TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS AND INFORMATION POLITICS:
INGOS AND THE COLLABORATION FOR FREE SPEECH IN CUBA

A Dissertation in
Mass Communications

by
Katharine R. Allen

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The dissertation of Katharine R. Allen was reviewed and approved* by the following:

John S. Nichols  
Professor Emeritus, Communications and International Affairs  
Dissertation Advisor  
Chair of Committee

Martin Halstuk  
Associate Professor of Journalism

Amit M. Schejter  
Associate Professor of Telecommunications

Sophia A. McClennen  
Professor of Comparative Literature, Spanish and Women’s Studies  
Affiliate Faculty, School of International Affairs

Ford Risley  
Professor of Journalism  
Interim Associate Dean for Graduate Studies and Research

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School
ABSTRACT

Bringing the Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN) theory into the world of digital activism, this project explores how international nongovernmental organizational (INGOs) members of a TAN use social media to interact with local activists in their advocacy for freedom of speech in Cuba. On a more critical level, the research analyzes the INGOs’ role as information gatekeepers, identifying and measuring the extent to which INGOs self-select the information they receive and share through social media. To evaluate the questions, the degree to which information is disseminated through INGO social media advocacy campaigns reflects the informational content and local agenda of Cuban activists—here represented by Yoani Sánchez and her blog Generación Y (GenY)—is examined. Although the research provides a statistical summary of INGO social media use, for descriptive depth, the exploration is deeper than a mechanistic assessment of Tweets and posts, analyzing the actual information and content disseminated by INGOs through social media.

This study includes a descriptive typology of social media used in today’s INGO advocacy campaigns and a comprehensive, holistic examination of the state of freedom of speech in Cuba. While each of the latter is of secondary importance, they are necessary to provide technological and ideological context for the study. Ideological variations in conceptualizations of freedom of speech and expression are delineated, not only for context, but also to provide a greater transparency in the research, given the potential for latent or implicit biases in cross-cultural studies.

The social media content of GenY and the select INGOs provided rich data. Data were collected from multiple sources during three separate bounded time frames to
provide triangulation and strengthen the validity of the research (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2003). Data revealed overall patterns that were supported by in-depth “snapshots” of INGO dissemination of GenY information.

Under the theoretical umbrella of TAN information politics, a mixed-methods approach was applied. Five sets of data were collected and analyzed: a numerical analysis of relative social media output, a qualitative comparative analysis of all GenY and INGO social media content for five year period, an in-depth “snapshot” qualitative analysis of GenY blog and Twitter output and corresponding INGO activity, a “snapshot” statistical analysis of INGO social media content relating to Cuba. Lastly, personal interviews with leading staff members of three of the six INGOs were conducted and synthesized to provide insight from the INGOs’ perspective.

Results reveal a significant disconnect between the local and the global. Specifically, the INGOs self-select the information on Cuba that they receive and share through social media, in effect “cherry-picking” the information they utilize in compiling position papers and annual indices, which consistently rank Cuba as one of the lowest of the low in terms of freedom of expression. The results call for a re-examination of the credibility of such reports given the profound foreign policy influence that is wielded INGOs, especially in light of the fragile beginning of normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF TABLES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIST OF FIGURES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Media and Transnational Sociopolitical Activism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploring the “Hows” of Social Media</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 2 RELEVANT LITERATURE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminal Theories of Communications and International Relations</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitanism</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmopolitan critiques</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Global Civil Society as Cosmopolitanism</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Movement Theory</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic social movement theories</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New social movements</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational Advocacy Theory: A “New” Social Movement Theory</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing Social and Political Movements</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castells’ network society</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A brief word on network analysis</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy INGOs</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information politics, INGOs, and gatekeeping</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatekeeping</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER 3 CUBA</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Freedom of Expression Outside the Liberal Paradigm</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideologies of freedom of expression</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Freedom of expression in Cuba and the United States ..................................51
A History of Freedom of Speech in Cuba .........................................................51
  The colonial era ..........................................................................................52
  The imperial era .........................................................................................54
  Castro .............................................................................................................55
Contemporary Restrictions on Speech and the Internet in Cuba ..................57
  Legal restrictions ..........................................................................................57
  Informal social restrictions .........................................................................59
  Control over information and technology ..................................................61
A Legacy of Cuban Activism ........................................................................65
  Jose Martí .......................................................................................................65
  Herberto Padilla ...........................................................................................66
  Oswaldo Payá and the Valera Project ...........................................................67
  Porno Para Ricardo: The Cuban punk activist movement .........................68
  El Sexto: Graffiti for freedom .....................................................................70
  Yoani Sánchez and La Generación Y ...........................................................76

CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ..............................80
  The Argument for a Case Study ..................................................................80
  Defining the Case Study .............................................................................82
  Types of Case Studies .................................................................................85
  Multiple Case Study Methodology and Protocol .......................................89
  Methodology .................................................................................................91
    Research questions .....................................................................................91
    Units of analyses .......................................................................................92
    Data collection ...........................................................................................94
    Data measurement and analysis ...............................................................95

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ...............................................105
  Research Tools and Objectives ..................................................................105
  Use of Social Media in Freedom of Speech INGOs’ Advocacy ..................105
  The Local Within the Global .....................................................................117
    GenY’s inclusion in a free speech transnational advocacy network .........117
    Extent to which INGO social media represents the voice of GenY .......118
Summary of Results and Conclusions ................................................................. 156

CHAPTER 7 IMPLICATIONS, TRAJECTORIES, AND CONCLUDING
THOUGHTS........................................................................................................ 159
Limitations ......................................................................................................... 161
  Practical limitations ...................................................................................... 161
  Methodological limitations ............................................................................ 163
Implications ........................................................................................................ 168
  Theoretical implications .............................................................................. 168
  Practical implications .................................................................................... 169
Research Trajectories ...................................................................................... 171
Concluding Thoughts ....................................................................................... 173

REFERENCES .................................................................................................... 176

APPENDIX A: YOANI SANCHEZ BLOG INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT
OBAMA .............................................................................................................. 208

APPENDIX B: INGO VERBATIM REFERENCES .................................................. 211

APPENDIX C: CORRELATIVE INFORMATION ................................................... 216
  Article 19: ..................................................................................................... 218
  Committee to Protect Journalists: ................................................................. 218
  Freedom House ............................................................................................. 224
  Reporters Without Borders ........................................................................... 227
  Generación Y, a blog by Havana-based Yoani Sánchez ............................... 230

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW CODING ................................................................. 231
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1  Six Factors of Added Value Theory .................................................................27

Table 2  Total Posts to RSS Feeds and Blogs from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014 ..................................................................................................................105

Table 3  Total Tweets from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014 ..........................105

Table 4  URLs Collected Between November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013 ..................138

Table 5  Text Data Collected Between November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013 ..........138
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1  Tilly mobilization model .................................................................29
Figure 2  Networks connecting individuals, groups, organizations and societies ........41
Figure 3  Graffiti by El Sexto .........................................................................70
Figure 4  Graffiti by El Sexto .........................................................................70
Figure 5  Photo Shop by Pardo Lazo ...............................................................74
Figure 6  Yin case study designs ....................................................................83
Figure 7  The Yin protocol ............................................................................86
Figure 8  The RSS feed ..................................................................................92
Figure 9  Sánchez Blog, April 6, 2014 ..............................................................95
Figure 10 RSS/blog posts, February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014 .....................103
Figure 11 Twitter feeds from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014 .................104
Figure 12 Transnational advocacy network among INGOs studied .................115
Figure 13 Transnational advocacy network of studied INGOs, including GenY ....116
Figure 14 Summary of results of text mining ..................................................139
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social Media and Transnational Sociopolitical Activism

In 2009, the world watched aghast when young Neda Agha Soltan became the face of Iranian protest in the wake of perceived rigged elections. Caught up in the street protests in Tehran, Neda was allegedly shot by Abbās Kārgar Jāvid, a pro-government militiaman. A bystander filmed the shooting and the near immediate death of the young woman, now considered a martyr. The amateur cell phone film is chilling, horrendous, and absolutely heart wrenching. It was disseminated to millions of citizens worldwide through YouTube, sparking virtual solidarity movements and international protest on Twitter and FaceBook.

On January 4, 2011, Mohamad Boauzizi died after self-immolation in protest of the Tunisian government’s economic stagnation. In this case, no viral video existed; however, his desperate act sparked a political upheaval in Tunisia that broadcast globally and, with the aid of social media, facilitated profound effects regionally. The most popular Twitter hash tags in the Arab region in the first three months of 2014 were Egypt, Jan25, Libya, Bahrain, and protest (Boyter, 2012). The so-called “Arab Spring” proceeded to sweep the region, with a spate of entrenched autocracies being overthrown by oppressed but emboldened citizens (Moran, 2011). Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen each saw their dictators topple, and some form of civil unrest touched nearly every country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In March of 2015 the Syrian nation entered its fourth year into a civil war in which rebels fighting against the oppressive Assad regime have been thwarted by the Syrian army with sustained, violent,

It remains to be seen how the MENA nations will emerge after the rise and falter of the Arab Spring, with Syria’s fate being even cloudier as the current push of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) gains further inroads into the country and rebels find themselves with a new force to combat or support (“ISIS Militants Capture Major Syrian Air Base,” 2014). However, it is incontrovertible that, whatever the future, social media will be an integral part of the process.

To say that social media have profoundly affected international relations and communications would be an understatement. Since the advent of Web 2.0 or what is known as user-generated content (Vossen, 2007), the potential of social media to mobilize sociopolitical change—particularly in terms of democratization and human rights—has been debated heatedly. Ideologies of the Internet run the gamut from technological determinism to critical political economy, each with its own theory as to social media’s power (or lack thereof) to overcome oppression, spread egalitarian values, and protect human rights. While there is no consensus as to the extent of social media’s power, the potential cannot be ignored.

Not surprisingly, the events in the MENA and other regions have intensified scholarly and industry interest in social media as foreign policy tools and as instruments to engage citizens in sociopolitical activism. This is particularly true for those international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) that seek to foster human rights agenda based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). For such
organizations, social media are seen as a method by which these organizations might leverage information and influence the internal political and social policies of governments worldwide.

**Exploring the “Hows” of Social Media**

The research questions proposed herein are inspired by the growth in transnational political activism that, at least superficially, appears to be linked to Web 2.0. The research is diverse and interdisciplinary, mixing international relations and foreign policy with the theoretical underpinnings and technological applications of international communication. A plethora of theories and models might be applied to the more general goal of this research, which is to explore and describe how activist organizations use social media to influence policy across borders. Among others, the network society, network analysis theory, social movement theories, and political participation theory were assessed and rejected as the proper theoretical foundation of this study. This decision was not because any one of the aforementioned would not be proper lenses through which to analyze this issue but because the model selected—Keck and Sikkink’s (1998) transnational advocacy network theory (TAN)—encompasses components of each of the alternative theories while providing a coherent set of prerequisites uniquely suited to analyze interactive activist networks. In particular, the model’s information politics is increasingly relevant in light of the Internet’s ability to “viralize” domestic political and social issues and set them on the global agenda, transforming them into issues of international concern.

The current body of communications, political science, and international relations literature is generally concerned with social media effects in international relations and
advocacy. Questions addressed in this present study include the following. What type of correlation or causal effect can be discerned between social media and political or social reform? Do social media open a virtual public sphere and create openings in closed regimes? Who uses media and to what social, cultural, or political effect? In addressing these important questions, this research will reveal and address gaps in the literature.

What appears missing in scholarly research is an exploration of the “hows” of social media advocacy: How do advocacy organizations use social media? How do social media inform an advocacy organization’s advocacy? Least explored of all, to what extent do advocacy INGOs respond to the social content and agenda of the citizens and groups for whom they claim to advocate?

**Theoretical Framework**

Answering such questions would be impossible without acknowledging the ever-increasing power of the TAN, through which global networks of activist organizations collaborate across borders to influence the social and political policies of institutions and governments. In the TAN model introduced by Keck and Sikkink (1998), TAN influence is achieved through a combination of four “politics”: the politics of information (management), symbolism (persuasion), accountability (socialization), and leverage (pressure). Bringing the TAN into the world of digital activism, this project explores how organizational members of a TAN interact with local activists within that TAN to advocate for freedom of speech in closed regimes (here, Cuba).

On a more critical level, the research looks to INGOs role as information gatekeepers. To do so, the research is focused on the extent to which INGOs self-select the information they collect and share on social media. More importantly, the research
addresses whether INGO representation of information by local Cuban activists is in fact representative of the information produced by those advocates.

**Significance of the Study**

This research is valuable across disciplines in that it examines not only INGO TANs but also individual TAN members, actors who have been almost uniformly overlooked in TAN literature. Heretofore, TANs have been envisioned as transnational networks of organizations such as research groups, INGOs, and civic and religious associations. Further, TANS have been most often conceptualized as working toward broad transnational social goals, such as women’s rights, genocide, education, health, environmental issues, and human rights abuses (Santa Cruz, 2004; Smith, Pagnucco, & Chatfield, 1997). However, as briefly contemplated by Keck and Sikkink (1998) in their original model, TANs also include networks of individuals. In this conceptualization, intellectuals, politicians, lawyers, scientist, exiles, refugees, expatriates, and as argued here, Tweeters and bloggers, network across borders with each other and with associations and organizations to join in the TAN effort to further a common political or social agenda (Tsutsui, Whitlinger, & Lim, 2012). By including individual activists as important actors in the TAN, this project addresses whether the larger organizational actors in the TAN absorb information broadcast by individual actors and whether that information is redistributed through social media.

Of perhaps greater significance is that this research adapts the TAN model to the contemporary media environment. The model predates Web 2.0, yet should be (and is) applied to information networks that are developed through interactive social media. Prior research has failed to recognize that the use of social media is interlinked, almost
inextricably, with those “dense exchanges of information” that are at the core of the TAN model. This project closes that gap and argues that the TAN model transcends typologies of media in that it applies to reciprocal information flows that collapse in space and time in the Web 2.0 arena.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question posed in this research is an old one that predates social media and Web 2.0 technology. It is a question of information balance and flow, rather than a superficial exploration of the conduits of the information. The project includes description and critique of whether information generated through Cuban social media is disseminated, received, and rebroadcast by INGOs within free-speech advocacy TANs or whether that information is muted or distorted in some way.

Such a question remains unaddressed in the literature and is stated generally as follows: To what degree does information disseminated through INGO social media advocacy campaigns for free speech in Cuba reflect the local agenda of Cuban activists? More particularly, the research proposed will explore the following:

- How do freedom of speech INGOs use social media in their advocacy for freedom of speech in Cuba?
- Do INGOs form a freedom of speech transnational advocacy network?
- Is GenY included in the INGO freedom of speech transnational advocacy network, and,
- To what extent does the information output by INGOs within the TAN represent the information output by GenY?

While each is a question in itself, they are all connected by the flow of information between the local and the global. In the TAN model, the exchange of information, regardless of medium, is fundamentally connected to sociopolitical reform. Here, it is argued, for INGOs operating in the “free speech for Cuba” TAN, the collection
and dissemination of localized individual information is equally important, if not more so, in furthering the INGOs’ generalized advocacy initiatives. More simply put, to use social media most productively, INGOs must speak, but they must also listen. If the INGO members of a TAN disregard the viewpoints and agenda of the intranational actors—if they do not listen—, then no matter how noble the goal, the INGOs will become gatekeepers, selectively broadcasting local information.

This research will provide a descriptive typology of social media used in current INGO advocacy campaigns. Further, a comprehensive and holistic look at the state of freedom of speech in Cuba will be included. While each of these issues is of secondary importance, they are necessary to provide technological and ideological context for the study. Ideological variations in conceptualizations of freedom of speech and expression are delineated, again for the purpose of context but also to allow for a greater transparency in the research, given the potential for latent or implicit biases in cross-cultural studies.

This research is multilayered and includes a descriptive look not only at which social media are used but also at how they are used. This latter question is intended to address any disparities in the amount and content of information output by INGOs, given the input available from local activists. Of greatest interest in this research is whether patterns of filtering or editorial selectivity can be found in the INGO social media output.

The innovation and beauty of Web 2.0 or other user-generated content lies in its interactivity, which allows multilevel, two-way flows of communications and creates that collaborative activist space sometimes known as the virtual public sphere. The research undertaken indicates, if a free-speech advocacy INGO monitors, absorbs, and
disseminates locally generated information into its own social media campaigns, that INGO brings the local into its advocacy. However, if an INGO “cherry picks” or “spins” information, the INGO is, in fact, a self-interested actor rather than a collaborative advocate, leaving the INGO susceptible to criticism on many levels, not least of which include cultural imperialism and elitism, as well as more practical concerns regarding efficiency, advocacy strategy, and reliability.

To evaluate the questions, the degree to which information disseminated through INGO social media advocacy campaigns reflects the informational content and local agenda of Cuban activists, here represented by Yoani Sánchez and her blog Generación Y (GenY).¹ Although the research includes a statistical summary of INGO social media use for descriptive depth, it goes deeper than a mechanistic assessment of Tweets and posts, including analysis of the actual information and content disseminated by INGOs through social media. Such an assessment reveals whether INGOs tend to self-select information or use social media as a resource to align and adapt information with that of the local to further a collective agenda of freedom of speech in Cuba.

¹ Throughout this text, Sánchez and GenY are used interchangeably.
CHAPTER 2
RELEVANT LITERATURE

Seminal Theories of Communications and International Relations

**Cosmopolitanism.** It would be remiss to investigate any transnational advocacy group without paying homage to the more abstract philosophy of cosmopolitanism, for transnational sociopolitical movements draw both validation and inspiration from cosmopolitanism. The word *cosmopolitan* derives from the Greek word *kosmopolitês*, which loosely translates to ‘citizen of the world’ (Kleingold & Brown, 2011). The word describes a variety of normative perspectives in moral and sociopolitical philosophy whose nexus converges in the tenet that all human beings, regardless of national and political affiliations, belong to a single community. This community must be nurtured for the betterment of humankind (Douzinas, 2007; Kleingold & Brown, 2011).

Cosmopolitanism’s roots lie with the Greek Stoics and Cynics, circa 445 BC-262 BC (Ferrara, 2007; Kleingold & Brown, 2011). “I am a citizen of the world!” So proclaimed the great Cynic Diogenes, flouting the polis-centered Platonian and Aristotelian philosophy. Early Greeks identified themselves solely through citizenship, aligning their personhood with sovereign institutions and governing bodies (Kleingold & Brown, 2011). However, by the time of Augustine and the advent of Christianity, both Cynicism and Stoicism were infused with spiritual visions of “a cosmopolitan City of God—a city with no external boundaries but with boundaries of faith; the city of those who loved God” (Ferrara, 2007, p.53). As the spiritual secularized, Humanists like Erasmus embraced cosmopolitanism as “the bond that unites human beings” and sets the stage for universal toleration (Ferrara, 2007, p. 53).
Natural law theorists Grotius and Pufendorf similarly envisioned a “great society of states” subject to a greater law of nations (Ferrara, 2007, p. 53). Kant, the premier cosmopolitan, brought to cosmopolitanism the concepts of universal morality and the natural rights of man (Ferrara, 2007). Kant’s *Perpetual Peace* (1795/2013) emphasized the necessity of peace among all states. In the first of his two-part treatise proposing a model for global coexistence, Kant set forth *Preliminary Articles of a Perpetual Peace Between States*, including:

- No conclusion of peace shall be held to be valid as such, when it has been made with the secret reservation of the material for a future war.
- No State having an existence by itself—whether it be small or large—shall be acquirable by another State through inheritance, exchange, purchase or donation.
- Standing armies shall be entirely abolished in the course of time.
- No national debts shall be contracted in connection with the external affairs of the State.
- No State shall intermeddle by force with the constitution or government of another State.
- No State at war with another shall adopt such modes of hostility as would necessarily render mutual confidence impossible in a future peace; such as, the employment of assassins (percussores) or poisoners (venefici), the violation of a capitulation, the instigation of treason and such like. (Kant, 1795/2013)

In part two, “Definitive Articles of a Perpetual Peace Between States,” Kant (1795/2013) enumerated those conditions necessary to achieve global peace:

- The civil constitution in every State shall be Republican.
- The right of nations shall be founded on a federation of free states.
- The rights of men as citizens of the world in a cosmo-political system shall be restricted to conditions of universal Hospitality. (Kant, 1795/2013)

Indeed, Kant’s *Perpetual Peace* provided the foundation for current public international law, as reflected in the mission statements and guiding principles of both the League of Nations (LON) and its successor, the United Nations (UN; Kleingold & Brown, 2011).

The *Covenant of the League of Nations* (1919/2008) indicates the following agreement:
In order to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war, by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations, by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another.

The UN is also founded on the Kantian ideal of global peace and citizenship. Chapter 1 of the UN Charter sets forth the primary mission of the UN:

1. To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations, which might lead to a breach of the peace;
2. To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;
3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion; and
4. To be a centre [sic] for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends (Charter of the United Nations, 1947).

Thus, it may be argued that public international law is wholly a cosmopolitan construct:

Since the narrower of wider community of the peoples of the earth has developed so far *that a violation of the rights in one place is felt throughout the world*, the idea of a law of world citizenship is no high-flown exaggerated notion. It is a supplement to the unwritten code of the civil and international law, indispensable for the maintenance of the public human rights and hence also of perpetual peace. (Kant, 1795/2013)

Cosmopolitanism, unashamedly utopian, was also embraced by Marx. In its theoretical underpinnings, Marxism may be seen as micro-cosmopolitanism. Communist society is

envisioned and expected to transcend all institutionalized divisions whether they be economic, ethnic, gendered, and so on (Ferrara, 2007).

Contemporary cosmopolitanism is, according to some, undergoing a “cosmopolitan turn” (Fine, 2003; Strand, 2010). Some have argued a convergence of factors—that is, the decline of the nation-state, new international migratory patterns, the existence of multiple citizenships, an ever-growing virtual network society, the increasing influence of supranational institutions, and the growing knowledge-based economy—have precipitated a call for a cosmopolitan world order. As described by Benhabib (2006),

Cosmopolitanism is not equivalent to a global ethic or such; nor is it adequate to characterize cosmopolitanism through cultural attitudes and choices alone. I follow the Kantian tradition in thinking of cosmopolitanism as the emergence of norms that ought to govern relations among individuals in a global civil society. These norms are neither merely moral nor just legal. They may best be characterized as framing the ‘morality of law’ but in a global rather than domestic context. They signal the eventual legalization and juridification of the rights claims of human beings everywhere, regardless of their membership in bounded communities. (p.174)

In what many see as the waning hours of the neoliberal order, it is possible to confuse cosmopolitanism with globalization. Some, in particular political theorists, use the two terms interchangeably or combine them under the auspices of “moral globalism” (Dallmayr, 2003). However, major differences exist between the two concepts, most glaringly the fact that, in the neoliberal trend of the 20th and 21st centuries, globalization has not contemplated, to date, universal human rights and ideals (Strand, 2010). In its most neutral and general definition, globalization is defined as “the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life” (Held & McGrew, 2002, p. 39). However, the reality is that globalization is the singular push for a global free market and a free market only. Cosmopolitanism, by
contrast, connects the goal of a free market to such ideas as fair trade, fair labor laws, and universal human rights (Strand, 2010).

