the subject the reporter specializes in, has a better chance to be chosen as a source than an SMO without the Internet.

HYPOTHESIS: An SMO advocating the interests of constituents with higher socio-economic status and higher education level will more likely be able to use the Internet as a public relations vehicle to attract media coverage than an SMO with lower SES constituents.

As for the Internet’s function as a communication vehicle for an SMO, the interviews with leadership and cadre members of the SMO with the Internet showed more enthusiasm toward communicating with audiences from different states and with different nationalities than an SMO without the Internet.

HYPOTHESIS: An SMO advocating interests of multiple states or international constituents would be more likely to adopt the Internet than an SMO with only local constituents.

In general, the findings in this study laid groundwork that may lead us into more specific follow-up research questions: Would it have been possible for the Ohio SMO to achieve the decreased communication costs without the Internet use? In other words, *is the Internet a cost-saver?* Is Internet use a necessary condition for decreased communication cost? Most importantly, if not, what else would the factors be? More strictly controlled longitudinal observation of an SMO’s communication activities might yield useful data to address these questions.

In addition, a specific study can be conducted to explain the dramatic drop (57 percent) of postage/shipping costs of the Ohio SMO and relatively less dramatic
change in the Indiana SMO’s postage/shipping costs (23 percent decrease).

Hypothetically speaking, could this trend imply an SMO’s Internet use would help reduce postage/shipping cost more than the other costs? Could this be an indication that the SMO’s Internet use would have more effect on postage/shipping costs than the other costs? Does this cost trend accurately suggest the SMO’s staff is using the Internet instead of the postal service?

All of those questions are difficult to be addressed empirically, mainly because of an absence of accurate indicators that can measure an actual impact of new communication technology.

Limitation of Research Methods

In this study, the following considerations were made in order to control for the different social settings of the two SMOs.

1) A pair of comparable SMOs that shared the same movement agenda were chosen

2) Two SMOs that were based in Midwestern states and shared similar political atmosphere, community structure and industry types

3) Two SMOs that had equally powerful political and social influences

4) Both SMOs covered by two state capital newspapers with similar circulation size and run by family-own companies.

5) Used a standardized IRS Form 990, an income tax report form for tax-exempted organizations.
Nevertheless, this study was limited by some constraints such as: (1) unknown membership/audience size; (2) missing or collapsed costs categories in IRS Forms 990 (i.e. regular 990 vs. 990EZ); and (3) unknown degree of SMO’s Internet use.

This study used financial cost as the indicator primarily because it is the only aspect of communication impact that can be enumerated. However, this is not to say the financial cost alone can paint the entire picture. Other important, although less feasible indicators would be: How much work time the SMOs saved because of the Internet, and how many more people they were able to contact and how many of them were new faces, and how many of them actually signed up as members and contributed money and their services.

Risky Factors

The design of this study could not adequately distinguish the Internet’s function as an SMO’s “internal” and “external” communication channel. I have come to realize that sorting out such distinctions from the SMO’s ongoing communication process was nearly an impossible task. For example, neither SMO has been keeping track of its expenses in terms of internal and external audiences. Other than using participant observation methods, it would be virtually impossible to locate records on the number of Xerox copies the SMOs have made, the number of postage stamp the SMOs used and the number of phone calls the SMOs made per year.

Another limitation this study suffered was that neither SMO has maintained an accurate estimate of membership size, and consequently, communication cost per individual member could not be calculated. As a result, this study had to assume that
the SMOs’ membership sizes would remain constant as their communication costs changed over time.

Although there was a weakness in this design, the design’s benefits outweighed its weaknesses. Although it sacrificed internal validity, this comparative method seemed most suitable and feasible when the investigator wanted to make a systematic comparison, rather than single-case historical research.