An illustration of the differences in the philosophies may be found in the different economic philosophies of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and *Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América* (ALBA). In 2004, ALBA was created as an alternative to the United States’ aggressive push for a Free Trade Agreement for the Americas (FTAA). FTAA was an attempt to extend NAFTA to all of the Americas and was seen as a U.S. strategy of further exploitation of the region by U.S. corporations (Becker & Molina, 2009). NAFTA is concerned with open markets and free trade but has no provisions for fair trade or reciprocal labor standards. In contrast, ALBA consciously addresses such cosmopolitan values as economic opportunity and basic standards of living (Becker & Molina, 2009; MacLeod, 2005). ALBA is based on close collaboration and solidarity among its signatories and is focused on improving the lives of the signatory countries’ people rather than merely enriching the wealthy and perpetuating the *status quo* (Becker & Molina, 2009; Blouet & Blouet, 2009).

When formed in 2006, ALBA had only two member states: Venezuela and Cuba (Hattingh, 2008). The cosmopolitan economic trade organization has since grown to include six more member states: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Honduras is a former member, having withdrawn in 2009 after the ouster of leftist trending President Zelaya (Masud, 2013). In 2012, Suriname and St. Lucia were granted guest membership, and three countries—Haiti, Syria, and Iran—currently have observer status (Masud, 2013).
In contrast to the neoliberal, free-market underpinnings of NAFTA, ALBA’s more cosmopolitan focus is on development between the countries of the hemisphere, whereby poor countries such as Haiti or Bolivia are compelled to compete with the world's leading economic power. In order to help overcome trade disadvantages, ALBA pushes for solidarity with the economically weakest countries, with the aim of achieving a free trade area in which all of its members benefit. (Arreaza, 2004)

**Variations in cosmopolitan perspective.** Kleingold (2011) identified six brands of cosmopolitanism; however, for brevity in this study, the concept is more loosely grouped into four: moral, political, legal, and economic.

*Moral cosmopolitanism.* Moral cosmopolitanism is the philosophical perspective that human beings should be morally committed to an essential humanity, one that rises above the individualistic attachments presented by nationality, ethnicity, religion, or family (Nussbaum, 2010; Turner, 2002). Moral cosmopolitanism does not specifically call for a restructuring of the international political world order; however, political duties are deemed intrinsic (Dallmayr, 2003). It is morality that provides the foundation for one’s actions as a citizen of the world or otherwise (Kleingold & Brown, 2011).

Moral cosmopolitanism advocates physical and moral equality of all human beings and all cultures. It requires openness and tolerance in intercultural communication. Moral cosmopolitanism perceives morality and ethics as universally recognized and practiced, paradoxically negating tolerance for intercultural and ideological differences (Kleingold & Brown, 2011).

*Political cosmopolitanism.* The goal of political cosmopolitanism is international relations regulated through norms rather than force or threats (Benhabib, 2006; Ferrara, 2007). Theoretically, the methods by which this goal might be achieved are twofold: (a) a system of regulatory norms for political relations constituted by universally recognized
human rights and (b) a regulation of global economic relations that ensures fair
distribution of economic opportunity (Ferrara, 2007). Political cosmopolitan thus
presents an “ethico-political” solution to the limitations of the nation state in addressing
contemporary challenges of globalization (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2012). Political
cosmopolitanism fosters supranational and transnational governance (e.g., IGOs, INGOs)
and envisions, on some level, the formation of a global civil society founded on INGOs
and other advocacy institutions (Held, 1995, 2004).

Unsurprisingly, political cosmopolitans diverge in perspectives. Some advocate a
centralized world state. Others favor a federal system with a comprehensive global body
of limited power. Still others lobby for international political institutions that focus only
on specialized issues, such as war crimes, human trafficking, and crimes against
humanity (Kleingold, 2011). Although running the theoretical spectrum, political
cosmopolitanism can be largely interpreted as a push for cosmopolitan democracy
(Bohman, 2004).

Cosmopolitan democracy is based on two assumptions. The first assumption is
that states are *de jure* sovereign but *de facto* non-autonomous (Archibugi, 2011; Held,
1995). Simply put, phenomena existing outside the actual control and borders of the
nation-state—environmental threats, contagious diseases, trade, terrorism, migration, and
even globalization—make it exceedingly difficult for states to be truly independent
(Archibugi, 2011).

The second assumption of cosmopolitan democracy is that the foreign policy of
democratic states is neither more virtuous nor more moral than that of non-democratic
states (Archibugi, 2011). Although cosmopolitan democracy seeks to increase both the
quantity and quality of democratic states, it recognizes the goal of world peace cannot be achieved based on the superior “democraticness” of individual states. In this manner, the concept of exporting democracy is troublesome and contradictory (Archibugi, 2011). In essence, cosmopolitan democracy sees as an international system based on cooperation and dialogue. Somewhat akin to modernization theories of the past, successful democratization is an endogenous process inspired by exogenous communications (Archibugi, 2011).

*Legal cosmopolitanism.* As noted, many political cosmopolitans advocate the development of a global legal order (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2012). Legal cosmopolitanism marks the institutional embodiment of such universal and cosmopolitan values as equality, solidarity, human rights, and a global consensus regarding rule of law (Habermas, 2007; Nowicka & Rovisco, 2012). Per Kant (1795/2013), international law regulates the relations between states but also relations between the state and its citizens (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2012). Kant advocated the creation of a global federation of republic states whose organization was based on *jus cosmopoliticum* or the negative concept of hospitality (the right of a foreigner/stranger not to be treated with hostility; Kant, 1795/2013; Nowicka & Rovisco, 2012). Beck (2004) asserted that legal cosmopolitanism requires that individuals and states be bound morally and legally to international law agreements (Nowicka & Rovisco, 2012; Beck, 2004). More recently, scholars have suggested that legal cosmopolitanism is the result of global citizenship, with individuals identifying collectively with universal ethics that serve as the foundation for legal enforcement of the same (Benhabib, 2002; Nash, 2009).
Originating circa 1869, international law was inspired by European liberalism and progressive social activism (Koskenniemi, 2005). The “fathers” of international law, John Westlake, Gustave Rolin-Jaequemuns, and Tobias Asser, established the *Institut de droit international* (Institute of International Law [IDI]) in 1873 as a forum for the study and advocacy for international law (Institut de droit international, n.d.; Koskenniemi, 2005). Their goal was the professional codification of universal principles such as suffrage, freedom of speech, and political rights (Koskenniemi, 2005; Institut de droit international [IDI], n.d.). They considered international law as the “juridical conscience of the civilized world” and posited the value of “always evaluating the laws of one’s home country from the perspective of the requirements of humanity” (Koskenniemi, 2005, p. 108). A recipient of the Nobel Peace prize in 1904, today, the IDI is a private association whose objective remains to promote the progress of international law by formulating general principles; cooperating in codification; seeking official acceptance of principles in harmony with the needs of modern society; contributing to the maintenance of peace or to the observance of the laws of war; proffering needed judicial advice in controversial or doubtful cases; and contributing, through publications, education of the public, and any other means, to the success of the principles of justice and humanity which should govern international relations. (IDI, n.d.)

**Economic cosmopolitanism.** Economic cosmopolitanism predicts that, in the increasingly interconnected and mobile world, people will develop a global consciousness and will be able to cross borders more freely to use their skills wherever the rewards will be highest (Beck, 2005; Castles, 2012). This concept is akin to the aforementioned one of moral globalism. According to this theory, human capital (education, training, and work experience) is a stratification factor in labor markets, but that inequality will disappear as developing countries become incorporated into the global economy (Castles, 2012).
Proponents of economic cosmopolitanism infuse free market ideology with notions of morality and fairness. For instance, the “capabilities approach” to social and economic development, as conceived by Amartya Sen (1999) and later enhanced by Nussbaum (2003), can be understood as economic cosmopolitanism reconstructed through moral and political cosmopolitanism (Hansen, 2010). In the capabilities model, Sen advocated a form of welfare economics in which market distribution is based on a person’s capabilities rather than production. Sen set forth five components with which to assess capability.

1. The importance of real freedoms in the assessment of a person's advantage
2. Individual differences in the ability to transform resources into valuable activities
3. The multi-variate nature of activities giving rise to happiness
4. A balance of materialistic and non-materialistic factors in evaluating human welfare

Economic cosmopolitanism is a rebuttal to contemporary neoliberalism in practice and argues that neoliberalism and globalization have fully corporatized the educational to the detriment of fundamental human needs (Habermas, 1998; Papastephanou, 2005). For proponents, it is understood as a “full-blown endorsement of free market principles conjoined with a selective array of liberal values” (Hansen, 2010, p. 155).

**Cosmopolitan critiques.** Cosmopolitanism in all forms is not without its critics. The most often cited are political realism, communitarian/multiculturalism, and the Western hegemon. The latter is most relevant to this research.

**The realist critique.** Post-Marxists, such as Chantel Mouffe, dismissed cosmopolitanism as an “ideological cover” (Hansen, 2010; Mouffe, 2005). The reality of global politics is that they are fragmented and polarized, with ideological clashes
inevitable (Mouffe, 2005). Rather than the unrealizable utopia of market or democratic cosmopolitanism, international relations should be governed by a pluralism of ideologies and social institutions, “agnostic pluralism” (Hansen, 2010; Mouffè, 2005). Mouffe called for a unified world absent universality (Mouffe, 2005). Recalling realism, in such a model exist various centers of power, which remain in political equilibrium and create a perpetual balance of power (Vorländer, 2013; Walt, 1998). Each center represents and governs different arrangements of social life, cultural traditions, and even economic relations (Vorländer, 2013).

The communitarian critique. Communitarians have argued against the presupposition of universalism inherent in cosmopolitanism (Bell, 2012). Communitarians have argued that the standards of international justice are constitutive and created by the forms of culture and traditions of particular societies (Bell, 2012). MacIntyre (1988) and Taylor (1990) argued that moral and political judgment depends on the interpretive framework through which agents view their world. As such, it makes no sense to separate the dimensions of human beliefs, practices, and institutions from the ideals of global political justice or universal rule of law (Bell, 2012). A further communitarian critique holds that an effective use of the global public sphere must include an understanding of the habits and traditions of actual people living in specific times and places (Bell, 2012; Walzer, 1994).

The Western hegemon. From the perspective of Western hegemon, to insist on cosmopolitan rules and institutions is to play the very dangerous game of exporting legal, political, and moral norms. Cosmopolitanism is a liberal construct born of the Western world and unrelated to the construction of non-Western states. Therefore, the promotion
of cosmopolitanism as a universal goal is an exercise in hegemony, one that projects onto the rest of the world values that are not appropriate, given varying cultural norms. Cosmopolitanism ignores cultural and ethical relativism (Archibugi, 2004; Zolo, 2002). The critique is not an abstract philosophical difference between universalism and relativism. Critics have often noted that Western-driven cosmopolitan institutions and advocacy groups serve the primary purpose of maintaining the Western hegemon through geopolitical power, economic dominance, and cultural and ideological imperialism (Archibugi, 2004; Zolo, 2002).

In the context of globalization, some have argued that cosmopolitanism is a new way of privileging the rich and making the situation of the poor worse (Bauman, 1998; Dower, 2010). Claiming only the rich profit from globalization and economic cosmopolitanism is, in fact, a way to masque the exploitation of millions of people for whom immigration is not an exploration of new possibilities and encounters with new forms of life but a substandard position imposed on them by their economic or political conditions (Bauman, 1998; Dower, 2010). Relevant to this research, this critique holds that cosmopolitanism must concentrate on empowering people not in the abstract but in the actual conditions of their lives, that is, empowering them within their own communities and traditions, not in spite of them (Bauman, 1998).

**The Global Civil Society as Cosmopolitanism**

Cosmopolitanism is not limited to formal global legal and economic institutionalism. Where the political and legal infrastructures fail the citizens (e.g., human rights violations, fair trade, immigration, etc.), the guiding principles of cosmopolitanism require that it extend into the extralegal and governmental realm, what
is known as the *global civil society* (GCS). The GCS includes, among others, transnational advocacy networks that represent a “practical formation of groups and organizations . . . often believing in the cosmopolitan ideal, hoping to make positive changes on a global scale (Orient, 2013). The term *global civil society* refers, in particular, to organizations (and individuals) that aid in humanitarian and environmental issues on a global scale (Orient, 2013). Although the GCS is generally seen as being outside of governmental control, a huge amount of the funding for the largest participants in the GCS-INGOs comes directly from governments. This source of INGO funding opens the door to questions of political bias and can erode cosmopolitan credibility (Keane, 2003).

Although rather abstractly, Thorn and Mosknes (2012) defined the *global civil society* as a political reality that is

a political space, in which a diversity of political experiences, action strategies, identities, values and norms are articulated and contested; a space of struggle and conflict over the values, norms and rules that govern global social space(s)– and ultimately over the control of material resources and institutions. (p. 5)

The development of the GCS, particularly in the last 30 years is attributed to “a commitment to the value of peace” that “unites individuals with various motivations, instruments and objectives” (Archibugi & Held, 2011, p. 434; Orient, 2013). Early examples of GCS movements include coordinated efforts for the abolition of slavery, the banning of foot binding in China, and the prohibition of female genital mutilation (Orient, 2013).

Literature on the GCS offers a wide range of typologies. Kaldor (2003) distinguished five categories. The first, “*societas civilis*” or civil society, is that which seeks the formation of law-based states and societies free from violence and arbitrary rule
(Kaldor, 2003; Kumar, 2007). Closest to this group are the advocates of an international cosmopolitan democracy (Kumar, 2007; Archibugi & Held, 2011). A second category, “bourgeois society,” is a market-based GCS (Kaldor, 2003; Keane 2003; Kumar, 2007). Closely related to neoliberalism, the bourgeois global society forms a non-governmental mechanism to check aspects of global development, including but not limited to transnational corporations, foreign investment, migration, and the creation of global culture (Keane, 2003; Kumar, 2007).

Three of Kaldor’s (2003) classifications refer to more contemporary conceptualizations of the GCS. The “neoliberal” GCS is theorized to be the sociopolitical partner of the process of globalization (Kaldor, 2003; Kumar, 2007). Neoliberalism is seen as economic globalization and necessarily includes the liberalization, privatization, and deregulation of markets, that is global capitalism (Kaldor, 2003; Kumar, 2007). In the postmodern GCS, the deconstruction of traditional international relations and institutions and reconstruction of a common culture accompanies the acceleration of internationalism by connections and commonalities formed across borders by way of the Internet and social media (Kaldor, 2003; Kumar, 2007). Last is the activist GCS, which manifests in local and global dissident movements. An activist GCS, as envisioned in the research herein, is focused on the Habermasian public sphere and includes transnational advocacy networks (Kaldor, 2003; Kumar, 2007).

Notwithstanding these categorizations, in terms of infrastructure, the GCS may be divided into three levels working together outside of governmental influence and on behalf of “citizens of the world” (Batliwala & Brown, 2006; Orient, 2013). Level 1
includes associations, for example, non-profit organizations, INGOs, NGOs, and transnational advocacy networks (Batliwala & Brown, 2006; Orient, 2013). Level 2 is GCS diplomacy—how the goals of the GCS are communicated by and through the associations. Level 2 includes academics, experts, and advocates who educate and attempt to influence both the public and governments and their institutions (Batliwala & Brown, 2006; Orient, 2013). Level 3 of the GCS is everyday citizen discourse on a global scale, including communication processes through social media (Batliwala & Brown, 2006; Orient, 2013).

Social Movement Theory

The TAN model cannot be extricated from more generalized social movement theory. In brief, social movements are networks that engage in sustained collective actions, have a common purpose, and challenge the interests and beliefs of those with power (Tarrow, 2005). The TAN the movement is the same, only transnational. “[S]ocial movements are interlocking networks of groups, social networks and individuals . . . with a shared collective identity who try to prevent or promote societal change by non-institutionalized tactics” (van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009, x). It is helpful to divide social movement theories chronologically into the past (classic theories) and the present (new social movements) to catalog the most influential literature (van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009).

**Classic social movement theories.** Early approaches viewed social movements as spontaneous, irrational, expressive, and often-violent outbursts of collective action in reaction to perceived grievances (van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009). The first sociological theories of urban revolution originated with the “crowd theorists” (Hirsch,
1990). Le Bon (1960/1895), Tarde (1898), and Taine (1874) all viewed revolutionary movements as irrational acts by those socially marginalized outside traditional social institutions, such as the church and state (Hirsch, 1990; Jahoda, 2007).

Later classic social movement behavior is conceptualized as “collective behavior.” In such theories, the motivations and processes of social movements are correlated with structural disruptions in society (Jenkins, 1983). According to this school of thought, social order is disrupted when a part of society fails to function effectively and equitably. In the European tradition, the dysfunction is usually in economic disparity, thus Marxism, Leninism, and Gramscianism are all variations of collective behavior social movement theory (Laraña, Johnston, & Gusfield, 1994).

Although structurally functionalist, the U.S. classic social movement is less economic (Marxist) and more social in its tradition. Five theories in particular represent the classic social movement theory of the mid-20th century. Although distinguishable, they are all based on the assumption that social movements occur because society failures disparately and negatively affect citizens, who then galvanize and join social movements (Klandermas, 1984; Park, 1967).

**Mass society theory.** Mass society theory centers on mass movements, defined by Kornhauser (1959) as “popular movements that operate outside and against the social order” (p. 58). Mass movements begin when social processes, such as industrialization, urbanization, or bureaucratization, alienate segments of society (Kornhauser, 1959). Such processes cause a collective feeling of marginalization, creating a mass society with the following characteristics.
1. **Atomization**: It is counterintuitive, but mass society forms where a large segment of the population feels isolated and alienated from the rest. When people are atomized, they are more likely to behave in disruptive behaviors that are intended to destroy, revolutionize, or transform society (Kornhauser, 1959).

2. **Access**, what some call “political opportunity” Kornhauser (1959): Citizens can have too much access to or influence over their leaders. Leaders wish to stay in power. When citizens have too much influence (financial, electoral, etc.) on whether leaders will maintain their positions, Kornhauser argued, the leaders become irrational and capitulate to the whims of citizens rather than act in the best interests of society overall (Kornhauser, 1959).

3. **Availability**: The opposite of access, availability occurs when a society has leaders with disparate influence over their constituents, causing instability. “Mass society is a social system in which elites are readily accessible to influence by non-elites and non-elites are readily available for mobilization by elites” (Kornhauser, 1959). Because neither the elites nor non-elites are working for the best interests of society, society becomes unstable and unpredictable, creating a mass society and opening the door to mass movements.

4. **Intermediate groups**: Kornhauser (1959) traced societal stability to citizens’ connections with intermediate groups, for example, churches, regional and local associations, and other members of the civil society. In a society lacking intermediate groups, social isolation and fragmentation are more likely (Kornhauser, 1959).

A mass society with the characteristics enumerated by Kornhauser (1959) is more likely to be susceptible to mass movements, which—under this theory—are seen as anti-
democratic and inimical to personal freedoms and a representative and egalitarian society. Not surprisingly, the social movement theory of the mass society arose in response to the transition of formerly democratic societies to Fascism and Nazism.

**Relative deprivation theory.** Deriving from an inquiry into the violence accompanying the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, relative deprivation theory (RDT) posits that collective behavior occurs when people feel deprived relative to others’ or to their own previous experiences (Davies, 1969; Gurr, 1970). In brief, segments of the society feel that they have less than they deserve, and social movements arise from combined individual discontent. Drawing on the Civil Rights Movement, RDT indicates social movements are ripe for mobilization in two scenarios: (a) the raising of expectations in society and (b) the reduction of opportunities (Davies, 1969).

**Added value theory.** Unlike RDT, which focuses on individuals unifying for action because of perceived social discontent, Added value theory (AVT) posits that social movements are the result of “collective seizures” suffered by members of society and that they are social, not psychological (Smelser, 1962). AVT enumerates six factors contributing to the mobilization of social movements (Table 1). Each factor is necessary, though not sufficient, to produce social movements; however, if the factors exist simultaneously, a collective seizure is inevitable (Smelser, 1962).
Table 1

**Six Factors of Added Value Theory**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Added value</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural conduciveness</strong></td>
<td>Physical and social conditions allow for the development of social action.</td>
<td>The geographical accumulation of citizens concerned about governmental opaqueness regarding a war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural strain</strong></td>
<td>A sufficient number of people experience social strain.</td>
<td>Mounting overseas casualties displayed graphically in the media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generalized belief</strong></td>
<td>Potential participants accept similar beliefs that rationalize or justify a certain behavior.</td>
<td>The growing realization that the government has misled the public as the motivation for the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mobilization of participants</strong></td>
<td>A sufficient number of participants receive the “jump start” information and have physical access.</td>
<td>Media leaked information about abusive military tactics and lies told by the government regarding “the enemy”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social control</strong></td>
<td>Agents of social control fail to diffuse the structural strain or eliminate the structural conduciveness.</td>
<td>The government continues conscripting citizens to fight in the unpopular war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Collective behavior</strong></td>
<td>Collective behavior will occur.</td>
<td>Vietnam protest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Resource mobilization theory.* As the early 1960s and 1970s showed social movements emerging despite the relative comfort and stability of the times, scholars began to question the classic structural paradigm of collective behavior. Resource mobilization theory (RMT) grew as an alternate conceptual framework (Hirsch, 1990; Tilly, 1978; van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009). Minimizing societal deprivation and psychological grievances as causal forces, RMT emphasizes mobilization and the dynamics and tactics of the movements themselves (Tilly, 1978; van Stekelenburg &
Klandermas, 2009). *Mobilization* refers to the processes by which a movement group assembles and how it uses available resources for the pursuit of group goals (Tilly, 1978; van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009).

RMT posits that social movements are possible and become likely when those with grievances are able to mobilize sufficient resources to take action (Tilly, 1978). Material resources—jobs, income, savings, goods and services, and media—and nonmaterial resources—authority, leadership, moral commitment, trust, friendship, and so on—are determinants in RMT and explain why some discontent individuals are able to organize while others are not (Tilly, 1978; van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009). RMT also addresses the organizational component of activism, indicating the success of a social movement is directly related to the extent to which the movement is able to organize to mobilize resources (Tilly, 1978; van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009).

Unlike other classic structural arguments, RMT views social movements as rational, well-organized phenomena with specific goals, strategies, and resources to attain those goals (van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009). Relevant to this research and foundational in later network theory, RMT examines the linkages of social movements to other groups (as in the TAN model). This approach depends on the interdependence of movements and actors with external support for success and on the means by which society might squelch protest by blocking access to that support (van Stekelenburg & Klandermas, 2009). The Tilly mobilization model (Figure 1) indicates the interaction of social movement interests, organization, and opportunity predicts a movement’s level of mobilization.
In the Tilly mobilization model, interest represents the potential gains from participation. Organization is the level of unified identity and networks. Opportunity is a combination of the amount of political power, the likelihood of repression, and the vulnerability of the target (Caren, 2006; Tilly, 1978).

**Political process theory.** Political process theory (PPT) is focused on the role of political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes, along with protest cycles and “contentious repertoires” (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982). *Contentious repertoires* are defined as the spectrum of contentious performances known and available within a set of political actors (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982). They include tools used by political activists to signal to the general public that political protest is underway (Tarrow, 1993; Tilly & Tarrow, 2006). Developed in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, PPT is focused on the interaction between a movement’s attributes, such as organizational structure, and the broader economic and political context (Caren, 2006).

Considering the Civil Rights Movement, McAdam (1982) theorized the rise and fall of social movement is correlated with three factors: political opportunities,
indigenous organizational strength, and cognitive liberation (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982). Political opportunities arise from “any event or broad social process that undermines the political establishment” (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982, p. 36). Examples might include wars, industrialization, international political realignments, prolonged unemployment, or widespread demographic changes (McAdam, 1982).

The second factor to increase the chance of mobilization is the existence and strength of indigenous organizations. Such organizations are pre-existing rather than responsive and already have members who can be recruited as participants and leaders, and communication networks (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982). The third element of McAdam’s PPT model is a collective sense of “cognitive liberation” (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982, p. 48), through which individuals feel their current political system lacks legitimacy, their social movement participation is justified, and the movement has good potential to produce meaningful change (Caren, 2006; McAdam, 1982).

**New social movements.** New social movement theory (NSM) arose in response to alleged inadequacies in the post-Marxian models of social movements, in which all individuals are presumed to develop a revolutionary working-class consciousness once made aware of the processes of their oppression (Buechler, 1995; Melucci, 1980; Offe, 1996). NSM sees activism as greater than the by-product of an individual’s relationship to the economy. The NSM approach begins with the assumption that “post-industrial societies” no longer have an “economic basis” (Melucci, 1980, p. 218). Societies are constructed through increasing integration of the “economic, political and cultural structures” (Melucci, 1980, p. 219). NSM is focused on transitions from industrial to
post-industrial societies and the effect such transitions have on the development of social movements (Melucci, 1980; Pichardo, 1997).

NSMs are considered “new” because they have characteristics distinguishing them from earlier collective action social movements. Laraña et al. (1994) identified eight features of NSMs:

- The tendency for the social base of new social movements to transcend class structure.
- A post-Marxist understanding of the structure of society.
- NSMs often involve the emergence of new or formerly weak dimensions of identity, i.e., “identity politics” (Aronowitz, 1992).
- The relation between the individual and the collective is blurred.
- NSMs often involve personal and intimate aspects of human life.
- The use of radical mobilization tactics of disruption and resistance that differ from those practiced by the working-class movement.
- The organization and proliferation of new social movement groups are related to the credibility crisis of the conventional channels for participation in Western democracies.
- NSM organizations tend to be segmented, diffuse and decentralized. (Laraña et al., 1994, p. 210)

Noting that contemporary movements most often use alternative media (as here, Web 2.0 technologies), Stein (2009) identified the communication functions most central to social movements:

- To provide information
- To assist action and mobilization
- To promote interaction and dialog
- To make lateral linkages
- To serve serves as an outlet for creative expression; and
- To promote fundraising and resource generation. (p. 752-753)

Of relevance to this study is the extent to which INGOs prioritize these communication functions and how such prioritization is reflected in their use of social media in the transnational social movement for freedom of speech in Cuba.
Transnational Advocacy Theory: A “New” Social Movement Theory

In their 1998 *Activists Beyond Borders*, Keck and Sikkink argued that all transnational relations can be analyzed in terms of networks. *Networks* are defined as “forms of organization characterized by voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). They further argued that networks should be categorized by their goals not their structure and identified three types of collective goals. Some transnational networks are motivated by instrumental goals, such as transnational corporations and banks. Other transnational networks are motivated by shared causal ideas, such as the groups of scientists and global knowledge networks (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Maxwell & Stone, 2013). Last are those transnational networks motivated by shared principled ideas or values (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). The TAN represents this latter type.

TANs have been alternatively described as “transnational social movements,” as “transnational activist networks,” and less accurately, as the “global civil society.” A TAN is a knowledge network whose function is to plead or defend the cause and rights of others, notwithstanding national or state boundaries (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Santa Cruz, 2004). The reciprocal and horizontal communication patterns exhibited in a TAN bring together actors in a common discourse, guided by values rather than material concerns. It is fed by “dense exchanges of information” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 74). Discourse around exchanges of information is used to call attention to social and political issues and influence policy regarding the same (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

In the literature, TANs are usually considered transnational networks of organizations, such as research groups, social movements, or civic and religious
associations, usually working for a common international policy goal (Santa Cruz, 2004; Smith et al., 1997). For this reason, TANs are often confused with the more abstract notion of the global civil society. However, Keck and Sikkink (1998) were clear that TANs may also encompass global networks comprised of individuals as well as organizations. Furthermore, while rarely addressed in the literature, the theorists argued that a TAN’s agenda may be state-specific as well as transnational.

As adopted for this present study, a broad definition of a TAN includes all relevant actors who work to create sociopolitical or other reform. International and domestic NGOs, research and advocacy organizations, foundations, the media, churches, and local activist movements are all part of the network. Not considered previously in the literature, bloggers, tweeters, You Tubers, citizen journalists, and other Web 2.0 participants may be part of the network as well. The TAN model includes four advocacy strategies: information politics, symbolic politics, accountability politics, and leverage politics. A strategy of information politics includes agenda setting and knowledge dissemination; symbolic politics strategies frame issues for persuasion purposes. The strategy of leverage politics uses information to encourage stronger nations to intervene or coerce nations perceived to be acting contrary to accepted social mores. Related is accountability strategy, which serves to pressure intergovernmental organizations to hold regimes responsible and accountable to their citizens (Keck & Sikkink, 1999; Santa Cruz, 2004). Using one or a combination of these strategies, a TAN exerts pressure for reform on targeted governments and international bodies (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Santa Cruz, 2004). This research is restricted to how INGOs use social media and, thus, lies squarely in the realm of information politics.
TANs develop in a number of ways. They can be strategic and planned by like-minded activists who wish to strengthen in force and collective agenda (Mekata, 2000). Other networks develop through the snowball effect in which existing contacts coalesce and intensify around a specific issue (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Last, TANs also form when local groups reach out to international organizations or sympathizers to create external pressure on their governments with whom all avenues of communication have been closed. The latter is known as the boomerang effect (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999).

The boomerang effect occurs when strategies of politics are applied and explain how domestic movements use international allies in pursuit of sociopolitical reform (Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Risse et al., 1999). Domestic groups can alter “power relationships involved by shifting the political context” while also tapping into “access, leverage, information and material resources they could not expect to have on their own” (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p. 32; Risse et al., 1999). This is necessary because, in less liberal states such as Cuba, the political and legal reality is that state-citizen communication is a top-down process and local citizens are unable to exercise vertical protest (Hoffman, 2011). Therefore, local actors must bypass the state and reach out to international groups to find outside pressure for reform (Risse et al., 1999).

Using Cuban activists as an example, individuals like Yoani Sánchez network through social media with freedom of speech INGOs to form a TAN that indirectly and directly lobbies citizens, nations, international organizations, and political institutions to apply pressure to the Cuban government to reform freedom of expression regulation (Risse et al., 1999). The boomerang is, of course, information. When information from
Sánchez is received and properly disseminated through the TAN, citizens across the globe are informed and, if mobilized, can exert pressure on their own governments and international governmental organizations to compel the Cuban government to reform policy (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Thus, a vital function of the INGOs in this TAN is to amplify the voice of Sánchez and local actors to spread information about the local agenda (Risse et al., 1999).

The INGOs studied here—Amnesty International (Amnesty), Article 19 (Article 19), Committee for the Protection of Journalists (Committee to Protect Journalists), Freedom House (Freedom House), Reporters Without Borders (Reporters Without Borders), and Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa or the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA)—are hypothesized as linked in a transnational advocacy network working for, among other more general aspirations, free speech reform in Cuba. The TAN strategy of information politics necessitates that the INGOs collect information from the would be to work with the local activists—in this study, GenY—and disseminate information, placing the issue of freedom of speech in Cuban politics into the virtual global arena (Santa Cruz, 2004).

Analyzing Social and Political Movements

Castells’ network society. Castells (2000) examined the social and political processes in a networked society (Castells, 2000; Thussu, 2006). Castells noted that a new form of communication—mass self-communication—has accompanied the development of interactive, horizontal networks over the Internet and new technologies (Castells, 2000). As a result, individual sociopolitical protest has been able to act more
proactively, exerting counter-power on the status quo. Per Castells, in today’s social and technological reality, there are four different forms of power:

1. Networking power is the power of the actors and organizations in the global or transnational network over organizations, institutions, and individuals who are not included in these global networks. In the case studied here, this power is the INGOs true advocacy power, as measured by the successful attainment of policy reform, if any.

2. Network power is the power resulting from the standards set regarding coordinated social interaction within the networks. This power is exercised not by exclusion from the networks but by the procedural imposition of the rules of inclusion and acquiescence to those rules. In the case of INGOs and social media, the role of gatekeeper is a potentially powerful exercise of network power.

3. Networked power is the power of a set of actors over other actors in the network. The forms and processes of networked power are specific to each network. In the case study at hand, this power may be seen through the INGOs’ power to disseminate information.

4. Network-making power is the power to program specific networks according to the interests and values of the programmers and the power to switch different networks following strategic alliances between dominant actors of various networks. Most relevant to this present research, INGOs might exercise this power in recognizing the agenda of local activists and programming advocacy efforts to support this agenda (Castells, 2011).

In addition, counter-power is exercised in the network society by altering networks that reflect dominant interests and replacing them with alternative agenda or alternative networks (Castells, 2011). In the TAN, power and counter-power are geared
to influencing policy through mass communication networks (vertical network communication, e.g., traditional media) and mass self-communication networks (horizontal network communication, e.g., social media; Castells, 2000, 2011). Castells argued that a network society creates the virtual equivalent of a global civil society through which the public expresses social, political, and economic agenda (Castells, 2009). Proffered as evidence is the emergence of reformist internetworked social movements (ISMs) in which “network armies” are formed with the specific intent to “go global” in the virtual public sphere (Bennett, 2003; Castells, 2013; Sassen, 1998).

It is true, as argued by Langman (2005), that the global reach of contemporary transnational social movements depends largely on the Internet for the diffusion of information, communication, and coordination and, thus, such movements must be located in the larger context of Castell’s globalized “network society.” However, the real network power of the Internet and social media lies in its information flows, in the interactive ability to collect as well as disseminate information.

The core resource of advocacy networks is information. Information is collected on the local level, transmitted to allies abroad, and then published in reports and testimonies to mobilize actors in the network to advocate for reform (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Thus, while many transnational social movements seek a global stage, as do free speech advocate INGOs, they are inextricably linked to the local, whereby they can receive information relevant to the cause. Despite his assertion that the network is the basis of all society, Castells (2013) admitted that new technology merely speeds up, facilitates, and makes more explicit these flows of information. How INGOs conduct information gathering and, more importantly, how they disseminate information are not
dictated by solely technology, it is a matter of institutional discretion and strategy. Movements are made through the sharing of information (Castells, 2013). As implied, sharing is a two-way process, a process of reciprocity and exchange, between individual actors and organizations within a network. In a TAN, information is the basis of communicative power or “the ability to exert influence over policies in ways that will pressure those in authority to consider their arguments” (Deane, 2007).

A brief word on network analysis. Similar to Castells’ network society is social network analysis (van Dijk, 2003). Although in general agreement with Castells’ vision of the network society, van Dijk considered networks organizational tools through which the network society emerges (van Dijk, 2003). Van Dijk diverged from Castells (DATE) in the proposition that individuals, groups, and organizations remain the building blocks of society. Networks, increasingly social media networks, are the tools with which individuals, groups, and organizations interact and synchronize activity (van Dijk, 2003).

At its core, network analysis is the study of how the social structure of relationships (such as networks) affects beliefs, behavior, and action (van Dijk, 2003). Thus, network analysis tends to focus on communication structures that can be distinguished and analyzed for causal effect (van Dijk, 2003). Methodologically, network analysis maps the relationships among individuals, organizations, institutions, and systems (van Dijk, 2003). In mapping social and political relationships on a global scale, network analysis can visualize emergent and informal communication patterns and explain or measure occurrences such as political transition or social reform (van Dijk, 2003).
Network analysis uses several levels of analyses, including communication patterns and roles, communication styles, and the effectiveness of the information flows (van Dijk, 2003). Empirically, network analysis techniques focus on the structure of communications, which may be operationalized in a variety of ways (van Dijk, 2003). Some structural features used in network analysis include communication patterns in an organization, the identification of groups, and communication-related roles of individuals within a network (e.g., agenda setters and gatekeepers; van Dijk, 2003). Network analysis also addresses specific aspects of communication patterns, including communication channels and media, the relationship between information types and communication networks, and the extent or potential for bottom-up communication in traditionally hierarchical communications patterns. More nuanced network analysis variables include communication as perceived by organizations and their members, communication styles used (i.e., critical discourse analysis), and effectiveness of the information flows (van Dijk, 2012).

In network analysis, the actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent; linkages between actors are venues for the transfer or flow of resources, in this present case, information. Network models see the network structural environment as providing either opportunity for or constraint upon the actions of the actors in the network. In essence the network structure (social, economic, political) is the pattern of relations among actors (Wasserman & Galaskiewicz, 1994).

Network analysis encompasses a wide range of theoretical perspectives and scholarly disciplines. Monge and Contractor (2003) indicated eight subgroups of network theory for which network analysis is appropriate for measuring and tracking
relations: theories of self-interest; theories of exchange and dependency; theories of cognition; homophily theories; theories of proximity; theories of uncertainty reduction; theories of social support; and, most akin to the research at hand, theories of mutual self-interest and collective action (Monge & Contractor, 2003). All social interaction can be viewed in network terms because networks are nothing more than relationships among participating actors. Formal network analysis examines individuals within their institutional context and relational contacts (Wellman & Hampton, 1999). Some scholars examine all interactions that relate to individuals, social groups, or society solely in terms of their network dependency (Gilpin & Miller, 2013; Wellman, 2001).

A network is a structural and relational paradigm, and network analysis is focused on detecting and measuring causal pressures in the social network structure (Figure 2; van Dijk, 2003). Network analysis alone, however, is an insufficient methodology for the holistic inquiry of the research questions posed herein. The analysis is useful in descriptive inquiries, such as tracking exchanges of information and locating linkages and networks, but a deeper exploration into the relationships and perceptions of the actors is helpful in providing a more nuanced view.

Advocacy INGOs

Defined minimally, an INGO is “any non-profit, non-governmental, legal, voluntary organization” (Union of International Organizations, 2013). The literature most broadly characterizes INGOs as organizations independent of government interference or profit motivation (Willets, 2013). However, the definition of INGO’s may be narrowed in terms of structure and function.
Wong (2012) cited two criteria for INGO status: (a) the organization should be working on an international scale with operations in several different countries (though not necessarily all regions of the world), and (b) they should be involved with some aspect of the development of civil society in countries where they work. Civil society is defined as that “web of autonomous associations independent of the state, which bind citizens together in matters of common concern” (Taylor, 1990, p. 94). GCS, as noted, refers in particular to organizations (and individuals) that aid in humanitarian and environmental issues on a global scale (Orient, 2013).

![Figure 2. Networks connecting individuals, groups, organizations and societies. Adapted from “Outline of a Multilevel Theory of the Network Society,” by J. van Dijk, 2012.](image)

A wide variety of INGOs function as mediators in intractable conflicts. These include conflict resolution INGOs, as well as those in humanitarian assistance, development, human rights, peace building, and other such arenas (Stephenson, 2005). There are five distinguishing structural features of the INGO. First, it is a formal organization, that is, institutionalized with some form of organizational permanence
(Lewis & Kanji, 2009). It has regularly scheduled meetings of member representatives, specified decision-making procedures, a permanent staff (Stephenson, 2005). Second, an INGO is private and free from interference (at least superficially) from governmental or capitalistic influence (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). INGOs are never established by governments or even by agreements among governments. Their members are usually individuals and private associations, rather than states, and they may be formally established networks of other organizations (Stephenson, 2005).

Third, to preserve credibility, INGOs are non-profit distributing; financial surplus may not accrue to owners or directors, only to the INGO itself (Lewis & Kanji, 2009). Fourth, the INGO is self-governing and directs its own affairs based on discretionary institutional protocol. Finally, INGOs are voluntary. This does not mean the staff is comprised only of volunteers, only that there is some degree of voluntary participation, such as a voluntary board of governors or trustees (Lewis & Kanji, 2009).

Numerous types of INGOs exist. They are generally classified by level of organization, geographic location, and main purpose. Willets (2013) categorized INGOs geographically, dividing them into regional and global NGOs. Vakil (1997) organized INGOs by purpose and listed five classes: welfare, development (e.g., capacity building), development education, networking or research, and, of course, advocacy.

Advocacy INGOs help disaffected individuals and organizations press claims against national and international institutions (Jordan & van Tuijl, 2000; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Recalling the boomerang effect, INGO TANs lobby on behalf of populations without political voice or access. For example, Amnesty challenges violations of human rights in many countries on behalf of prisoners of conscience (POC; Amnesty
Prisoners of conscience are defined as “people . . . jailed because of their . . . conscientiously-held beliefs, ethnic origin, sex, color, language, national or social origin, economic status, birth, sexual orientation or other status, provided that they have neither used nor advocated violence” (Amnesty, 2014). Amnesty claims five Cuban citizens are POCs: Rafael Matos Montes de Oca; Emilio Planas Robert; and brothers Alexeis, Diango, and Vianco Vargas Martín (Amnesty, 2014).

Other advocacy INGOs seek to reform political institutions they perceive to have harmed or marginalized populations. For example, the mission of Transparency International (TI) is to reduce corruption that undermines sustainable development and economic justice around the world. A major initiative of TI is its Corruption Perception Index, published annually since 1995 (Transparency International, 2014).

What distinguishes advocacy INGOs from service-delivery or capacity-building organizations is that their goal is to produce effective political demands for action on others; as such, they epitomize the TAN model. They seek to make other organizations, institutions, and states recognize problems or be held accountable to commitments they have already made to IGOs (Stephenson, 2005). Advocacy INGOs (also known as “policy-influence INGOs”) engage in many activities. They make arguments for the importance or justice of their causes. They conduct research to show the size and extent of problems. They organize demonstrations to mobilize support. They gather evidence about compliance with existing laws and policies. In addition, they press for laws and policies that further their goals (Stephenson, 2005). INGOs influence policy, and their most important tool in so doing is information.
**Information politics, INGOs, and gatekeeping.** As noted earlier, a TAN uses the strategy of voluntary, reciprocal information exchange to further its advocacy agenda (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). This may take the form of coordinating activities, fundraising, and lobbying, but most importantly, it entails the use of information politics to raise issue awareness and set advocacy agendas. Control over information is the strongest asset in the advocacy network, and using information, INGOs within a TAN gain influence by mobilizing information as a strategy for advocacy (Center for Global Democracy, 2014).

TANs rely on information politics to push their advocacy agenda, in this case, that of free speech. Information politics is not only the gathering and disseminating of information. In the TAN, information politics seeks to exert influence through the construction, alignment, and bridging of cognitive frames (Overdevest, 2005). INGOs in the free speech TAN place issues on the public agenda, providing policymakers and the general public with information (Overdevest, 2005).

Keck and Sikkink (1998) theorized that, through the TAN, INGOs are able to use information to their advantage because the network has the following characteristics:

1. **Speed:** Because advocacy networks are linked to like-minded networks across the globe, they have access to information that might otherwise be lost or suppressed (Center for Law and Democracy, 2014). Technology has only enhanced this speed. E-mail, faxes, the Internet, smart phones, and social media platforms, such as Twitter and FaceBook, make sharing important information around the globe inexpensive and instantaneous (Center for Law and Democracy, 2014).

2. **The appearance of credibility:** Advocacy networks claim sophisticated information gathering and analysis methods and have the benefit of being attractive to
scholars and regional experts, as well as grassroots forces, to gather and present trustworthy information (Center for Law and Democracy, 2014).

3. Framing techniques: Advocacy networks have become adept at communicating information (such as stories and testimonials) that present the facts with a human face (Center for Law and Democracy, 2014).

However, information politics brings with it the dangers of bias and inadvertent or direct editorializing. The extent to which INGOs exercise the role of gatekeeper is of primary concern to the research at hand. Thus, the argument that INGOs might reinforce existing power structures is explored through the wider lens of gatekeeping.

**Gatekeeping.** Gatekeeping is simply that “process by which the billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into the hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day (Shoemaker, 1991). The concept, first introduced by Lewin’s (1947) inquiry into community dynamics, is the simple task of selecting what goes on the table for dinner (Lewin, 1947; Soroka, 2012). Lewin theorized that a dinner menu was the result of a communications channel he saw as a gate. The person deciding which foods to select was the keeper of that gate (Lewin, 1947). The concept was made media specific when White (1950) tested his own hypothesis that selection of news stories was primarily a subjective process in which those tasked with choosing which news stories were published played a crucial and very personal role in channeling or gatekeeping information.

Scholars have diverged concerning how large a role subjectivity bias plays in news selection or, as addressed in this present research, information distribution. Gieber (1956) argued that editorial decisions are not based on personal preferences but are the
result of technical constraints. Similarly, others have noted that larger organizational
goals and structures mediate and constrain the preferences of gatekeeping individuals
(Bagdikian, 2004). However, the concept of gatekeeping is widely accepted as an
industry truism, and the implication is that any examination of the newsworthiness or
selection of information must take into account those making the decisions as to which
information is gathered, selected, and disseminated. In so doing, it becomes an easier
task to assess the impartiality or credibility of that particular information.