Contributions of Qualitative Data

The qualitative data generated by several in-depth interviews with cadre members of the two SMOs compensated for several major shortcomings of the study. Without conducting in-depth interviews, it would not have been possible to learn about an SMO staff member’s “perception” toward the Internet and other technological innovation in general. The presidents of both SMOs explained that their organizational structures were not system of centralized management. In fact, the SMO’s structure was developed almost in the opposite direction from a corporate tree-branches structure, according to the president of Indiana SMO. These organizations have grown from “bottom-up.” That is why most of county chapters are financially autonomous and the state’s central office does not have any means to get accurate reports on membership size. The president of Indiana SMO said:

They (counties) pay the expenses, and they get to keep the income. Each county buys what they think they need..... Well, you have to remember I had to drive from my house to here. It’s four-and-a-half hour drive. If one office tries to say this is what you need and this is what you are getting, it just doesn’t work.
Also, you are working with volunteers. And you’re not going out to people and say you have to do this because we’re paying you to do it. These are people who say well, I think I wanna help. So we can’t be boss here. We’re not boss here. They are the bosses, and we do what they want us to do. We are not top-down organization, we are from bottom-up. So it’s a lot of people from the country who make up states and they are bosses. We’re not their bosses.

We also have big cities like Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, and areas near Chicago, very city, very urban. You also have places very rural. What you need in rural areas is different than what you need in urban areas. So to centralize it would be to decrease effectiveness.

In other words, much of the movement activities of both SMOs are taking place at the county level rather than the state level. She said the SMO’s state office is “nothing more than some of the county people coming together.” That explains why there was such little necessity for the leadership to keep track of statewide membership size.

Content Analysis

While the content analysis results revealed that the Ohio newspaper mentioned the SMO’s name more frequently as a source than the Indiana newspaper did, the overall frequency of the SMO’s name attribution seemed low and diminished the effect of the results.

Such a low frequency of attribution of the SMO’s name might be due to the fact that a majority of stories used in the content analysis mostly dealt with a debate on a passage of a legislative bill that was favorable to the SMO side. The data presented in Table 4.8 supported that claim, with only 13 percent of Indiana newspaper stories
and 8 percent of Ohio newspaper stories reporting that the SMO was on the losing side of the game.

Following journalistic routine, journalists who wrote those stories tried to balance the story with some quotes from the SMO opponents’ side. As a result, the content analysis showed that the overall treatment of the movement issue appeared to be well balanced, without favoritism toward either side of the movement. Table 4.8 showed that 84 percent of the Indiana newspaper stories maintained neutral positions, while 70 percent of the Ohio newspaper stories maintained neutral position (see also Figures 4.7 and 4.8).

Conclusion

In social movements, resources are indispensable for movement formation, survival, and success. And as we live in an “Information Society,” mobilizing those resources requires quite sophisticated communication strategies and tactics. The Internet, like any other technology, was invented to advance human life and communication. As Internet advocate claims, the Internet appeared to be a cheaper, faster, and better communication tool than conventional technologies. The results of this study suggest that the Internet indeed had a positive impact on the SMO. Cadre members of an SMO with the Internet showed great enthusiasm toward communicating with audiences from different states and with different nationalities. Communication costs of the SMO with the Internet have declined over the years. However, an SMO’s Internet use has had no significant impact on the journalist’s news judgments and the way the journalists validating their sources for stories. It
appeared to be a traditional journalistic norm has been applied regardless of communication format. Finally, we are not yet in a position to evaluate fully the merits of the Internet. While the data presented in this thesis suggest that we may be witnessing a profound change in the communication structure of SMO, more longitudinal studies on a broader variety of SMOs, such as virtual movement organizations, would also be beneficial in expanding this body of knowledge.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A

CODING INSTRUCTIONS
Before you begin coding, please read this coding instruction carefully and fully familiarize yourself with the categories. Please follow instructions strictly. Do not assume anything. If you have any questions, please ask the investigator for clarifications.

Using the “Coding Sheet” code the following items for each story. For each item, write the number of the appropriate code on the line provided in the right-hand column. Please refer to this codebook for detailed definitions of the codes. Thank you for the cooperation.

1. **Publication:** Use the one-digit code assigned to the newspaper.
   
   1. The Indianapolis Star
   2. The Columbus Dispatch

2. **Date of the story:** Record the month, day and year of the publication. Use two-digits for each. For example, April 7, 2000 would be: 04/07/00

3. **Page number and section:** Record the page number (in two digits) and section names that the story appeared on. This appears on the top of the story.

4. **Reporter:** This refers to the author(s) of the story. Record the name(s) of the author on the line provided.

5. **Sources:** Please read the story carefully to identify whether the story mentioned the name of specific social movement organization. Be careful because there will be similar organizations with similar names and share the same views. Please pay a special attention to the name of organization. If SMO’s name was mentioned more than once, still check for number two.
   
   1. SMO’s name was not mentioned
   2. SMO’s name was mentioned
6. **Viewpoint of the story:** Generally speaking, did the story report the SMO’s gain or loss? If the story contains not enough information, record it “indeterminate.”

   1. The SMO side is gaining social and political supports
   2. The SMO side is losing social and political supports
   3. Indeterminate

7. **Favoritism in the story:** In your view, did the story cover the SMO’s position fairly and accurately? Did you find the story have favorable angle toward the SMO or toward its opponent groups?

   1. The story is favorable to the SMO side
   2. The story is favorable to the SMO’s opponents
   3. The story maintains a neutral viewpoint

8. **Subject of the story:** Determine the central issue contained in the story and record. If the subject doesn’t fit the categories, code it “5” and specify the subject on the line provided in the coding sheet.

   1. Legislative process in the statehouse
   2. Political candidates’ position on issue
   3. Feature story portraying the person’s hardship
   4. Protestors’ controversial strategy and tactic
   5. Others
APPENDIX B

CODING SHEET
1. Publication .................................................................

2. Date of the story ............................................. __/__/__

3. Page number and section ........................................ ____/__

4. Reporter (name): ________________________________

5. Sources:  
   1. SMO’s name was not mentioned
   2. SMO’s name was mentioned

6. Viewpoint of the story:  
   1. SMO is gaining social supports
   2. SMO is losing social supports
   3. Indeterminate

7. Favoritism in the story:  
   1. The story is favorable to the SMO side
   2. The story is favorable to the SMO’s opponents
   3. The story maintains a neutral viewpoint

8. Subject of the story:  
   1. Legislative process in the statehouse
   2. Political candidates’ position on issue
   3. Feature story portraying the person’s hardship
   4. Protestors’ controversial strategy and tactics
   5. Others (specify) ___________________________
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

JOURNALISTS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:
JOURNALISTS

1. How long have you been with your newspaper?

2. How long did you cover the movement issues?

3. How did you go about gathering information for your story?

4. Who were the sources you used in these stories (social status and affiliation)?

5. How did you determine which sources you would use and not to use?

6. How did you develop rapport with your sources?

7. Did you find some sources to be more cooperative than others?

8. Did you have any of the sources tried to influence or manipulate how you covered the story? If so how did you respond?

9. When you were covering the movement, did any organizational constraints, such as deadlines, and such affect your reporting capability?

10. What are your general impressions about the Internet technology?

11. Do you believe journalist might contact an SMO more often if it has Internet?
12. Do you believe an SMO’s Internet use might influence journalist’s source validation standard?

13. Ultimately, an SMO’s Internet use might result in more favorable coverage?

14. What do you think the greatest impact of the Internet on journalism?
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

SMO PRESIDENTS/CADRE MEMBERS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:
SMO PRESIDENTS/CADRE MEMBERS

1. How big is the size of staff and membership?

2. Do you regularly send out any publications to members? How big is the size of organization’s publications?

3. What about a number of events and movement activities?

4. Where could I find out about how much resources, how much time, and budget have been spent for communication?

5. In a year, how often does your organization coordinate legislative efforts?

6. Do you have a media relations person? Who speaks to the media? If not, how do you deal with media?

7. Have you created a media event to attract media publicity?

8. Did mainstream media ever distort your movement’s image?

9. How do you recruit members? Funds?

10. Have you bought any TV or radio advertisements? Billboards advertisements?

11. You have been in leadership role and cadre member… so based on your personal observation, any influence by the Internet?
12. In the beginning, what was position of your leadership members toward the Internet? What were anticipated the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet?

13. How many of your members have an access to the Internet?

14. Do you know the name of reporter who frequently covers your organization?