While an in-depth exploration of the multitude of gatekeeping literature is
unnecessary for the purposes of this review, it is helpful to identify some of the biases
that might influence news selection and information sharing. As noted, organizational-
level factors—for example, administrative costs, working protocol, time constraints, and
budgetary concerns—play a role in news selection (Bass, 1969; Donohue, Olin, &
Tichenor, 1989; Soroka, 2012). In this present research, the tight budgets of the studied
INGOs are, indeed, influential because limited resources prevent these organizations
from putting field staff (virtual or otherwise) in every country of concern.

In addition, “story related factors” (Soroka, 2012) may include geographic
proximity, disasters, economics, politics, and crime (Abbott & Brassfield, 1989; Galtung
& Ruge, 1965). Story-related factors have particular relevance for this study for two
reasons: (a) Free speech INGOs with an eye on Cuba must take care not to “out” their
sources because of a general perception that any outing source will be vulnerable to
repudiation and criminal charges, and (b) because the INGOs have no representative
ground presence in Cuba and Cuban citizens have limited access to unfettered Internet
access, making contact with the local citizenry is severely hampered. This latter point is
of interest because it would indicate that virtual access through social media would be of priority.

Of greatest concern are the extra-organizational factors that play a role in gatekeeping. Soroka (2012) identified these as professional factors, such as journalistic values and norms or stereotypes of newsworthiness (Gans, 1979; Soroka, 2012). However, also contemplated is the ideological. Thus, in the case at hand, extra-organizational factors include not only journalistic values and norms but also both organizational and individual ideologies. As such, INGO ideology—as it applies to freedom of speech, democracy, and communism—is a potential factor in INGO decision making in selecting which information to share from Cuba through its social media.
CHAPTER 3

CUBA

Understanding Freedom of Expression Outside the Liberal Paradigm

Assessing freedom of speech in Cuba, one would think that the nation was born in 1959. The literature trends toward the tautological, assuming Cubans do not speak because there is no free speech in Cuba. Little explanation or context is asserted for the relative ease with which the Castros’ regime has been able to stifle meaningful dissent for nearly 55 years. Freedom of speech and other civil rights have not been properly examined in large part because of the ideological remnants of the Cold War. To this day, there is an overwhelming focus on the legitimacy of the Cuban regime, that is, Communism, and on the near universal assumption that Cuba will eventually transition to a U.S. style of democracy. While democratization literature has elsewhere found that an increase in civil rights, particularly those of speech and the press, is positively associated with regime transitions, little research exists in which the sociopolitical evolution of freedom of speech in Cuba is analyzed (Karl & Schmitter, 1991; O’Donnell, 1998; O’Donnell & Schmitter, 2013).

Ideologies of freedom of expression. Often, the terms free speech, freedom of expression, and free press are merged.”3 For particular research agendas, this merger conflates concepts and blurs significant distinctions between the ideas. Freedom of the press might better be understood as the publicized by-product of freedom of speech and freedom of speech as the application of freedom of expression. However, for the

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3 See the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19; European Council’s Convention on Human Rights, Protocol 11.
purposes of this review, the three terms are merged under that of free speech because it is the fundamental freedom from constraint that is examined here.

    Usually attributed to Western philosophy and political ideology and always associated with democracy, the definition of free speech is elusive. Early Athenian politics were interwoven with the concept of parrhesia, which translates roughly as “freedom of speech” and, more recently, as “frank speech” (Fields, 2009; Landauer, 2012). Parrhesia encompasses both the cultural expectation and political reality that “speech reveals the truth as one sees it; speech opens and uncovers” (Saxonhouse, 2006, p. 235).

    Free speech has been defined as broadly as “the whole range of expressive acts that are produced with the intention of communicating an idea” (Scanlon, 1972, p. 2) and as narrowly as speech designed to promote truth and the overall condition (Braddon-Mitchell & West, 2004). Interpretations concerning the breadth and depth of freedom of speech vary by culture, yet most contemporary interpretations of the term associate it with classic liberal political philosophy.

    Classic liberalism, as it applies to free speech, derives from Milton’s (1644) impassioned argument for a free press in Areopagitica (Summers, 2000).

        This is true Liberty when free born men
        Having to advise the public may speak free,
        Which he who can, and will, deserv's high praise,
        Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;
        What can be juster in a State then this? (Milton, 1644).

    The rationale is explained further by John Stuart Mill: “We can never be sure,” he wrote, “that the opinion we are endeavoring to stifle is a false opinion, and if we were sure, stifling it would be an evil still” (Mill, 1885, p. 13).
From classic liberal theorists like Milton, Mill, and later notable political and moral philosophers—such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, Johan Gottlieb Fichte, Adam Smith, Thomas Paine, and Thomas Jefferson—, the belief in a citizen’s right to speak became entrenched in Western ideology (Sica, 2005).

The belief is woven into many Western European constitutional and legislative frameworks. For example, France’s constitutional precursor, the Declaration of the Rights of Man (Declaration) acknowledges free expression of thoughts and opinions as one of the most precious rights of man. Every citizen may therefore speak, write, and print freely (National Assembly of France, 1789). Similarly, the United Kingdom’s Human Rights Act of 1998 asserted in Article 8, “Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion,” that “everyone has the right to freedom of expression.” Free expression is the right to hold opinions and to receive and impart information of ideas (Wadham, Mountfield, & Gallagher, 2009).

In the United States, freedom of speech is one of “qualified absolutism.” Freedom of speech is of the highest priority, and all regulation is suspect; however, at times to protect the harmony of society, speech may be regulated (Smolla, 2011). The First Amendment definitively prohibits punitive or censorious regulations on speech if based on content, opinion, or ideas.

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances. (U. S. Constitution, 1787)

Although more often associated with the negative right to be free from interference, classic liberalism presents freedom of speech as both a positive (“freedom to”) and a
negative ("freedom from") right. Freedom of speech is the freedom to speak without fear of official sanction (Commission on Freedom of the Press, 1947; Curran, 1998).

**Freedom of expression in Cuba and the United States.** To contrast Fidel Castro’s Revolutionary concept of freedom of speech with a liberal notion of the same, the UN’s definition of *free speech* is adopted for the Western world. Freedom of speech is “the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas *through any media and regardless of frontiers*” (UN, 1948; emphasis added). Freedom of speech in Cuba is different; it is a collective good, wherein the freedom to speak is filtered through what is best for society as a whole, rather than as an intrinsic right for the citizen. The Cuban Constitution is clear on this point:

> Citizens have freedom of speech and of the press in keeping with the objectives of socialist society. Material conditions for the exercise of that right are provided by the fact that the press, radio, television, cinema, and other mass media are state or social property and can never be private property. This assures their use at exclusive service of the working people and in the interests of society. (Cuba Constitution, 2002)

**A History of Freedom of Speech in Cuba**

Cuba is over 500 years old, yet it is arguable whether Cuba has ever existed as a truly free nation. Throughout its history, Cuban citizens have struggled to establish a foundation for freedom of speech and political expression. Their struggles have been largely unsuccessful.

Contrary to Castro-centric literature, this project posits that Cuba developed a strong sociopolitical culture of repression prior to the Revolution. This “non-tradition” of free speech can be traced to the Spanish Inquisition. Once culturally established in Cuba, the culture of repression thrived during Colonial occupation and was made stronger by
U.S. imperialist policy. By the time of Castro’s Revolution and introduction of the Socialist Republic, a cultural understanding of speech restriction was firmly entrenched. Rather than taking away their citizens’ rights of dissent and expression, the Castros inherited a culture in which speech restrictions were ingrained. For ideological context, a brief history follows.

**The colonial era.** While Spanish colonization of Cuba began in 1511 with conquistadors Diego Velásquez and Pánfilo de Narváez, the golden years of Spanish colonial rule began in the 17th century with the development of sugar- and tobacco-inspired wealth (Gott, 2007). In 1830, Cuba was the wealthiest colony in the world, benefiting mightily from its sugar trade (Gjelten, 2008). Cuba produced much-needed tax revenue for Spain, so the motherland maintained a tight grip on the island. The influence of the Inquisition and Spain’s rejection of Enlightenment ideals became absorbed into the growing colony’s political culture. Freedom of speech was not recognized. Dissent was not tolerated. In particular, the tradition of repressing speech was adopted and continued by two forces: (a) the Spanish military and (b) *Voluntarios*. The two branches of the Crown—one formal and one informal—worked in conjunction to eradicate dissent and enforce loyalty to Spain.

Guided by appointed territorial governors, the Spanish military presence was strong. At least 40,000 troops inhabited the island in 1830 and enforced strict Spanish censorship laws (Gjelten, 2008). Any Cuban rebellion against Spanish rule was quashed ruthlessly by the military. Dissidents (known as propagandists) were imprisoned, exiled, and executed (Gjelten, 2008). Using an Inquisition tactic, the Spanish military used a ubiquitous network of informants and spies to identify potential dissidents in the native,
slave, and burgeoning “Cuban” populations (Gjelten, 2008).4 Also reminiscent of the Inquisition were campaigns such as La Escalera. In an 1844 slave revolt, the military responded by arresting thousands of free and slave Black Cubans. The detained were accused of conspiracy against the Crown, tied to a ladder (escalera), and whipped until they confessed to the accusation (Gjelten, 2008; Paquette, 2007).

Voluntarios were marauding paramilitary loyalist groups who committed acts of violence and intimidation upon any citizen who dared speak of independence or criticize the monarchy (Gjelten, 2007; Lent, 1989). The role of the voluntarios was to expose pro-independence groups and movements, turn them into the military, and terrorize the population. Unchecked by local authorities, the militia added to the repressive environment in Cuba. Voluntarios also acted as vigilantes. In one instance, after a group of young independents were acquitted of making deriding statements about a loyalist editor, the voluntaries held a second trial of their own and executed eight of the acquitted (Lent, 1989).

Pro-independent groups did manage to publish sporadic dissident newspapers and tracts. In 1869, during the first war for Cuban independence, several pro-independence periodicals came into existence: La Estrella Solitaria, El Mambi, El Boletín de la Guerra, and El Cubano Libre published criticism of Spanish rule (Lent, 1989). However, the most influential reformist publication of the Colonial era—Jose Martí’s Patria—was published in New York City, rather than Cuba. In Cuba, fear of the military, voluntarios, and actively enforced censorship and infidencia laws (sedition laws) prevented the free expression of nationalist, reformist, or independence sentiments.

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4 A Cuban identity began to take shape in the late 16th–early 17th centuries as African, Chinese, and indigenous peoples mixed with Spanish adventurers and entrepreneurs to form an eclectic society (Gott, 2007; Gjelten, 2008).
(Gjelten, 2008; Lent, 1989). A violation of *infidencia* was punishable by death, and Spanish authorities used them to carry out a murderous siege intended to sow terror in the population” (Gjelten, 2008).

**The imperial era.** U.S. imperial relations with Cuba post-independence and its subsequent economic and Cold War policies only exacerbated the repressive climate in Cuba. This is indeed ironic given the United States’ oft-touted respect for civil liberties, in particular freedom of speech. In 1898, with the help of an eager United States, Cuba was anointed “Republic” after winning independence from Spain. The United States had long viewed Cuba as a potential conquest. Motivated by greed for Cuba’s booming sugar economy (Gjelten, 2008), an interventionist and opinionated press, and “remembering the Maine” (“The Maine Blown Up,” 1898), the United States began its occupation of Cuba immediately after declaring war on Spain on April 25, 1898. Thus began 4 years of military rule (Gott, 2007). Although the United States officially departed Cuba in 1902, its control over the Cuban government only truly ceased with the ascension of Fidel Castro.

More than 50 years of U.S. intervention, militarily and otherwise, served to further ensconce restriction of speech and dissent. During this time, the United States actively supported incompetent and corrupt governments and backed brutal dictatorships aligned with its financial interests and anti-communist ideals (Gonzalez, 2011; Gott, 2007). The Platt Amendment, reserving the U.S. right to intervene in Cuban affairs as well as to lease and secure lands, and the U.S.-supported Batista regime are two examples of how the U.S. negatively affected freedom of speech in Cuba.
Castro. Under Castro, restriction of citizen speech was continued through Leninist ideology. However, the success with which the government has been able to suppress expression for more than 55 years must not be disassociated with the historical context of freedom of speech in Cuba. It is short sighted to do so. Long before Fidel Castro, there was a vacuum where there should have been political debate and dissent. The culture inherited from Spain and groomed by colonialism and U.S. imperialism left the Cubans without a political public sphere.

In his now famous speech in 1961, Fidel Castro addressed the relative importance of freedom of speech:

...within the Revolution, everything; against the Revolution. Against the Revolution nothing because the Revolution has its rights and the first right of the Revolution is to exist, and against the right of the Revolution to be and exist, nobody... What are the rights of the revolution or non-revolutionary writers and artist? Within the Revolution everything; against the Revolution, no right. (Castro, 1961)

The speech is ironic because Fidel’s rise to power was in part aided by illegally distributed dissent literature, such as the Sierra Maestra and El Cubano Libre (Luis, 2001; Riveron & Salgago, 1989). Initially, Fidel himself claimed that his government would be based on “absolute guarantees of freedom,” including those of speech and the press (Redding, 1971).

The Republic of Cuba has had great success in controlling dissent among its citizens. How it has succeeded where others—including most recently those fallen dictatorships of the MENA region—have failed is an issue of lively debate among scholars. Reed (1993) attributed this success to a confluence of three factors: (a) the nationalization of the communications industry, (b) the punishment of Cubans who
violate restrictions on freedom of expression, and (c) the denial of access to foreign news sources (Reed, 1993).

Aguirre (2002) found strategic implementation of “social control” differentiates the Cuban government from other failed socialist or communist systems, including the former Soviet Bloc. Social control in Cuba is maintained through a combination of formal and informal control mechanisms. Formal mechanisms include laws, institutions, and political organizations. Informal mechanisms are comprised of political and cultural myths; charismatic rhetoric; and peer policing, with the latter exerting extreme influence over the collective psyche of the citizens (Aguirre, 2002; Aguirre, 1998).

Scholars have also examined cycles of repression that ebb and flow with political, social, and international circumstances. Three cycles in particular—vigilance, contention, and open repression—alternate in varying levels in response to levels of dissent or perceived threats to the State (Lopez-Gottardi Chao, 2005). Vigilance manifests in inter-peer-policing, wherein citizens are solicited and encouraged to gather information on their fellow citizens’ activities and ideas (Lopez-Gottardi Chao, 2005). Contention intensifies constraint, with officials targeting and threatening key individuals and groups. Open repression includes direct action, such as imprisonment or sanctions taken by the State against a citizen or group (Lopez-Gottardi Chao, 2005). Such actions are generally taken against budding protest organizations that express demands for economic and social reform. In particular, groups suspected of cooperating with the United States are targeted (Lopez-Gottardi Chao, 2005).

The 2003 retaliatory crackdown on the Varela Project is an example of an open repression cycle. On March 18, 2003, in what is now known as the Black Spring, the
Cuban government arrested 75 members of the protest group (“Dissidents Sentenced,” 2003). All of the arrested dissidents, who were advocating for expanded civil and economic rights, were convicted and adjudged lengthy sentences (Bond, 2003). Most were convicted of treason for collaborating with the United States (“Dissidents Sentenced,” 2003).

**Contemporary Restrictions on Speech and the Internet in Cuba**

While academic debate continues as the cause of Castro’s successful repression of dissident ideals, the literature does provide a general framework through which to analyze current strategies of repression. Control over citizen speech is maintained through a combination of (a) actively enforced restrictive legislation, (b) informal social mechanisms, and (c) a near universal control over information and technology (Evenson, 2003; *Press Freedom*, 2013).

**Legal restrictions.** In the Cuban legal system, freedom of speech is governed by the Constitution and legislative acts enacted by the *Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular* or National Assembly of the People’s Power (*Cuba*, n.d.). As noted previously, freedom of speech in Cuba, as a socialist society, is prioritized differently than it would be in a capitalist one. Although widely perceived as providing unfettered access to free speech, it should be noted that, in capitalist democracies, freedom of expression is often subordinated to corporate, commercial, and individual property rights (Frye, 2014; Maltz, 2003; Parenti, 2010). In the socialist republic of Cuba, freedom of speech rights are subordinate, not to the Cuban peso, but to the collective public welfare (the State). As

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5 A factor unexamined in this project is the extent to which current ideology remains popular to the citizens.  
6 The State is often accused of committing acts of political terror, including state-sponsored violence and “other integrity of life” actions, such as torture and random executions (Lopez, 2002). However, the accounts of political terror vary so widely in the literature it is impossible to verify the credibility of the reports. For that reason, political terror, as defined above, is not considered in this study.
Article 53 of the Constitution states, “Citizens have freedom of speech and of the press in keeping with the objectives of a socialist society” (Cuba Constitution, 2002).

The Cuban penal code contains several laws that criminalize speech and impose potentially lengthy terms of imprisonment. Article 108 of the Code prohibits

(a) incitement against the social order, international solidarity of the socialist State by means of oral, or written propaganda . . . .
(b) makes, distributes or possesses propaganda . . . .

Other prohibitions on speech include bans on the creation of enemy propaganda (Article 103), contempt for authority (Article 144), inciting public disorder (Articles 200 and 201), sedition (Article 100), dangerousness (Articles 72–90), and rebellion (Articles 98 and 99; Evenson, 2003).

Particularly scrutinized in the international human rights community are Law 88 (Ley 88) and the previously mentioned Article 91 of the Penal Code. In 1999, Cuba's National Assembly passed the Ley de Protección de la Independencia Nacional y la Economía de Cuba, (Law for the Protection of the National Independence and Economy of Cuba or Ley 88). The law requires a 7–15 year imprisonment for “passing information to the United States that might aid anti-Cuban measures such as the US economic blockade.” Surreptitious gathering of such information raises the punishment to 20 years (Evensen, 2005). Specifically, Ley 88 bars the “ownership, distribution or reproduction of ‘subversive materials’ from the US government, and calls for up to five years of imprisonment for those who collaborate with media deemed to be assisting US policy” (Evensen, 2005, p.178).

Used in conjunction with Ley 88 is Article 91 of the Cuban Penal Code: “He who in the interest of a foreign state, commits an act with the objective of damaging the independence or territorial integrity of the Cuban state, incurs the penalty of ten to twenty
years, imprisonment or death” (Evenson, 2005, p. 178). Such laws are not exclusive to Cuban citizens. U.S. contractor Allan Gross, recently released in U.S.-Cuba normalization negotiations was is serving a 15-year prison sentence after being accused of committing offenses against State security in delivering communication equipment to people regarded as opponents (Press Freedom, 2013).

Many of these laws have served as justification for economic sanctions against Cuba, such as the U.S. 1963 economic embargo and subsequent tightening of the embargo in the 1992 Torricelli and 1996 Helms Burton Acts (Groombridge, 2012). The future of the embargo is, for the first time, suspect. As U.S. citizens move further from the Communist Cold War paradigm, support for such restrictive measures has waned. A recent poll revealed that “61 percent nationally and 67 percent of Floridians favor removing all restrictions on travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens; Latinos weigh in at 66 percent” (Atlantic Council, 2014). Other signs indicate a possible thaw in relations between the United States and Cuba in the near future. Secretary of State Kerry’s recent praise of Cuba’s proactive humanitarianism in the Ebola crises and talks of exchanging the Cuban 5 for Alan Gross are harbingers of such a thaw (Anderson, 2014; Sanchez, Labott, & Oppman, 2014). Like Gross, the Cuban 5 were accused of spying on the United States and convicted in 2001 for intelligence gathering in Miami. They were part of what the United States called the “Wasp Network,” which allegedly collected intelligence on prominent Cuban-American exile leaders and U.S. military bases (Sanchez et al., 2014).

**Informal social restrictions.** Informal social restrictions are used to control free speech and political dissent (Aguirre, 2002). While there are several types of informal
control—that is, ritual, myth, charismatic authority, and indirect exile—, the strategy of peer-policing (otherwise referred to as peer vigilance) has particular relevance for this study (Aguirre, 2002). Peer policing takes the form of formal and informal organizations monitoring citizen activity in the open and in secret. It creates a pervasive sense of distrust among citizens and chills expression of dissent. It also engenders suspicion of those who do express opinion or complaint: Is it real, or is it a trap?

The Comités en Defensa de la Revolución (CDRs), although of waning importance, is an example of a citizen informant group. Created in the 1960s to monitor internal opposition, CDRs are formal organizations partitioned into neighborhood blocks (Gott, 2007; Lopez-Gottardi Chao, 2005). In the open, citizens are assigned to document the opinions and activities of their neighbors (Lopez-Gottardi Chao, 2005). These organizations also have the authority to interrogate suspected counterrevolutionaries and issue arrest warrants (Aguirre, 2002). Thus, in every community, residents are checking their speech and actions for fear of interrogation from the appointed neighborhood watchdog.

Similar to the CDRs are the Rapid Response Brigades (RRBs), whose duty it is to observe and monitor behavior, and the Sistema Unico de Vigilancia y Protección (SVUPs or the Singular System of Vigilante and Protection), who not only monitor fellow citizens but engage in acts of repudiation against “dangerous” citizens (Aguirre, 2002; Raul Rivero, Cuba, 2000). Recently, the blogger at the heart of this study, Yoani Sánchez, was allegedly attacked and beaten on the street by suspected SVUPs. When her husband and fellow blogger, Reinaldo Escobar, tried to track down the agents, it was reported that he was also beaten by “an act of repudiation organized by the State security forces”
(Tamayo, 2009). This alleged retaliatory activity is representative of SVUP social control strategy.

In addition to formal and organized informant and retaliation groups, the Cuban Department of State Security actively recruits secret informants, known in Cuba as *chivatos* or *dobles* (Aguirre, 2002). The effect of these secret informants is twofold: the government is able to infiltrate opposition groups and preemptively quash dissident movements. More insidiously, the secret informants create an atmosphere in which people are afraid to speak because they can never be certain who is an informant and who is a friend (Aguirre, 2002). Neighbors suspect neighbors, friends suspect friends, and colleagues suspect each other. The result is an environment in which fear and distrust underlie relationships among family members, neighbors, and friends. Fear of exposure leads to self-censorship. Citing political dissident Martha Beatriz Roque Caballo, Lopez-Gottardi Chao (2005) wrote, “Every Cuban has a built-in policeman . . . [a] complex mechanism whereby one assumes the conscious of a hunted man has been developed and perfected for almost 40 years” (p.176).

**Control over information and technology.** In Cuba, even with the relative liberalizations accompanying Raúl Castro’s leadership, access to information and technology is strictly controlled. Aside from underground independent newspapers, periodicals, and blogs, citizens have no source diversity when it comes to information content. It must be noted that this is not only because of state restrictions; Cuban infrastructure has limited penetration of digital technologies in a large part due to an undeveloped economy that has suffered due to the U.S. embargo.
It has been theorized that source diversity in a society is the foundation for a well-informed public, which stimulates debate and dissent in the exercise of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991). To deter the creation of a public sphere, access to information, culture, or entertainment from any source but the government is prohibited by Article 53 of the Constitution:

[T]he press, radio, television, movies and other organs of the mass media are State or social property and can never be private property. This assures their use at the exclusive service of the working people and in the interest of society. (Cuban Constitution, 2002)

Three national newspapers circulate in Cuba: Granma, Juventad Rebelde, and Trabajadores. Granma is the most important periodical, with a daily circulation of around 675,000 (University of Minnesota, 2013; Evenson, 2005). Granma has also gone digital, with Digital Granma Internacional, which presents pages in Spanish, English, French, Portuguese, and German (Digital Granma Internacional, 2014). Both print and Internet editions contain national and international news, cultural reporting, letters, sports, and special thematic features. Most stories are reports of official decisions already implemented by the government or pointed critiques of U.S. national and foreign policy (Evenson, 2005). Per Article 53, each medium is an organ of the State.

In addition, Article 53 authorizes State control of the broadcast news agencies. Agencia Cubana de Noticias (AmnestyN) and Prensa Latina (Latin Press) are the official distributors of government information. News is framed in a manner that supports government and foreign policies. For example, on September 11, 2001, AmnestyN condemned the actions of Al Qaeda in the World Trade Center attacks, but spent most of the print criticizing U.S. response in Afghanistan (“World Shock Over US Attacks,” 2001).
Citizen access to information is also restricted by blocking technologies. In 1996, when the Internet first arrived in Cuba, the government declared access to be a “fundamental right” of the Cuban people (Venegas, 2010). However, soon after, Decree-Law 209 restricted access to the Internet and access to and ownership of computers. The law has since been amended to allow ownership of computers (prohibitively expensive for most Cubans) and until recently, blocked access to non-government produced content (Armario, 2014; Venegas, 2010).

Currently, any Internet use that is in “in violation of Cuban society’s moral principles or the country’s laws” and e-mail messages that “jeopardize national security” is criminalized (Armario, 2014). The government routinely blocks “objectionable” Internet pages, such as the home page of the Ladies in White dissident group and U.S. government-funded news broadcaster Radio and TV Marti (Armario, 2014).

While critics of President Raul Castro have accused the government of withholding access to control the people, the government has taken steps to increase access during the years immediately prior to this writing (Armario, 2014). In June 2012, more than 100 Internet cafes were opened around the island. Still, the $4.50 an hour fee continues to prohibit access for most Cubans who earn an average of $20 a month salary (Armario, 2014).

Private ownership of computers is now legal; however, citizens must possess three expensive items to connect to the Internet: a private telephone line, an Internet access device (e.g., PC with a modem), and dial-in capability. For most, the costs are too high, creating a de facto restriction on speech. According to a 2014 report, an estimated
28 percent of Cubans reported using the Internet (“Internet Users by Country,” 2014; Armario, 2014).

In 2011, the government announced the arrival of a $70 million underwater fiber-optic cable from Venezuela, ALBA-1, that was predicted to speed up connections by a factor of 3,000 (Burnett, 2013). The project went online 2 years later (Orsi, 2013). Some of the island’s high-speed Internet connections have improved noticeably; however, dial-up users have seen little gains in speed (Orsi, 2013). In May of 2013, a new branch of the Venezuela-to-Cuba undersea fiber-optic cable also came online, linking the island to nearby Jamaica and improving Cuba’s potential international communications bandwidth as well as providing a backup for the main line (Orsi, 2013).

All Internet traffic in Cuba must pass through state-run ISPs. There are two State-owned ISPs, the Centro Nacional de Intercambio Automatizado de Información (CENIA or the National Center for Automated Exchange of Information) and the Empresa de Telecomunicados de Cuba S.A (ETECSA or the Cuban Telecommunications Company; Spinello, 2012; Yee, 2013). The government also uses cyber-policing to control dissidence. Software is used to detect dissident information (Spinello, 2006). The software includes random e-mail monitoring and, upon detection of politically sensitive content, programs automatically close for “state security reasons” (Open Net Initiative, 2007). Those who do have access to the Internet often self-censor; they are afraid to use it for fear of e-mail monitoring and possible legal or social retaliation (Open Net Initiative, 2007).

Working in conjunction with the historical legacy of speech repression, political and legal restrictions, informal social controls, and limited access to communications
technologies have, to this point, been successful in curbing free speech and meaningful
debate in contemporary Cuba. Notwithstanding these constraints, protest, dissent, and
expression have occurred, in part, because of the loosening of restrictions under Rául
Castro; however, it is also directly correlated with the introduction of social media to
these groups.

A Legacy of Cuban Activism

Despite the bleak history of free speech in Cuba, it would be an oversight not to
pay homage to those Cuban citizens who have continued to voice dissent over the years
in myriad ways. While an in-depth history of Cuban activism is beyond the scope of this
project, the following political dissidents serve as a reminder that the Cuban people
should not be seen as passive in the face of repression. Rather, Cuban dissent has a
legacy of challenging the status quo not only through traditional civil protest, as often
seen in the United States and other Western nations, but also in clever and creative
subliminal protest by way of literature, poetry, religion, music, graffiti, and blogging.

Jose Martí. All the ubiquitous charisma of the Revolution and Fidel Castro
cannot begin to compete with the hero/idol position held by Jose Martí in the minds of
Cubans. This “architect of Cuban freedom” (Abel & Torrents, 1986, p. 256) “patriot
poet” (Turton, 1987), and “revolutionary democrat” (Abel & Torrents, 1986, p. 256) is
revered in Cuba and around the world. In Cuba, Martí is second to none, and his
revolutionary role against the Spanish in 1895 makes him the father of Cuban
Independence (Fanning, 2013).

Martí organized and unified the movement for Cuban independence from Spain
and died fighting for it on May 19, 1895, during a failed revolution (Adams, 2010).
Martí’s dissent was not limited to the military. He used his prose and poetry to garner support for Cuban independence and was exiled for it long before he took up arms (Adams, 2010). In 1869, he created the newspaper *La Patria Libre* (‘the Free Fatherland’), through which he advocated for independence and equality (Adams, 2010). Martí spent much of his adult life in exile yet continued to write for newspapers all over Latin America as well pen poems calling for an equitable, just, and liberated Cuban Republic. For Martí, dissent must be expressed in all forms, for “like stones rolling down hills, fair ideas reach their objectives despite all obstacles and barriers. It may be possible to speed or hinder them, but impossible to stop them” (Rodriguez-Louis, 1999, p. 117).

**Herberto Padilla.** Herberto Padilla illustrated how art embodies political expression. Padilla published a book of poems in 1968 that won the Writers Union annual book award (Quesado, 1975). The book was published in Cuba with an afterward condemning the material as “counterrevolutionary.” Padilla’s poems reflect a deep discontent with the outcome of the Revolution (Quesado, 1975). While usually using allegory to critique political realities of the Revolution, at times his words are bravely pointed: “But Revolution, we shall not leave you. The men, we are going to sing your old battle songs; To hoist your new battle cries. To keep on writing with your unforgiving chalk ‘Fatherland or Death!’” (Padilla, 1998, p. 61). Such words, of course, earned him the ire of the government. Prior to Padilla, many artists who expressed dissent, disapproval, criticism, and discontent were censored and harassed. However, because of the international notoriety of his work, Padilla received particularly harsh treatment. In what is known as the *Padilla Affair*, Padilla and his wife were arrested, allegedly
tortured, and made to read a public confession accusing himself and others of “attitudes and activities” against the government.

**Oswaldo Payá and the Valera Project.** In 1988, Oswaldo Payá illegally founded a religious-based civil disobedience party, The Christian Liberation Movement (CLM), which is known as one of the building blocks of a slowly emerging Cuban civil society (Gershmand & Guitierrez, 2009). Payá later organized the Varela Project, a petition drive, based on a constitutional provision that empowers citizens to put to a national referendum any proposal receiving at least 10,000 signatures from registered Cuban citizens (Gershman & Guitierrez, 2009). The Project circulated a referendum petition calling for a vote in favor of freedom of association and expression, freedom of the press, free elections, the right to operate private businesses, and amnesty for political prisoners (Cave, 2012; Gershman & Guitierrez, 2009). In a move that ultimately failed in political success only, Payá personally delivered to the National Assembly a referendum petition signed by 11,000 Cubans (Cave, 2012; Gershman & Guitierrez, 2009).

When Payá began collecting signatures in the late 1990s, Cuba’s domestic opposition movement was very different from today’s younger, more cohesive, and technologically sophisticated activists (Cave, 2012; Romero, 2013). The Castro government tried to marginalize the group by labeling them mercenaries who were on the conservative exile community and U.S. payrolls (Cave, 2012). However, Payá’s credibility grew as he publicly rejected any U.S. aid and opposed the U.S. trade embargo (Cave, 2012). Payá was not part of the traditional anti-Castro opposition, nor was his group overtly seeking outright overthrow of the same. The Varela Project represented a new kind of activism, one that opposed the Castro dictatorship based on the moral and
religious ideals epitomized by Father Félix Varela, a Catholic priest who began an
teleological and moral movement for Cuban independence under Colonial rule (Gershman & Guitierrez, 2009).

When accepting the 2002 European Union human rights Sakharov Prize, Oswaldo Payá said the prize was “for all Cubans, because I believe that, in awarding it, Europe wishes to say to them: ‘You, too, are entitled to rights”.

Payá was killed in a car crash in 2012 (“Oswaldo Paya,” 2012).

Porno Para Ricardo: The Cuban punk activist movement. Latin American ethnomusicologists have long argued that there is a rich culture of dissent in the Cuban underground music scene (Baker, 2011). Despite the strong presence of media censorship, underground musicians have managed to record, distribute, and perform controversial music as a form of artistic and political expression (Baker, 2011). This productivity is due, in part, to artist persistence and creativity but also to complex negotiations with cultural officials at the lower level of the government. There is a de facto policy of passive containment rather than blanket banning of alternative music (Baker, 2011). The result has been an opening for underground music and its aficionados to express discontent through a different medium.

Perhaps no group is better known, inside and outside of Cuba, than Porno Para Ricardo (PPR). PPR was named after a Cuban who loved pornography but could not get access because of the government ban (Lacey, 2008). PPR is an outspoken rock group, and its lead singer, Gorki Águila, holds a somewhat cult status (Baker, 2011). In 2003, Águila spent 2 years in prison on drug charges. After his conviction, the band’s lyrics,

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7 The prize was also awarded to Yoani Sánchez and, later, to Las Damas Blancas.
already “counterrevolutionary,” became more critical of the Castro Administration (Baker, 2011).

In 2008, Águila was arrested on charges of “dangerousness,” which, under the Cuban penal code, allows the authorities to detain those they suspect are likely to commit crimes (Voss, 2008). It is alleged that the arrest was in retaliation for PPR’s anti-Castro lyrics, in particular the song “El Comandante”:

You are a tyrant and there’s no one who can stand you . . .
Walking coma, you hold elections that you invented to stay in power. . .
Walking coma, you want me to go and vote
To keep fucking myself over
No walking coma. (Porno Para Ricardo, 2007)

His detention was widely publicized by Cuban activists and human rights groups and caused international outrage (Lacey, 2008). Eventually, Cuban authorities dropped the charge, which could have led to years in prison, instead convicting him of public disorder and sentencing him with a $30 USD fine.

Banned from performing live in Cuba since 2005, PPR continues to make music and waves. They perform clandestinely and attract a large following of counter-culture and dissident youth (Lacey, 2008). The band’s appeal to the youth subculture lies, in part, in the sociopolitical substance of its lyrics and serves to strengthen a collective activist camaraderie, if not identity (Baker, 2011). The band’s more recent songs include “Dinosaurs,” (referencing the Cuban leadership); “El General,” which caricatures Raúl Castro as a farce; and” El Comandante II,” a follow-up to their earlier song about Fidel Castro (Lacey, 2008). On September 30, 2013 Águila was again arrested as he prepared to debut his new album Maleconazo Ahora (a reference to the 1994 protests in Havana’s waterfront promenade; ArtsFreedom, 2014).
El Sexto: Graffiti for freedom. El Sexto (“the Sixth”) is Danilo Maldonado Machado, an artist who channels the punk/dissident aesthetic through graffiti, canvas work, tattoos, and nearly anything on which he can place an image (Mienza, 2013). Now a fellow at The Hague, Machado creates images of recent Cuban political martyrs like Laura Pollán and Oswaldo Payá. He has spray painted such images on streets, buildings, and billboards, as well as tattooed their images on his skin so that no one could erase them. One of his more flagrant methods of political protest is to modify and satirize official posters and traffic signs, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Graffiti by El Sexto.

Machado uses his artwork to bring citizens into the public sphere, confronting both the government and populous with images of the thoughts that remain unspoken but are shared by many. This appeal to the senses is a new type of activism, created by the necessity to find alternate routes of expression. For Machado, the alternate route is a
powerful weapon against censorship, and while there are risks—as Figure 4 shows—, he continues to wield it. “To defeat me you need guns, you need police, you need prisons. For me to defeat you, I only need spray paint and this little piece of paper” (Machado, 2011).

Figure 4. Graffiti by El Sexto.

Despite vast legal and technical obstacles, a growing number of Cuban bloggers have emerged to disseminate island news and views online. The bloggers, mainly young adults from a variety of professions, have opened a new space for free expression in Cuba, offering an outlet for sharing independent ideas (DesdeCuba, 2014). The Cuban Blogosphere, Desde Cuba, a German based portal, links to nearly 50 independent bloggers, journalists and writers (Cubaperiodistos.cu, 2014). Desde Cuba is “a place where citizen journalists can offer opinions that don’t have room in official Cuban outlets or any other publication that is conditioned by political requirements” (Owsiany, 2014).
As many as 75 other independent blogs are active, although these are not journalistic or news-based commentary, and rather focus upon personal and family interests (Cubaperiodistas.cu, 2014). There are also 200 officially approved blogs that produced by government journalists (Cubaperiodistas.cu, 2014).

The emergence of the independent Cuban blog began in 2007, when the first few were written under pseudonyms. Free press advocates, including the INGOs studied herein attribute the blogging community to to Yoani Sánchez who began blogging in April 2007 and was the first to write under her own byline (Owsiany, 2014). Since that time there has been a proliferation in independent voices, six in particular stand out. While most of the bloggers write in Spanish, many are translated by volunteers using platform such as Wordpress. In addition, organizations such Global Voices translate and post the blogs on a daily basis. Global Voices is a non-profit organization comprised of “a borderless, largely volunteer community of more than 1200 writers, analysts, online media experts and translators (Global Voices, 2015). The mission of Global Voices since 2005 has been “to curate, verify and translate trending news and stories you might be missing on the Internet, from blogs, independent press and social media in 167 countries” (Global Voices, 2015).

Thanks to volunteers and organizations like Global Voices Cuban blogs are made accessible bringing international attention as well as support from Cuban citizens who have access to the Internet (Global Voices, 2014). It is beyond the scope of this research to paint a comprehensive picture of the Cuban blogosphere. However, to highlight the burgeoning public sphere, 4 blogs are profiled below.
**Elaine Diaz.** Elaine Diaz is a moderate voice in the polarized Cuban blogosphere, offering an objective view of life in Cuba (Raman, 2013). Diaz is a Cuban journalism professor at the University of Havana, she has received a lot of through her personal blog La Polémica Digital (The Digital Controversy) [Raman, 2013].

**La Jovén Cuba (The Young Cuba).** La Jovén Cuba is a blog posted by a group of university students from the Matanzas province who offer their perspective. Although most of the posts support a pro-government ideology, there is great debate in the comments section. Many comments are highly critical, and spark debate in the community (Raman, 2013). Members of the website recently participated in a live meeting with other prominent Cuban bloggers & Twitter users (Raman, 2013).

**Sandra Álvarez.** Álvarez is a psychologist and journalist and her blog tackles issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation in Cuba (Raman, 2013). The blog is entitled *Negra Cuban Tenia Que Ser* (It Had to Be a Black Cuban Woman). She provides intersectional analyses of the identities of Afro-Cubanism, the LGBT community, and other minority groups (Raman, 2013).

**Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo.** Pardo Lazo’s blog, *Lunes De Post-Revolución* (The Monday after the Revolution) is virulently ant-Castro. Currently serving as a fellow at Brown University’s International Writers Project, Pardo Lazo is a prolific blogger and photojournalist. Born in Havana, Pardo Lazo is also the author of five novels. He is a columnist for Madrid’s *Diario de Cuba, Sampsonia Way Magazine* and *El Nacional* in Caracas, and is webmaster of the photoblog, *Boring Home Utopics*. Pardo Lazo’s novel, *Boring Home*, was censored by the Letras Cubanas publishing house in 2009 (Coelho,
2014). Following the novel’s publication in Prague and Caracas, he has not been permitted to publish, study, or work in Cuba (Coelho, 2014). He was arrested on three occasions and prevented from leaving the island by Fidel Castro’s secret police. However he was permitted exit Cuba in 2013 and accompanied Yoani Sánchez on her international speaking tour, adding to the conversations and chronicaling the trip with his photography.

In the course of this research there was opportunity to interview Pardo Lazo who told of his expulsion from the academic community (he was previously a geneticist). Pardo Lazo spoke at length regarding his negative opinion of Cuba and the U.S. and perceived relations between the two as an inadvertent conspiracy to keep their leaders in power (Pardo Lazo, 2014). His most recent blog post, entitled Cubaamerica, reflects the position in a forceful and colorful manner:

*Figure 5. Photoshop by Pardo Lazo*

Cuba I've given you all and now I'm nothing.
Cuba two CUCs and 56 years, January 1st, 1959.
You can't stand my own mind.
Cuba when will we end the human peace?
Go fuck yourself with your Revolution
I don't feel good don't brother me.
I won't write my poem till I'm in my left mind.
Cuba when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your uniform?
When will you look at myself through the grave?
When will you be worthy of your million Castroists?
Cuba why are your libraries full of totalitarianism?
Cuba when will you send your eggs to Indianapolis?
I'm sick of your sane demands.
When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my Gross looks?
Cuba after all it is you and I who are perfect not the ex world.
Your Marxism is too much for me.
You made me want to be a serf.
There must be some other way to settle this government.
Batista is in Target I don't think he'll come back it's minister.
Are you being minister or is this some form of practical joke?
I'm trying to come. To the point.
I refuse to give up my obsession.
Cuba still pushing I know what I'm doing.
Cuba the rum blossoms are falling.
I haven't read the newspapers for months, everyday somebody goes on trial for migration.
Cuba I feel sentimental about the Bolos.
Cuba I used to be a communist when I was a kid and I'm not sorry.
I smoke Aromas every chance I get.
I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the Raulists in the closet.
When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid.
My mind is made up there's going to be transition.
You should have seen me reading Mao.
My psychoagent thinks I'm perfectly tight.
I won't say the Lord's Prayer.
I have mystical treasons and Cardinal vibrations.
Cuba I still haven't told you what you did to Uncle Sam after he came over from The Obama House.
I'm addressing you.
Are you going to let our emotional life be run by The New York Times?
I'm obsessed by The New York Times.
I read it every week.
Its cover stares at me every time I slink past the corner candystore. 
I read it in the basement of the José Martí National Library. 
It's always telling me about responsibility. Businessmen are serious. Movie producers are serious. Even the exile is serious but me. 
It occurs to me that I am Cuba. 
I am talking to myself again.

**Yoani Sánchez and La Generación Y**

Sánchez writes about *Generación Y*, the label she has given her generation: 

> [P]eople like me, with names that start with or contain a “Y”. Born in Cuba in the ‘70s and ‘80s, marked by schools in the countryside, Russian cartoons, illegal emigration and frustration. . . . Yanisleidi, Yoandri, Yusimí, Yuniesky and others who carry their “Y’s.” (Sánchez, 2014)

Sánchez, 38, studied for two terms at the Pedagogical Institute in Cuba, majoring in Spanish Literature. She earned a degree in Hispanic philology with a concentration in contemporary Latin American literature (Owsiany, 2014). 

Perhaps a sign of things to come, Sánchez’s posting entitled “Words Under Pressure: A Study of the Literature of the Dictatorship in Latin America” was declared “incendiary.” She entered the work force at the State-run publishing house Gente Nueva; however, she soon realized her wages would not support her family, and she left the publishing house for better-paid work as a freelance Spanish teacher for German tourists visiting Havana (Huffington Post, 2014). In the biography posted on her blog, *Generación Y*, Sánchez noted, 

> [It] was a time (which continues today) when engineers preferred to drive a taxi, teachers would do almost anything to get a job at the desk of a hotel, and at store counters you could find a neurosurgeon or nuclear physicist. (Sánchez, 2014)

Like many disillusioned with the state of affairs in Cuba, Sánchez emigrated to Switzerland; however, she returned in 2004 and began her personal quest to push for economic and social reform in Cuba (Huffington Post, 2014). She began to publish the
underground magazine *Contodos*, which she describes as a forum for free expression and a source of information and news from outside of the state (Sánchez, 2014). In 2009, she also established, with her blogger husband, Reinoldo Excobar, the digital magazine *Convivencia* (Huffington Post, 2014).

Her entries are not always political, but when they are, they are dissident in nature, questioning the *status quo* and calling for social activism and reform.⁸ “I have a dream,” writes Sánchez. “[O]ne day in this country no one will be discriminated for thinking differently. There will be space for everyone” (*Generación Y*, December 13, 2009). Sánchez posts to the blog by e-mailing or texting friends and volunteers who translate and post online for her. Her blog is translated into 18 languages; her “tweets” are followed by 595,000 (Twitter, 2014). Sánchez has been a contributing columnist to the *Huffington Post* since 2008.

The blog and tweets and other electronic writings are not accessible by everyday Cuban citizens because of the general lack of access to the Internet and government blocking of her site, yet she is an international figure. *Foreign Policy* named her one of the top 10 most influential bloggers in 2008 (*Foreign Policy*, 2009). In 2009, she became the first (to date the only) blogger to interview President Barak Obama in a virtual exchange (*See Appendix A*). She was awarded Colombia University’s Maria Cabot Award for journalistic excellence, was named a “Young Global Leader” by the World Economic Forum, and *Time Magazine* named *Generación Y* one of the top 25 best blogs (Huffington Post, 2014). In 2010, she received the World Press Freedom Hero Award from the International Press Institute and the Prince Claus in the Netherlands (Huffington

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⁸ Sánchez also critiqued U.S. policy, calling for an end to the embargo and a reformation of relations between the two countries.
She has also received Spain’s highest award for journalism, the *Ortega y Gasset* Award and was recently listed by *Foreign Policy* as one of the world’s top 10 dissidents (Huffington Post, 2014).

Notwithstanding the difficulty in disseminating her message locally, Sánchez has encouraged others to express themselves virtually. She and her husband run the “Blogging Academy” out of their living room (Miroff, 2010). In a 6-month course, offered at no charge, they teach eager students how to use Twitter, write code in Wordpress, and use and contribute to Wikipedia (all illegal in Cuba). They also offer instruction in writing, journalism, and ethics (Miroff, 2010).

Several of the academy’s students report peer vigilance criticism and threats and harassment by the government, including cell phone confiscation by police, but the Academy has been able to continue uninterrupted by the government (Global Post, 2010). However, this does not mean it is with the State’s blessing. The official stance on Sánchez, who has reported being abducted, harassed, and threatened, is that Sánchez is not an innocent blogger voicing her opinion but a mercenary in the pocket of the U.S. government (Global Post, 2010).

A spokesperson for the pro-government website cubadebate.com posits that Sánchez, the Blogging Academy, and *Generación Y* are funded by the United States.

You can’t criticize learning. . . . But you can criticize the intention behind her efforts, which are taking place in a framework of a U.S. policy of subversion and aggression. We’re not talking about some blogger in Sweden, we’re talking about a blogger in Cuba, which the United States has been waging economic and political warfare against for the past 50 years. And this is just the latest form of that warfare. (Global Post, 2010).

Graduates of the Academy have grown in number, and many are known internationally for their own blogs and are now collectively referred to as *Generación Y*. For example,
Orlando Louis Pardo Lazo has received international acclaim for his art and literary publications.

Sánchez and her blog embody the new Cuban dissident movement and, through TANs, use technology to broadcast their dissent outside of their countries and garner international attention for their issues. The deeper query here lies in whether the international community is truly listening to the reformist (rather than revolutionary goals of Sánchez and her cohorts, whose goal is not to overthrow or even replace the government but to use their words “every day, to help build a plural and inclusive Cuba with room for all Cubans” (Sánchez, 2014).
CHAPTER 5
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The Argument for a Case Study

The project is epistemically interpretive and ontologically constructivist. The purpose is to conduct an in-depth analysis of a TAN’s use of social media to advocate for freedom of expression in Cuba. More specifically, the study examines the TAN established between prominent human rights INGOs and the Cuban activist Yoani Sánchez and the social media content produced on her Twitter account (@yoanifromcuba) and blog, collectively known as GenY.

The purpose is to track and understand the flow of information between the INGOs and Sánchez and determine whether the flow represents TAN reciprocal exchanges of information, which result in the dissemination of the local to the global. The critical interest lies in how frequently information is absorbed by the INGOs and how accurately it is retransmitted through the TAN. Because the study is both evaluative and exploratory in nature, a mixed-methods case-study approach is adopted rather than a strictly quantitative or qualitative design.

The use of a case study is determined by four factors: the nature of the research question, the amount of control the researcher has over the variables under investigation, the desired end product, and the identification of a bounded system or network as the focus of investigation (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Merriam, 1998). Case-study research is most appropriate for looking into the “how” and “why” questions of a case (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Yin, 2009). A case study builds on both observable and tacit knowledge.
and yields a rich description of the case under investigation (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Yin, 2009).

The research question provides the rationale for conducting a case study (Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2011). Case studies are useful in answering broad questions on social processes (as contemplated here) for which, as in the case of Cuba, there is a relative absence of knowledge and little foundation to form hypotheses (Swanborn, 2010; Yin, 2011). Case studies are particularly useful when the research seeks not only to answer broad questions but also to “discover the world as seen by participants in the system and explain how and what they see, and how they influence each other” (Swanborn, 2010, p. 18). In this manner, case studies can provide great insight into the perceptions and decisions of the stakeholders of a phenomenon (Swanborn, 2010). A case study is “multi-perspectival,” and the researcher is required to consider not only events but also the intuitions of actors, the relevance of those actors, and the interaction among them (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Tellis, 1997).

In justifying a mixed-methods case study over a wholly quantitative or other non-case study design, a number of “methodological tradeoffs” were considered. In consideration of these tradeoffs, the following questions were asked:

- Whether the inferences sought are descriptive rather than causal;
- if the propositional depth of the inquiry is more valuable than its breadth;
- is the need for internal case comparability greater than that of external case representativeness;
- does the research seek insight into causal mechanisms rather than causal effect;
- is the causal proposition invariant rather than probabilistic; and
- is the research exploratory rather than confirmatory? (Gerring, 2004)

Each question was answered in the affirmative, providing a sound rationale for the selected methodology.
Defining the Case Study

George and Bennett (2005) defined the case study method as a detailed examination of an aspect of an episode or interaction to develop or test explanations that may be generalized to other events or to theory. Merriam (1998) more generally defined, the case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon, such as a program or event, a process (as studied here), an institution, or a social group. Stake (1995) further expanded this definition to include the process of inquiry into the case as well as the end product of that inquiry (Tellis, 1997).

Case studies are commonly identified through singularity of purpose. “A case study is best defined as an in-depth study of a single unit . . . where ‘the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena’” (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Gerring, 2004, p. 341). Collectively the literature groups case studies into five broad categories: “small-N” (Della Porta & Keating, 2008, p. 226; Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009); ethnographic, participant observation, and “in the field” research (Gerring, 2004, p. 341; Yin, 2009); studies characterized by process-tracing (George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2004); research that examines a single case (Gerring, 2004; Campbell & Stanley, 1963); and research that investigates a single phenomenon (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009).

Where case studies are characterized as “small-N” studies, the method is often understood empirically as a phenomenon studied through reporting and interpretation of “only” a single measure of the pertinent variable (Eckstein, 2000; Yin, 2009). Of course, implicit in this characterization is the pejorative notion that the major difference between case studies and statistical analyses (“large-N” studies) is an insufficiency of data in the former (George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2004). Another frequent criticism of the case
study is that overreliance on one case and a lack of representativeness make it impossible to reach generalizable conclusions (Bennett & Campbell, 2005; Gerring, 2004). Case methodology is considered “‘microscopic’ because it appears to lack sufficient data” (Giddens, 1993, p. 27). However, such conclusions are short sighted. Unlike quantitative studies, in the case study, generalization of results is made to theory not to populations (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008).

Eisenhardt (1989) offered a succinct synopsis of the case study, stating that the case study is a means to (a) provide description, (b) test theory, or (c) generate theory (Lee & Baskerville, 2003; Glaser & Strauss, 2007). As noted by Yin (2007), whose definition and procedure guided this research, case studies are “rich empirical descriptions of particular phenomena” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2007). Indeed, the case study satisfies three pillar tenets of the qualitative method: to describe, to understand, and to explain (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2011).

Case studies have become an essential form of research in nearly all the social sciences (Feagin et al., 1991; Tellis, 1997). They are used to explore issues in business and management, management and information sciences, education, health, child development, and juvenile justice policies (Feagin et al., 1991; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2011). It is a particularly popular method in the areas of international communication, international relations, and—more generally—sociology (Della Porta & Keating, 2008; Feagin et al., 1991; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Stake, 1995).

For the political scientist and international communications scholar, cases studies offer a more nuanced analysis of multiple variables than do covariant approaches, which generally seek correlation and causation, often at the expense of holisticism (Jupp, 2006).
The method is uniquely suited to studying innately complex phenomena, such as democratic governance, regime change, and revolution (Eckstein, 2000; George & Bennett, 2005; Yin, 2011). Case study methodology is often applied when a researcher has little control of the variables under investigation (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Yin, 2009; Gerring, 2007). In policy and international relations research, myriad variables interact at any given time. Often the requirements and inflexibility of experimental and quasi-experimental research make a case study the only viable alternative (Yin, 2009, 2011). The observer is able to obtain insights into microlevel social processes, which would remain hidden if restrained to simple survey-like cross tabulations (Jupp, 2006; Swanborn, 2010).

Because case-study data can be collected from a multitude of sources, both qualitative and quantitative, case studies provide a rich understanding of the mechanisms at work within the unit of analysis. Data sources include documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, and participant observation. Multiple-data collection fosters a more thorough examination than a quantitative evaluation and strengthens the rigor of the examination (Hancock & Alzozzine, 2006; Yin, 2009).

Multiple-data collection further advantages case study research in that the investigator can address a broader range of issues—for example, the historical, attitudinal, and observational—than is possible in large-N survey research (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2009). Empirically, multiple-data collection guards against subjectivity bias, which is a threat to analytic validity (Angen, 2000; Whittmore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Validity in quantitative research relies on strict methodological rules and standards (Angen, 2000; Whittmore et al., 2001).
When judged by the validity criteria of experimental procedures, interpretive designs such as the case study are most often critiqued as being too subjective, lacking rigor, being unscientific, and having low validity (Angen, 2000; Whittmore et al., 2001). Multiple sources of data provide a buffer against such criticisms. Findings and conclusions are supported by a chain of multiple evidence from multiple sources (“triangulation”), legitimizing results (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Clark, 2007).

**Types of Case Studies**

A case study is categorized by the nature of the final report (Laws & McLeod, 2004). Yin (1994) identified three types of case study: exploratory, explanatory, and descriptive (Tellis, 1997). In the exploratory case study, the researcher conducts a pilot study, which may eventually serve as prelude for future applied research. Fieldwork is essential, and data collection often predates the definition of the ultimate research questions and hypotheses (Yin, 1994, 2004).

Alternatively, an explanatory case study provides an in-depth analysis of complex causal links in real-life situations (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). Explanatory case studies examine the observable operational links. Ontologically positivist, explanatory case study begins with a hypothesis and research question with the purpose of presenting data to explain how events occurred and to indicate any cause and effect relationship (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Yin, 1994).

The descriptive case study is used to present a detailed account of the phenomenon under study (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Yin, 1994) and answers the *who, what, and where* questions (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). Descriptive case studies are often atheoretical and used to present information in areas where little
research has been previously conducted (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Tellis, 1997). However, where descriptive case studies include the theoretical, they are subdivided into interpretive (analytical) and evaluative. An interpretive case study develops conceptual categories or seeks to support or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data collection and analysis (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Tellis, 1997). Doing so necessitates a more detailed analysis of the data and requires a theoretical framework through which to analyze.

The evaluative case study is most similar to the project at hand. An evaluative case study involves “thick description,” is grounded in theory, and is analyzed holistically (Merriam, 1998; Kolbacher, 2006). An evaluative case study seeks not only to provide a description of the phenomenon but also to evaluate and derive a judgment based on the application of the data collected to the theoretical framework (Merriam, 1998; Kolbacher, 2006).

Kenny and Grotelueschen (1984) advocated the use of evaluative case studies in that they offer a “better understanding of the dynamics” (p. 42) of a program (or, as in this present study, a process). When it is important to convey a comprehensive and dynamically rich account of a case, as in policy making and advocacy, the evaluative case study is preferred (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Stake, 2013). An evaluative case study collects multiple data and simplifies them, producing overt and tacit knowledge and meaning. An evaluative case study “weighs” information to produce judgment. Informed judgment is the final product of the evaluation (Kenny & Grotelueschen, 1984; Laws & McLeod, 2004). Whatever typed selected, case studies may be single- or
multiple-case designs (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1994). Yin (1994) identified four types of case study research design based on the 2x2 matrix in Figure 5.

![Figure 5. Yin case study designs. Adapted from *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (2nd ed.), by R. Yin, 1994, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p. 39.](image)

All four designs may take a holistic or embedded approach. As shown in Figure 5, the number of units or levels of analyses differentiate the approaches (Yin, 1994). Single-design case studies are often used to confirm or challenge a theory, represent extreme cases, or bring to light cases in which access to a previously inaccessible phenomenon is opened (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). A single-design case is also favored when it serves as a critical case in testing a well-formulated theory (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). To confirm, challenge, or extend a theory, a single case may be sufficient to meet all of the conditions for determining whether a theory’s propositions are correct (Laws & McLeod, 2004; Yin, 1994).

Single-design case studies are also favored when the case represents a unique, extreme, or “stand alone case” (Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994, p. 42), for example, when a specific instance is so rare that any single case is worth analyzing (Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994). Single-design case studies are useful when the single case is representative or typical (Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994). Because the case is generally accepted as typifying the
circumstances and conditions of a phenomenon, the lessons learned from a single case are enough to offer scholarly value (Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994).

Revelatory and longitudinal cases are considered single-case designs (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009). A revelatory case exists when a researcher is able to observe and analyze a phenomenon previously inaccessible to investigation (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 1994, 2009). The longitudinal case study addresses the same case at two or more points in time to examine whether and how conditions changed in that case (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 1994).

Multiple-case studies have distinct advantages in comparison to single-case study designs (Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994), not the least of which is that evidence from multiple cases is seen as more legitimate and compelling (“more scientific”), which as earlier noted bolsters the robustness of the overall study (Herriott & Firestone, 1983, p. 17; Marshall & Rossman, 2010). Multiple-case designs follow replication logic (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 1994). Replication logic should not be confused with sampling logic, in which a selection is made from a population for inclusion in a study (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994 *emphases added*). Sampling logic requires an operational enumeration of the entire universe or pool of respondents and then a statistical procedure for selecting a subset. Surveyed data are then assumed and presented to reflect the entire universe (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994).

Conversely, in multiple-case studies each case is a whole study in itself. Facts are gathered in each case from a variety of sources, and conclusions and theories emerge from those facts (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). In a multiple-case design, each case must be carefully selected so that it produces either literal replication (prediction of similar
results) or theoretical replication (prediction of contrasting results for predictable reasons) (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). The ability to conduct multiple-case studies is analogous to conducting multiple experiments (Yin, 1994). If each case turns out as predicted, the study provides compelling support for the researcher’s initial propositions. If not, those propositions must be revisited and retested with an entirely new set of cases (Yin, 1994).

The focus of this present study is on how domestic and transnational networks advocate for freedom of expression in Cuba. Multiple organizations are working to promote freedom of speech in Cuba; therefore, a multiple-case design was appropriate. In short, an evaluative multiple-case study design allowed exploration into similarities (literal replication) and differences (theoretical replication) within and between cases (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1994). Because comparisons were drawn, it was imperative that multiple cases be selected to gauge similar results across cases or reveal contrasting results based on a theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 1994).

**Multiple Case Study Methodology and Protocol**

The multiple case replication approach is shown in Figure 6 (Yin, 1994). The first step of multiple design protocol development of a detailed theoretical framework as it is from this theoretical framework, hypothetical propositions are formulated (Yin, 1994). Baxter and Jack (2008) noted a common error in multiple-case study designs occurs when researchers attempt to answer a question that is too broad or that broaches a topic with too many objectives for one study. To prevent such error, Yin (2003) and Stake (1995, 2013) suggested researchers set boundaries or “bind the cases” (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).
Figure 6. The Yin protocol.
Suggested boundaries include (a) time and place (Creswell, 2003), (b) time and activity (Stake, 1995), and (c) definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Bounded cases allow the study to remain reasonable in scope. In the research here, the cases are bound by time, definition, and context. Six activist INGOs that monitor freedom of expression have been selected and placed within the context of TAN advocacy for freedom of speech in Cuba during three separate bounded time frames.

As in all research, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability must be considered (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 1994). The development of a formal case study protocol provides rigor in a multiple-case study design. The research design of this present study follows the Yin protocol (1994) to safeguard validity and reliability and to assure an empirically rigorous analysis.

Methodology

Research questions. This present study is an in-depth exploration into the social media information flow between INGOs and Gen Y. Thus, the research addresses not only how INGOs within a TAN use social media to advocate for free speech in Cuba but also to what extent they use social media to share local information output by Gen Y received by way of social media. The overarching question guiding this study may be restated as follows: To what degree does information disseminated through INGO social media advocacy campaigns for free speech in Cuba reflect the local information of Cuban activists?

As stated earlier, this study explores the extent to which INGOs self-select local Cuban activist information, thus distorting or muting local information.
Units of analyses. The units of analyses, as noted earlier, are INGOs advocating internationally for freedom of expression in Cuba. Listed below are the INGOs, with brief descriptions of their activities and geographies. The INGOs were selected for their prominence in the field of freedom of speech/expression advocacy, their accessibility, and their regional and international variation. Although each of the organizations listed below is included in the quantitative sampling, personal interview access to each was limited.

Amnesty International. Amnesty is an INGO focused on human rights, including freedom of speech. Amnesty boasts 3 million members and supporters from around the world (Amnesty, 2013). With offices in more than 72 countries, the objective of the organization is “to conduct research and generate action to prevent and end grave abuses of human rights, and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated” (Amnesty, 2013). Amnesty draws attention to human rights abuses and campaigns for compliance with international laws and standards. Amnesty advocacy campaigns focus on mobilizing public opinion to put pressure on governments suspected of perpetrating or allowing human rights abuses, including repression of free speech (Amnesty, 2013).

Article 19. Article 19, founded in 1987, is a London-based, international, non-governmental organization with a specific focus on the defense and promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of information worldwide (Freedom of Expression, 2013). Article 19’s work is organized into five regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East. It has over 70 staff and regional offices in Bangladesh, Brazil, Kenya, Senegal, and Tunisia. Article 19 works in partnership with nearly 100 organizations in more than 60 countries around the world (Freedom of Expression, 2013).
Committee for the Protection of Journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists promotes press freedom worldwide by defending the rights of journalists to report the news without fear of reprisal. Founded in 1981, the Committee to Protect Journalists takes action when journalists are censored, jailed, kidnapped, or killed for their work, without regard to political ideology. In its defense of the press, the Committee to Protect Journalists “protects the rights of all people to access independent sources of information—an essential part of a free society” (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2013). Committee to Protect Journalists engages in both research and advocacy around the world.

Freedom House. Freedom House is an independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom around the world. It acts as a catalyst for freedom through a combination of analysis, advocacy, and action (Freedom House, 2013). It advocates for U.S. leadership and collaboration with like-minded governments to vigorously oppose dictators and oppression. Freedom House compiles an empirical analysis of press freedom in its annual publication “Freedom of Press around the World” (Freedom House, 2013).

Reporters Without Borders. Reporters Without Borders was founded by four journalists in Montpellier, France, as Reporters sans Frontieres in 1985. Reporters Without Borders is a research and advocacy organization whose advocates are organized by geographic area (Reporters Without Borders, 2013). The organization has developed two essential and highly specialized spheres of activity: one focused on Internet censorship and the new media and the other devoted to providing material, financial, and psychological assistance to journalists assigned to dangerous areas (Reporters Without
Reporters Without Borders also compiles an annual “Press Freedom Index.”

**Inter-American Press Association.** *Sociedad Interamericana de Prensa* (the Inter American Press Association) is a press advocacy group representing media organizations in North America, South America, and the Caribbean. The stated objectives of the Inter American Press Association are to defend press freedom, protect the interests of the press in the Americas, promote responsible journalism, and encourage high standards of professional and business conduct (*About IAPA*, 2013).

**Data collection.** The social media content of GenY and the select INGOs provided rich data. Data were collected from multiple sources during three separate bounded time frames to provide triangulation and strengthen the validity of the research (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2003). Data revealed overall patterns that were supported by in-depth “snapshots” of INGO dissemination of GenY information.

The following types of data were collected and analyzed. (a) Documentation consisted of country evaluations and reports, press releases, and measurement indices published online by the INGOs during the data collection periods (Yin, 2003). (b) Archival records included INGO and GenY social media archives, including Tweets, blogs, and RSS feeds (Cresswell, 2009; Yin, 2003). (c) Focus interviews included three in-depth, free-flowing interviews with relevant INGO employees (Yin, 2003). While free flowing, some interview structure and direction was guided using a variety of resources, including a pre-existing survey, the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s *Guide for Measuring Advocacy and Policy*, and the Harvard Berkman Center’s *Menu of Outcomes for*
Advocacy and Policy Work, both of which provide a guide for measuring and mapping advocacy in policy.

**Data measurement and analysis.** Under the theoretical umbrella of TAN information politics, a mixed-methods approach was applied. Five sets of data were collected and analyzed: a numerical analysis of relative social media output, a qualitative comparative analysis of all GenY and INGO social media content for a 5-year period, an in-depth “snapshot” qualitative analysis of GenY blog and Twitter output and corresponding INGO activity, a “snapshot” statistical analysis of INGO social media content relating to Cuba. Lastly, personal interviews with leading staff members of three of the six INGOs were conducted and synthesized to provide insight from the INGOs’ perspective.

*Social media uses in freedom of speech INGOs’ advocacy.* To answer the question of how freedom of speech INGOs use social media in their advocacy for freedom of speech, an overall picture of GenY and INGO social media preferences and outputs was needed. Thus, social media activities of Sánchez and five of the INGOs were tracked between the dates of February 24, 2014, and March 24, 2014. Social media content was assessed both quantitatively and qualitatively to give a descriptive account of INGOs’ activity on their preferred media platforms: blogs, RSS feeds, and Twitter. Dates were chosen based on Twitter data constraints, with only the most recent 3500 tweets archived. Of greater relevance, the dates were selected based on three dates of significance to Cuban freedom of speech, which occurred within the bounded time: February 24, the anniversary of Raúl Castro’s ascension to the Presidency of the Council of Ministries; February 28, the one year anniversary of the detention of Cuban blogger
Angel Santiesteban-Prats; and March 19, the anniversary of the Black Spring of 2003 (Reporters Without Borders, 2014). While many platforms are available and used in varying degree—for example, FaceBook, PinInterest, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, and Google+—, a survey of the INGO websites and interviews with INGO staff showed two methods are most commonly favored and heavily relied upon by each: RSS feed/blogs and Twitter feeds.

**RSS feeds.** Really simple syndication (RSS) is a mechanism for publishing site content wherein new posts are automatically picked up by software programs (Press Feed, 2014). When an RSS is subscribed to, “feed reader” software collects the latest posts from that site and continually updates the subscriber as the posts are generated (Press Feed, 2014). As shown in Figure 7, the RSS works by having the website author maintain a list of notifications on the website (Software Garden, 2014). Special computer programs called **RSS aggregators** automatically access the feed to transmit to subscribers and stream from home pages (Software Garden, 2014).

![Figure 7. The RSS feed. Adapted from What Is RSS?, by Software Garden, 2014. http://rss.softwaregarden.com/aboutrss.html](http://rss.softwaregarden.com/aboutrss.html)

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9 On March 19, 2003, the Cuban government arrested independent journalists and political dissidents on the Island and incarcerated nearly 100 (Unzelman, 2011).

10 The RSS feed may be subscribed to or accessed from the INGO website.
RSS provides very basic notifications, really only “information bytes.” A feed is made up of a list of items presented in order from newest to oldest. Each item consists of a simple title describing the item, along with a link to a web page with the actual information content (Software Garden, 2014).

For example, RSS headlines on the Amnesty, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders sites, at the time of this writing, contained the following, with a brief summary and links to the original story:

- Mexico – French president urged to discuss impunity during Mexico visit April 9, 2014 10:49 AM (Reporters Without Borders, 2014, April 9).
- Kazakh court shuts down another critical newspaper February 25, 2014 3:23 PM (Committee to Protect journalists, 2014, April 9).
- Release pro-democracy youth activists in Azerbaijan April 8, 2014 11:00 AM (Amnesty International, 2014; April 9).

Blogs. A blog or weblog is an online journal. The activity of updating a blog is called blogging, and someone who keeps a blog is a blogger (“About Social Networks and Blogs,” 2013). Blogs are typically updated regularly with posted entries: posts. Posts are usually arranged in chronological order with the most recent additions featured most prominently (“About Social Networks and Blogs,” 2013). Posts can be responded to via comments, making the blog uniquely interactive (Ferdig & Trammell, 2004). Blog topics are typically short and self-selected and tend to take an editorial or advocacy stance rather than just a briefing.

For instance, Sánchez’s recent Huffington Post blog entry—“Better Naked Than...”—muses on the shaming of Venezuelan citizens by, she implies, the military arm of an authoritarian regime. She wrote,
Authoritarians handle nudity badly. They feel impure, dirty, humiliated, when in reality it is the natural and primitive state of human beings. Totalitarians are prudish and timid. Any libertarian gesture frightens them, and they perceive too much exposed skin as a gesture of defiance. They think this because -- deep down -- they see the human body as something impure and obscene. Hence, undressing their opponents constitutes one of the repressive practices they most enjoy. They believe that by stripping them of their clothes they reduce them to simple animals. The same mental mechanism that leads them to call their critics “worms,” “vermin” or “cockroaches.” (Sánchez, 2014)

Commenting on the post, Ivan Nikolovski argued:

How short the memory of the professional ‘dissident’ that, in her desperation to blacken the name of Socialists, she merely succeeds in blackening the name of her own American paymasters. Has she already forgotten the US facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq where hundreds of detainees were stripped and grossly humiliated by their American military jailers? Has she forgotten the occupied territory at Guantanamo Bay where the only illegally held prisoners on the island are guests of the same American military? It would seem so. (Sánchez, 2014)

Another feature of blogs is the ability to include graphics, videos, music, podcasts, and hyperlinks within the posts, all without the need for advanced or sophisticated technical knowledge of HTML or other programming languages (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). Figure 8 shows Sánchez’s April 6, 2014, post in which she posted the following YouTube link to a video of Venezuelan police officers stripping the clothes of a student protester and dramatic photos of fellow students posing nude in solidarity with the protester (Sánchez, 2014 April 6).

Initially in this research, RSS feeds and blogs generated by the INGOs were measured separately in data collection. It became quickly apparent that, although different vehicles for sharing information, the RSS feeds and blogs of the INGOs are usually mere reiterations of each other, in fact, rerouting subscribers and viewers to the same headlines, links, and information. Thus, they were measured cumulatively rather than distinctly. The RSS and blogs of each INGO and of Gen Y were tracked from
February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014. The respective RSS/blog activity was then plotted through Excel analytics to provide numerical and visual representations of the blog entries of Sánchez and the INGOs in order to assess whether the INGO social media content responded to or represented that produced by Sánchez.

Figure 8. Sánchez Blog, April 6, 2014.

Twitter. To recall, Twitter is a service for friends, family, and coworkers, and organizations to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent messages (Twitter, 2014). People write short updates—tweets—, limited to 140 characters or less. The messages are posted on the user’s profile and sent to the Twitter account’s followers. They are also searchable on Twitter (Twitter, 2014).

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11 Sánchez has an English blog on which she posts, and she posts regularly in the Huffington Post. Although dates vary, the blogs are the same on both sites.
With Tweet Tunnel, the tweets of each INGO and of Yoani Sánchez were tracked from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014. Tweet Tunnel is a search engine designed specifically for Twitter research. The tool can mine up to 3500 past tweets from a Twitter account. Tweet Tunnel was used to gather all tweets from GenY and the sample INGOs during the bounded time frame. As above, tweets were compared numerically, and the respective Twitter activity was plotted to evaluate how or if the INGOs reacted to and represented Sánchez’s Twitter output.

**INGOs in a freedom of speech TAN and GenY.** Subquestions 2 and 3 addressed whether a free speech TAN exists among the INGOs, and, if so, whether GenY is included in that TAN. The questions were measured through inter-actor interactivity analysis: first, examining the network among the select INGOs and, then, seeking a network connection between the INGOs and Yoani Sánchez. Inter-actor interactivity was measured with Issue Crawler. Issue Crawler is a “web network location and visualization software tool.” It consists of web crawlers, analysis engines, and visualization modules (Issue Crawler, 2014).

In brief, Issue Crawler “crawls” specified sites and captures outlinks from those sites. An outlink is HTML code on a site that allows visitors to access other sites (Isola & Dietmar, 2004). Sites may be crawled and analyzed in three ways: co-link, snowball, or inter-actor. Here inter-actor analysis was applied to establish the TAN. Inter-actor analysis crawls selected seed URLs and retains the inter-linking among the seeds. The inter-linking establishes a network. Issue Crawler then generates a visual image of the

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12 IAPA is important to this research because of its regional affiliation; however, it has such a limited Internet presence that the organization was excluded from the inter-actor analysis.

13 For comparison, co-link analysis crawls designated seed URLs and retains the pages that receive at least two links from the seeds while snowball analysis crawls sites and retains pages receiving at least one link from the seeds (Issue Crawler, 2013).
results in cluster and geographic maps (Issue Crawler, 2014). Inter-actor analysis was used to confirm or deny free speech a TAN that includes both individual (GenY) and organizational (INGOs) actors.

**Correlation between GenY social media output INGOs social media content regarding Cuba.** The question of to what extent does INGO social media campaigns on Cuba represent and reflect GenY social media output was assessed with a mixed-methods approach on four dimensions:

1. *Comparative qualitative analysis of social media archives of Amnesty, Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Inter-American Press Association and GenY.* To explore fully the history of INGO engagement with Sánchez, all online content generated on Sánchez’s blog was compared with all online content produced by the INGOs. The degree to which information posted by GenY was represented in INGO social media campaigns was operationalized by the frequency and accuracy of GenY information disseminated on INGO social media. The text was culled to gauge: (a) the frequency with which the INGOs cited content from Sánchez’s blog and (b) the extent to which the information was representative of GenY content. Frequency is reflected by a numerical ratio, and representation measured by the extent to which Sánchez was quoted verbatim (verbatim iterations) [See Appendix B], and the extent to which INGO factual representations correlated with GenY content (correlative information dissemination) [See Appendix C].

Data were collected from a 5-year period: January 1, 2009, through January 1, 2014. Sánchez began posting regularly in the *Huffington Post* in 2009. The content was first analyzed with a “start list,” as in the later quantitative measure. The terms *Cuba,*
Yoani Sánchez, GenY, freedom of speech, and trade embargo were searched for on each INGO’s unique website. The search was conducted through Google’s keyword/website query tool (e.g., “Yoani Sánchez” site:freedomhouse.org), through which keywords are isolated on specified domains and within a customized time period. In addition to the start list, all content relevant to freedom of expression in Cuba was isolated. Among other topics identified, information that referenced dissidents, blogging, Internet technology, governmental monitoring and regulation of social media content, freedom to exit the country, Yoani Sánchez’s international tour, police detention and incarceration, and alleged acts of repudiation was recorded and organized in an ascending hierarchy.

1. Comparative textual analysis of GenY and INGO blogs and tweets. To put into context the amount and substance of information typically generated by Sanchez and to increase rigor, an in-depth comparison was made of the information output by Sánchez on her blogs and Twitter with that output by the INGOs. This measure provided a smaller, snapshot to correspond to the lengthier analysis described previously. All blogs, RSS feeds, and tweets posted by five of the INGOs and all blogs and tweets by Sánchez between the dates of February 24, 2014, and March 24, 2014, were qualitatively analyzed to determine whether freedom of speech information output by GenY was absorbed and redistributed in INGO social media. Dates were again chosen based on Twitter data constraints and the three anniversaries of particular significance for freedom of expression in Cuba during the time frame.

3. Snapshot comparative statistical analysis of INGO websites. To further triangulate the measures, a quantitative analysis of INGO information dissemination was

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14 GenY was searched in three different iterations: Generation Y, Generación Y, and GenY.
15 Again, IAPA was omitted from this inquiry because of its lack of social media activity.
conducted to provide a statistical description of how much of the local travels through the global. The social media archives of Sánchez and the four most Internet-prolific INGOs (Amnesty, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders) provided data relevant to information reciprocity and dissemination as it pertains to Cuba.

SAS software, Text Miner, was used to mine data. Text Miner is a “screen scrape” technology that automatically extracts data from web pages. A simple Google search limited to GenY and the INGO websites provided the links on which the scrape was performed. Text Miner was programmed with a start list, a list of words and combinations of words relevant to GenY and freedom of speech in Cuba. The following names, words, and phrases comprised the start list: Castro, trade embargo, freedom of speech, Cuban dissident, Yoani Sánchez, and GenY. The program then “scraped” the INGOs’ websites for references to those phrases, revealing how much the INGOs produced content that included these words, names, and phrases. The results allowed for a quantitative representation of information about Cuba output on each of the INGO sites.

This particular analysis was performed within the third bounded time frame, between November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013. The time frame was selected because it was the period in which Sánchez was making her well-publicized international tour, as discussed in Chapter 3) to speak on the state of freedom of expression in Cuba. Data collection began 2 months prior to the launch of her tour and continued until 2 months after the tour concluded. The rationale for the time frame was that it provided ample opportunity to explore INGO engagement with Sánchez through social media during and after her travels.
4. **Personal interviews.** Last, personal interviews were conducted with representatives from three of the INGOs (Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders). The interviews were free flowing although guided by questions developed from the literature. More specifically, the direction of personal interview questions was loosely derived from a combination of (a) the Harvard Family Research Project’s *Menu of Outcomes for Advocacy and Policy Work* (Reisman, Gienapp, & Stachowiak, 2007) and (b) the Annie E. Casey Foundation Organizational Research Service’s *Guide to Measuring Advocacy and Policy* (Organizational Research Service, 2007), both of which provide guidelines to measure and policy objectives in non-profit advocacy.

The interviews were designed to provide a holistic picture of organizational use and the advocates’ perceptions of the relative use and utility of social media. In addition, the interviews provided insight into each organization’s strategy (if any) regarding social media and other advocacy in Cuba. Data collected from personal interviews were qualitatively assessed following the Yin protocol. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed. Personal reflective notes were taken during the interviews. Transcripts and notes were read and reread. Common themes were identified, and relevant statements grouped into categories, for example, “social media landscape,” “Cuba,” “Mission,” and so on. The personal interviews were assessed for commonalities and differences in INGO representatives’ perceptions and use of social media in their advocacy for free speech in Cuba. When relevant, statements that provided insight into the other measures were included in other analyses.
Research Tools and Objectives

The primary research question addresses the extent to which INGOs use the social media output of local Cuban activists in their advocacy for freedom of speech. That is, do they include the local in the free speech TAN or are they proactive in self-selecting information thus muting or distorting local voices? However, understanding INGO general social-media patterns allows for placing the Cuba question in context. Therefore, before delving into the more critical inquiry, a description of the social media preferences of the selected INGOs provides insight into the issue.

Use of Social Media in Freedom of Speech INGOs’ Advocacy

This measure included a description of the most common social media communications shared by each INGO: RSS feeds, blogs, and Twitter feeds. Where relevant, transcribed personal interviews with INGO staffers are cited to identify common themes or trends in INGO social media use.

Results. A survey of the INGO websites showed two primary methods through which the INGOs operate: RSS feed/blogs and Twitter feeds.

RSS feeds and blogs. Initially, RSS feeds and blogs generated by the INGOs were measured separately. However, it became quickly apparent that, although different vehicles for sharing information, as described in Chapter 5, the RSS feeds and blogs of the INGOs tend to be reiterations of each other, rerouting subscribers and viewers to the same headlines, links, and information. Thus, they were measured cumulatively rather than distinctly. The respective RSS/blog activities in Table 2 below:

16 IAPA was not included in this analysis because of the relative lack of Internet activity.
Table 2

*Total Posts to RSS Feeds and Blogs from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity posting</th>
<th>Number of posts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GenY</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters Without Borders</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee to Protect Journalists</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Tweet Tunnel, the tweets of each INGO and of Yoani Sánchez were tracked from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014. The respective Twitter outputs of the INGOs in Table 3 below:

Table 3

*Total Tweets from February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity tweeting</th>
<th>Number of tweets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GenY</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporters Without Borders</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom House</td>
<td>607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Committee to Protect Journalists</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article 19</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amnesty International</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion: INGO RSS/Blog and Twitter Use**
Amnesty International. Although Amnesty uses FaceBook, You Tube, and Pinterest, its primary social media activities are conducted through its RSS, blog, and Twitter. Concerning its RSS feeds and blogs, Amnesty’s blog, LiveWire, is somewhat misleadingly titled because updates are not posted on a daily basis. Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, Amnesty included 36 headlines in its blog and RSS feeds. While the RSS provided feeds almost daily, of the 36 posts, only six were posted on Livewire, with the last entered on March 10, 2014. The posts occurred sporadically on the following dates: February 24, March 5, March 7, and March 10.

On the Amnesty site, blog posts and RSS feeds have distinct functions. The blog posts are editorial in nature, designed to argue and advocate for specific issues. For example, Amnesty’s post on February 24, “Venezuela: Human Rights and the Rule of Law,” condemns the crackdown on protesters in Venezuela:

The entire world has seen the images of excessive use of force by security forces, including the use of firearms, the violence used in some of the protests, and the attacks perpetrated with impunity by groups of armed civilians close to the government (known as colectivos). Journalists and human rights defenders have suffered harassment and other abuse. All of these acts constitute human rights violations and must not be tolerated. (Amnesty, 2014b)

The RSS feed serves two purposes. One is issue awareness, providing updates and links to headlines from around the globe, for example, that of March 24, 2014, “China: Fears of Crackdown ahead of Tiananmen Square Anniversary.” The second function is online advocacy initiatives, which Amnesty refers to as calls to action. The feed provides links to online petitions, encouraging people to add their voices to Amnesty’s human rights work.

Amnesty joined Twitter on September 6, 2008, and has posted, to date, 11,516 tweets. Amnesty boasts nearly one million followers and, in turn, follows close to 7,000
organizations and individuals. (Yoani Sánchez is not followed by Amnesty). Between February 24 and March 24, Amnesty tweeted 251 times, averaging about nine tweets a day. However, as shown in Table 3, on certain dates, Amnesty was more prolific in tweeting, for example, on March 4 and March 7. While one might assume that the spike in tweets would be a reaction to current events and human rights issues, this is not the case. On those dates that Amnesty had a significant increase in tweets, most of the tweets were “thank yous” for financial support. On March 4, Amnesty tweeted 19 times. Of the 19, all but three were thanking contributors for support, for example, “@primedM thanks so much for your support” (Amnesty, 2014).

Amnesty retweets rarely, having retweeted only 12 times during the period in question. Those tweets not dedicated to recognizing sponsors or retweeting are tweet links to headlines around the world, as shown in this selection from March 24, 2014:

- 24 Mar
  *AmnestyInternational @amnesty*
  1 year ago today rebels seized Bangui. The ensuing #CARcrisis is still raging. See our story map & take action [http://t.co/vi54P7J8uA](http://t.co/vi54P7J8uA)

- 24 Mar
  *AmnestyInternational @amnesty*
  #Egypt: More than 500 sentenced to death in ‘grotesque’ ruling [http://t.co/c4CDnfw5nj](http://t.co/c4CDnfw5nj)

- 24 Mar
  *AmnestyInternational @amnesty*
  @joelpberger thanks so much for your support Joel!

- 24 Mar
  *AmnestyInternational @amnesty*
  Sentencing of protestor prompts crackdown fears ahead of #Tiananmen 25th anniversary [http://t.co/uLj1SeBSwK](http://t.co/uLj1SeBSwK) #China #humanrights

*Article 19.* Article 19 does not have an RSS feed on its site. Of the INGOs in this particular sample, Article 19 uses social media the least and has the least sophisticated website. While the other INGOs use multiple platforms, this organization has a Twitter account and FaceBook page only. Article 19’s website is a compilation of press releases, legal and policy analyses, and links to headlines regarding freedom of expression around
the world. The Article 19 blog is updated regularly, with a total of 21 posts through February 24 and March 24. Most of the posts are editorial and calls to take action; for example, “Turkey: Blanket blocking of Twitter is a serious violation of the right to free speech . . .” (Article 19, 2014). The Article 19 home page has an interactive map, entitled “Join the Debate” which serves as an issue awareness tool and links users to perceived violations freedom of speech and expression around the globe, inviting comments on the same and thus serving the same function as an official blog.

Article 19 joined Twitter in November of 2009 and has posted, to date, 3,039 tweets. Article 19 has close to 9000 followers and follows roughly 800 organizations and individuals (not including Yoani Sánchez). Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, Article 19 tweeted 107 times, averaging the fewest tweets at about four per day. Article 19 retweets on occasion, recording 19 retweets during the timeframe.

Committee for the Protection of Journalists. Committee to Protect Journalists has the most prominent blog presence. During the selected dates, the Committee to Protect Journalists blog and RSS feed posted 112 times. Committee to Protect Journalists uses FaceBook, Twitter, e-mail blasts, and an RSS feed; updates are regularly posted (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014; Singh, 2013). Committee to Protect Journalists appears to prioritize blog updates, as reflected by the fact that regional representatives give weekly if not daily updates on their particular jurisdictions. In addition, almost all Committee to Protect Journalists staffers—from board members and executives to research associates, field representatives, program managers, and program coordinators—contribute to the Committee to Protect Journalists blog (Singh, 2013). As revealed in an interview with Committee to Protect Journalists staffer, Kamal Singh, Committee to
Protect Journalists has no social media desk or program coordinator; however, everyone is encouraged to contribute online (Singh, 2013).

Committee to Protect Journalists prolific blog can be attributed to the fact that Committee to Protect Journalists encourages and features guest bloggers: researchers, journalists, media professionals, students, and other intellectuals, who contribute to the blog on a regular basis. For example, a regular contributor, Victor Bwire is the deputy chief executive officer and programs manager of the Media Council of Kenya. He is also a safety trainer for journalists. On March 3, YEAR, Bwire posted a blog entitled “Kenya Media, Security Forces Soul Search After Westgate,” in which he queried the security of journalists:

Should journalists expect support and protection from security agents when they risk their lives to report on security operations? What if their coverage could potentially expose military strategies? Why are journalists disparaged as unpatriotic when they show how security operations fail? (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014)

In addition, Committee to Protect Journalists has 25 regularly contributing bloggers (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014).

The Committee to Protect Journalists blog includes editorials, updates, and alerts on all issues related to press freedom and journalism. It is apparent from the blog, supported by the interview with Singh, that, although there is no specific social media strategy, strong emphasis has been placed on using blogs, the RSS feed, and Twitter and the Committee to Protect Journalists social media presence is “evolving” (Singh, 2013). That the blogs are assigned on a regional basis indicates a de facto strategy of “divide and conquer,” resulting in organized and current information (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014; Singh 2013). The Committee to Protect Journalists RSS is used solely to refer subscribers to the blog and includes headlines and global updates on a variety of
issues, such as violence against journalists, censorship, and access to the Internet, as well as redirects to the home and regional blogs (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014).

Committee to Protect Journalists joined Twitter in January 2009, the first of the INGOs examined to do so. Committee to Protect Journalists has posted, to date, 11,619 tweets and is second in followers to Amnesty, with 63,619. Committee to Protect Journalists follows 733 organizations and individuals, including Sánchez. Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, Committee to Protect Journalists tweeted 368 times, averaging the second largest number of tweets at about 13 a day.

Committee to Protect Journalists tweets are usually used to call attention to relevant headlines from around the globe. For example, the following are tweets from March 19, 2014:

19 Mar Committee to Protect Journalists @pressfreedom
Kati Marton appreciates PM role in pursuing Wali Babar case | PAKISTAN - geo.tv http://t.co/dleoHNOFgy

19 Mar Mustafa Qadri @Mustafa_Qadri
According to @cpjasia PM Sharif pledged to reinvigorate (effectively reopen) Saleem Shahzad murder investigation. Up 2 us 2 hold him 2 that!
Retweeted by Committee to Protect Journalists

19 Mar Elana Beiser @ElanaBeiser
Proud of our work today. @pressfreedom delegation meets with #Pakistan's PM Sharif. http://t.co/EzMYV8uqoU http://t.co/0y674Cmskc
Retweeted by Committee to Protect Journalists

19 Mar Committee to Protect Journalists @pressfreedom
The @tumblr community is very active. Please take a look at our new home there and let us know what you think. http://t.co/wmQmk62DXS

19 Mar Committee to Protect Journalists @pressfreedom
The delegation also included board member Ahmed Rashid, Executive Director @JoelCPI, and Asia Program Coordinator Robert Dietz (@cpjasia)

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17 Committee to Protect Journalists Americas, the regional Twitter account, follows Sánchez.
Over half of Committee to Protect Journalists’ tweets are retweets (183). Committee to Protect Journalists retweets itself and a regional affiliate, Committee to Protect Journalists Americas, often; however, the retweets are also from a variety of individual professionals, journalists, and followers and from other free speech organizations, for example, Amnesty, Reporters Without Borders, and Human Rights Watch.

*Freedom House.* Although the most prominent free speech INGO besides Amnesty and having a strong Internet presence, Freedom House posts surprisingly little on its blog and RSS feed, posting only 12 times during the dates in question (Freedom House, 2014). Freedom House uses RSS, FaceBook, YouTube, and Twitter, along with its blog. The Freedom House blog is largely editorial, providing critiques of governmental repression of speech around the world. For example, the following excerpt from March 14, 2014, warns that the Crimea situation poses danger for civil liberties should Russia annex the country:

> [B]ut the most dramatic divergence between the two countries is in the area of political freedom and elections. Notwithstanding its many flaws and the tumultuous episode of the 2004 Orange Revolution, in which a fraudulent election outcome was successfully blocked by a protest movement, the Ukrainian political system has sustained a genuine diversity of parties and produced multiple nonviolent rotations of power among rival factions.

> By contrast, the Kremlin under Putin has stage-managed a sham democracy of phony opposition parties, rigged balloting, media manipulation, and suppressed dissent. Moreover, there has been no rotation of power at the executive level since the collapse of the Soviet Union: Putin succeeded Boris Yeltsin as a chosen successor, and he remained the paramount leader during Dmitry Medvedev’s nominal 2008–12 presidency.

> Given this record, Sunday’s fundamentally illegitimate vote in Crimea would only be the first of many if the region were absorbed by Russia. (Freedom House, 2014)

The Freedom House RSS feed is similar to that of Committee to Protect Journalists and links subscribers/users to its blog, provides alerts regarding alleged freedom of
expression and other civil liberty abuses, and posts Freedom House advocacy opinion pieces.

Freedom House strongly condemns the illegal imprisonment in exile of Farshid Yadollahi and Reza Entesari, two Sufi Dervishes and prisoners of conscience. Additionally, Iranian authorities must stop preventing Iranian Sufi Dervishes and prisoners of conscience from access to adequate medical care. (Freedom House, 2014)

Of interest is the fact that Freedom House often links to the Huffington Post blog, to which Yoani Sánchez is a prominent contributor. However, Freedom House provides no links to the Sánchez blog during the examined dates, despite the fact that Sánchez posted numerous times in this period. In addition, while Freedom House program director, Cynthia Romero, is well aware of Sánchez and her Internet presence and although she follows Sánchez personally, Freedom House, as an organization, does not implement a strategy of collecting information from Sánchez’s social media platforms (Romero, 2013).

Freedom House was the first of the INGOs to join Twitter, creating the account @freemdhousedc in November of 2008. Freedom House has nearly 28,000 followers and, in turn, follows 1,151 individuals and organizations. Despite Freedom House connections in Cuba and knowledge of Sánchez’s work, as recorded in the interview with the Freedom House staffer, Freedom House does not follow Sánchez on Twitter (Romero, 2013). To date, Freedom House has posted 16,238 tweets, the most of all the INGOs (@freedomhousedc, 2014). Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, Freedom House posted the most tweets, 607, nearly double Committee to Protect Journalists, the second most prolific tweeter.

Like the other INGOs, Freedom House tweets include headlines from around the world, providing issue awareness by linking to reports of alleged abuses. The Freedom
House Twitter presence also refers followers to various Freedom House public events and to reports and analyses published by the organization. There is much chatter regarding the Freedom House indices on freedom of the press, the Internet, and whether a country is ranked “free” or otherwise (e.g., a March 21, 2014, tweet: “#Turkey’s on the list: 11 countries where Twitter is not free”).

Freedom House tweets stand out from those of other organizations for two reasons. The Freedom House Twitter account encourages direct tweets from followers. Many of the tweets originate from followers who tweet to the Freedom House account about ongoing issues, allowing the Freedom House Twitter account to provide a comprehensive and real-time account of free speech issues. In addition, Freedom House tweets syntheses of panels and debates hosted by Freedom House or attended by Freedom House staff. An example is provided by the Freedom House Twitter coverage of a Freedom House-sponsored debate on ethics in African leadership and the role ethics play in transitioning democracies.

27 FebFreedom House @FreedomHouseDC
@keyamadhvani Speakers include Joanne Ciulla, Stephen Ndegwa, & Nii Akuetteh. Moderated by Chloe Schwenke. We'll be live tweeting the event

27 FebFreedom House @FreedomHouseDC
Starting now: our event on ethical African leadership. Follow the discussion at #fhevents #Africa

27 FebFreedom House @FreedomHouseDC
Chloe Schwenke - VP for global programs at Freedom House - moderating this morning's discussion on ethical African leadership #fhevents #Africa

27 FebFreedom House @FreedomHouseDC
Chloe Schwenke: Ethical leadership is not talked about enough. #fhevents #Africa

27 FebMcCain Institute @McCainInstitute
Chloe Schwenke begins a discussion on Ethical #leadership in #africa at @FreedomHouseDC with Stephen Ndegwa, Nii Akuetteh and Joanne Ciulla

Retweeted by Freedom House
27 Feb Freedom House @FreedomHouseDC
Stephen Ndegwa says individuals must define institutions and they cannot be separated from the individuals who act within them #fhevents

Not surprisingly, Freedom House has the most retweets, at 319. Like Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House retweets are drawn from individuals, other INGOs, journalists, and other professionals.

Reporters Without Borders. Reporters Without Borders has a strong Internet presence and uses FaceBook, Google+, RSS feeds, Twitter, and YouTube. Reporters Without Borders does not have a blog, and the only interactivity on the site is a link to “Petitions,” where users can add their names to petitions concerning a variety of causes. Reporters Without Borders posts research reports, such as the annual Press Freedom Index and the recently released Enemies of the Internet report (Reporters Without Borders, 2014). In addition, reports on press freedom violations and actions against journalists appear in editorials. For example, a post dated April 17, 2014, advocates against the jailing of a journalist:

Reporters Without Borders condemns independent journalist Juliet Michelena Díaz’s detention since 7 April, three days before the publication of a by-lined report she wrote for the Miami-based independent news platform Cubanet about a case of ordinary police violence she had witnessed in Havana. . . . ‘We urge the authorities to free Michelena without delay and drop all charges against her,’ said Lucie Morillon, head of research at Reporters Without Borders. ‘The decision to bring a more serious charge indicates a desire to silence her and put a stop to all her critical reporting. Police violence is nonetheless far from being a subject that Cubans can easily forget. (Reporters Without Borders, 2014)

The Reporters Without Borders RSS provides near-daily feeds. Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, Reporters Without Borders posted 40 updates. Unlike the other INGOs, RSS/blog posts, which include links to headlines, are all advocacy based, stating its position on press freedom violations, usually in strong tones, using the terms condemnation, outrage, alarm, and concern (Reporters Without Borders, 2014).
Reporters Without Borders joined Twitter in June 2009. The organization has the fewest followers, at close to 28,000. The only other INGO to follow Sánchez, Reporters Without Borders follows only 800 other organizations and individuals and has, to date, tweeted 7,367 times (Tweet Tunnel, 2014). Reporters Without Borders tweets (@RSF_Reporters Without Borders) rank in the lower bracket of the INGO tweet count, its having tweeted 140 times during the dates examined. However, these figures are misleading because Reporters Without Borders “double tweets” all post in French and in English. Thus, Reporters Without Borders actually uses Twitter the least of the INGOs. Reporters Without Borders uses Twitter similar to its RSS feed to advocate, but also to create issue awareness by providing links to international press freedom headlines as follows.

10 Mar RSF / Reporters Without Borders @RSF_Reporters Without Borders #Irak - Deux professionnels de l'information tués dans un attentat à la voiture piégée http://t.co/EXwcI8eutF

10 Mar RSF / Reporters Without Borders @RSF_Reporters Without Borders #Iraq - Two media workers killed in suicide bombing http://t.co/MCqD77PJJI

10 Mar RSF / Reporters Without Borders @RSF_Reporters Without Borders #Syria - Canadian photographer killed by barrel bomb in Aleppo http://t.co/pR4g9ARVr1

10 Mar RSF / Reporters Without Borders @RSF_Reporters Without Borders #Syrie - Un photographe canadien victime d'une frappe militaire http://t.co/haDADv3pWn

Reporters Without Borders retweeted only 19 times of the 140 recorded tweets, with most being retweets of their own original tweets. Despite the fact that the INGO follows Sánchez, no retweets from Sánchez’s account were found. The interview with Reporters Without Borders director, Delphine Halgand, revealed that the organization is vaguely aware of Sánchez’s writing; however, Reporters Without Borders does not monitor Sánchez or other bloggers from Cuba.
The Local Within the Global

**GenY’s inclusion in a free speech transnational advocacy network.** To answer this question of whether GenY is included in free speech transnational advocacy network, determining whether the INGOs included in the study actually form a freedom of speech TAN was crucial. The TAN was confirmed using the readily available web-based analytic tool Issue Crawler. An inter-actor analysis performed via Issue Crawler mapped interactions between the select INGOs. Each of the organizations’ domains was entered, and the program tracked linkages between the domains, establishing a transnational advocacy network among the organizations, as shown in Figure 11.

*Figure 11. Transnational advocacy network among INGOs studied.*
Issue Crawler was also used to indicate whether Yoani Sánchez’s blog was included in this TAN that advocates for freedom of speech around the world, including Cuba. The results, in Figure 12, confirm that Sánchez’s blog is included in the network.

*Figure 12.* Transnational advocacy network among INGOs and GenY.

**Extent to which INGO social media represents the voice of GenY.** The question concerning to what extent INGO output is representative of the social media content of Sánchez and GenY was addressed through a mixed-methods approach:
1. Comparative qualitative analysis of social media archives of Amnesty, Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, IAPA, and GenY

2. Comparative textual analysis of GenY and INGO blogs and tweets

3. Snapshot comparative statistical analysis of INGO websites

4. Personal interviews with INGO staff from Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders

**Comparative qualitative analysis of social media archives of Amnesty, Article 19, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders, IAPA, and GenY.** To explore fully the history of INGO engagement with Sánchez, all online content generated on Sánchez’s blog was compared with all online content produced by the INGOs. As noted in Chapter 5, the text was culled to gauge (a) the frequency with which the INGOs cited content from Sánchez’s blog and (b) the accuracy of the information redistributed. Frequency was reflected by a numerical ratio, and accuracy was measured by the extent to which Sánchez was quoted verbatim and the extent to which factual representations correlated. Data were collected for a 5-year period from January 1, 2009, through January 1, 2014.

The content was first analyzed with a start list, as in the later quantitative inquiry. The terms *Cuba, Yoani Sánchez*, and *GenY* were searched for on each INGO’s unique website. The search used Google’s keyword/website query tool (e.g., “Yoani Sánchez” site:freedomhouse.org), through which keywords are isolated on specified domains and within a customized time period. In addition to the start list, all content relevant to freedom of expression in Cuba was isolated. Among other topics identified, references to

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18 *GenY* was searched in three different iterations: Generation Y, Generacion Y, and *GenY*
dissidents, blogging, Internet technology, governmental monitoring and regulation of social media content, freedom to exit the country, Yoani Sánchez’s international tour, police detention and incarceration, and acts of repudiation were recorded and organized in an ascending hierarchy. Finally, to provide an in-depth comparison of blogs and to bolster rigor, all blog and RSS feed content on the INGOs’ and Sánchez’s blogs generated between February 24, 2013, and March 24, 2014, were analyzed for a more in-depth look at actual amount and substance of local information posted by GenY and made available to the INGOs.

**Results.** During the time in which data were collected (January 1, 2009, to January 1, 2015), Yoani Sánchez posted 602 entries on her blog. Of the 602 entries, 225 contained terms from the start list, as well as information relevant to freedom of speech in Cuba. When searched for start list terms, Amnesty yielded the following: *Cuba*: 1000 hits; *Yoani Sánchez*: 19 hits; and *GenY*: two hits. In addition, there were 24 Amnesty blog entries otherwise relevant to freedom of expression in Cuba. Although Amnesty does issue news and reports on freedom of expression in Cuba, as well as on Sánchez, the frequency with which Amnesty reposted information output by Sánchez through social media was low, with only 12 posts containing information directly blogged by Sánchez, giving a frequency ratio of 3:75.

Article 19 content contained the least amount of correlation to Sánchez, with only 21 hits from the start list, all in reference to Cuba. There were no hits for *Yoani Sánchez* or *GenY*. Of the content analyzed, five of Article 19’s blog posts contained information associated with output from Sánchez’s blog, resulting in a frequency ratio of 1:45.
Committee to Protect Journalists, on the other hand, produced much more content relevant to Cuba and related to information output from Sánchez’s blog. Of the start list words, Committee to Protect Journalists returned 467 hits for Cuba, 170 references to Yoani Sánchez, and two for GenY. Committee to Protect Journalists’s online content also included 30 entries relevant to freedom of speech in Cuba. However, in terms of content that reiterated that on Sánchez’s blog, only nine posts conveyed Sánchez’s content, making Committee to Protect Journalists’s frequency ratio 9:225.

Freedom House produced a similar quantity of start-list words and Sánchez references, with 177 references to Cuba, 14 to Yoani Sánchez, and seven to GenY. Ten other references were relevant to freedom of speech in Cuba. Freedom House, like Committee to Protect Journalists, yielded nine posts with content originally blogged by Sánchez, producing a frequency ratio of 9:225.

Reporters Without Borders online content yielded 1000 references to Cuba, 12 to Yoani Sánchez, and one to GenY. Only five blog entries replicated information output on Sánchez’s blog, giving Reporters Without Borders a frequency ratio of 1:45. Last, IAPA online content returned 20 hits for Cuba, three for Yoani Sánchez, and two for GenY. Although IAPA has a limited “up to the minute” Internet presence and an incomplete website, IAPA content was deemed germane because of its unique regional affiliation and the fact that Sánchez serves as IAPA liaison to Cuba (IAPA, 2013). IAPA’s online content and blogs during the 5 years in question contained five references to Sánchez, giving it a frequency ratio of 1:45.

Of equal, if not greater, importance is the extent to which INGO social media represents Sánchez’s information. Representation is operationalized as the extent to
which Sánchez is quoted directly (verbatim iterations) [See Appendix B], as well as the extent to which the INGOs’ factual information correlates with the information set forth by Sánchez (correlative information dissemination) [See Appendix C]. To assess this, Sánchez’s relevant posts on the INGO sites were compared with those of Sánchez’s blog. Neither Article 19 nor Inter American Press posted any direct quotes from Sánchez.

Amnesty directly quoted Sánchez three times in the 5-year period. One of the quotes is unverifiable because it referenced tweets prior to the 3500-post searchable database. One quote, taken from 2010, states, “Chinese authorities have found themselves unsettled or outwitted by internet users – a wild colt that cannot be tamed, in the words of Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez. The quote, while similar in substance, is not a direct quote as implied. Rather Sánchez’s statement was repackaged a bit, as the corresponding post, located in 2009, reads “[t]he authorities consider the technology as a “wild colt” that must be tamed, but we independent bloggers want the wild colt to run freely” (Sánchez, 2009).

Committee to Protect Journalists also quoted Sánchez three times in 5 years, with one unverifiable tweet. In 2009, Committee to Protect Journalists quoted directly from the GenY blog: “Her blog, Generación Y . . . as its introduction says, ‘citizen journalists’ can offer ‘opinions that don’t have room in official Cuban outlets or any other publication that is conditioned by political requirements” (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009). The statement, however, cannot be corroborated directly as coming from Sánchez’s blog because the introduction has changed since that time. However, other references to this quotation were found, and the quote appears accurate (UNCHR, 2008). Committee to Protect Journalists also quoted Sánchez and her written interview with President Obama
following his election in 2008, which she prefaced by stating, “After months of trying I managed to send a questionnaire to the American president, Barack Obama, with some of the issues that keep me from sleeping” (Sánchez, 2008). Committee to Protect Journalists amended the statement and referenced it by adding, “Generación Y, where she has posted Obama’s answers to her seven questions, Sánchez explained that the questions were based on issues ‘that keep me from sleeping,’ and were born from her personal experience” (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009).

In the 5-year time period, Freedom House quoted Sánchez directly only once and in regards to an interview with a blogger sponsored by State Security:

In February 2013, Yoani Sánchez interviewed blogger Eliécer Avila, a former UCI student—and leader of Operación Verdad. Referring to the group as the “kilobyte police,” Sánchez stated that the interview “corroborated” theories that State Security had created blogs to “denigrate and discredit the citizen who criticizes the system.” (Freedom House, 2013)

However, the only corresponding post by Sánchez did not refer to Avila and had less fact and more opinion:

Sometimes, I confess, I thought they were paranoid delusions in my mind, but now I have no doubts: the Cuban authorities are spending thousands of hours on the internet and unimaginable resources each year to counter some peaceful citizens who are simply offering our opinions.

Last, in its 2012 Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders quoted Sánchez one time in reference to a 2009 post in which she optimistically predicted that “[t]he Internet is becoming a public square for discussion where we Cubans write our opinions. The real Island has started to be a virtual Island. More democratic and more pluralistic” The Reporters Without Borders quote was used to rebut the progressive nature of the original post, concluding, “[a]pparently Yoani Sánchez’s predictions that ‘the real island
is starting to convert into a virtual island’ will take a little longer than expected to be realized” (Reporters Without Borders, 2009).

In addition to quotes provided on the INGO online content, each INGO used information originating from the GenY blog in their social media and policy reports. As above, neither Article 19 nor the Inter American Press Association referenced information from Sánchez’s blogs. However, Amnesty’s online content reiterated information found on GenY four times in 5 years, each in its Annual Reports of 2010 and 2011. All of the information represented by Amnesty was in regards to state-sponsored repression in the form of website blocking and detentions and freedom of movement.

During the 5-year period of data collection, Committee to Protect Journalists posted content from Sánchez’s blog 11 times. Committee to Protect Journalists’s posts were representative of information posted by Sánchez. Freedom House, perhaps Cuba’s most vocal critic, used content from Sánchez’s blog four times in 5 years. Three of the posts contained accurate summaries of information output on GenY; however, one post presented information misquoting Sánchez on her blog:

In early 2013, Sánchez, who was finally permitted to leave Cuba after having been denied an exit visa 21 times in the past five years, began an 80-city, 12-country tour, with the aim of bringing awareness to Cuba’s active civil society and blogosphere. Her speeches have since received international attention. (Freedom House, 2013).

Sánchez referred to exit visa denial in several blogs over the 5 years; however, she stated that a travel visa was denied “16 times in 4 years” and, later, that she was denied white papers (to exit) “20 times in 5 years” (Sánchez, 2011, 2013).

Reporters Without Borders social media content contained five references to information posted on Sánchez’s blog. Three of the posts corroborated information on the blog. Of the two remaining, one post contradicted information posted on the blog
while the other highlighted information on Cuban censorship while remaining silent as to
the successful digital revolution taking place. In a post from its annual report of 2010,
the organization highlighted a meeting organized by Sánchez in which she would
introduce the blogosphere to potential contributors. Reporters Without Borders stated,
“The authorities have also used their power of dissuasion to cancel a meeting she tried to
organize between the island’s bloggers” (Reporters Without Borders, 2010). However,
Sánchez blogged that this meeting was a success:

Young people filled with discontent and with desires to make things change,
received us to hear about the Cuban blogosphere. Shy at first, but, after a few
minutes, with many questions about the multifaceted and flexible tool that is a
blog. Now we’ll see if they join the Voces Cubanas [Cuban Voices] project.
(Sánchez, 2009).

She continued,

The police operation had—we understood it a posteriori—an intention to
intimidate, but there was little they could do in front of the cameras of the foreign
press and of the writers who were invited. We began, sitting on the grass,
speaking with a group of fifteen people, and ended with the closing applause of
more than forty. (Sánchez 2009).

In a 2012 report on “netizens,” Reporters Without Borders posted,

Imaginative methods, including the use of USB flash drives and CDs, have to be
used to circulate her posts in Cuba, where most of the population is limited to a
highly-censored Intranet. Sánchez is subject to strict government censorship and
smear campaigns, and has even been physically attacked. (Reporters Without
Borders, 2012).

However, the report failed to reference GenY posts concerning the success of digital
communications in subverting censorship:

We have gone from rationed information to a veritable “coming out” that flows in
parallel with the censorship of the official media. Our glasnost has not been
driven from offices and ministries, but has emerged in mobile phones, digital
cameras and removable memories. My own cell phone has been on the verge of
collapse from so many messages telling me about the student protests and the
closure of several television stations. I forward copies of these brief headlines to
everyone in my address book, in a network that mimics viral transmission: I
spread it to many and they in turn inoculate a hundred more with the information. There is no way to stop this form of broadcast news, because it does not use a fixed structure but mutates and adapts to each circumstance. (Sánchez, 2010).

This inquiry explored both the extent to which INGO social media representation reflects the local, that information output by GenY. To do so, questions of (a) the frequency with which INGO content referenced GenY/Sánchez and (b) the representativeness of that information were addressed. After measuring both over a period of 5 years, the answers are, in simplest terms, (a) rarely and (b) questionable.

The Amnesty mission states, “Amnesty International keeps vigilant watch on the rights of people around the world and publishes hundreds of independent reports based on our rigorous research, free of corporate and government influence” (Amnesty International, 2014a). Similarly, Freedom House’s mission is to “analyze the challenges to freedom; advocate for greater political and civil liberties; and support frontline activists to defend human rights and promote democratic change” (Freedom House, 2014). Among other items, the Inter American Press agenda also includes the following mission: “[t]o defend press freedom wherever it comes under threat in the Americas” and “to promote broader awareness and further the exchange of information among the peoples of the Americas, in order to support the basic principles of a free society and individual liberty” (About IAPA, 2014).

As in the above examples, each of the INGOs claims, in one form or another, to be freedom of speech watchdogs, vigilantly investigating and objectively assessing and reporting freedom of speech violations from around the world. Sánchez is prolific in her social media use. A tremendous amount of content was recorded during the period in question: 602 entries on her blog, 225 of which were deemed relevant to freedom of speech in Cuba.
**Discussion.** Despite the amount of local social media content generated and the purported watchdog mission of the INGOs, the frequency with which GenY or Sánchez is referenced is exceedingly low. While Committee to Protect Journalists and Freedom House share a low frequency ratio of 9:25, the other INGOs reflect even lower ratios, with Amnesty coming in third at 3:75, and Article 19, and Reporters Without Borders sharing a frequency ratio of 1:45. The frequency ratios highlight a large disparity in the amount of information output by Sánchez and the amount of the same disseminated by the INGOs. Such a result, especially when taken in consideration with the subsequent measures, reflects a considerable disconnect between Sánchez and the INGOs. These results, in turn, shed light on the inquiry of how much the local (GenY) is included in the global (INGOs) in the TAN dedicated to freedom of speech.

However infrequent, during the time examined, four of the six INGOs either directly quoted Sánchez or referred to information posted on her social media. Thus, the research addressed the veracity of representation with which the INGO social media content reflected information collected from GenY. The measures were based on verbatim quotes and blog/tweet content dissemination.

In terms of verbatim citation, the results show accuracy varied. Committee to Protect Journalists social media content was most reflective of Sánchez’s words. However, all the INGOs displayed a tendency to change or embellish Sánchez’s content. In addition, Amnesty, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders either used the quotes out of context or reworded them to support their own social media content. Specifically, Amnesty, referenced Sánchez three times in the context of its annual reports. As shown above, Amnesty had one unverifiable tweet, one correct reiteration, and one
quote taken out of context, which served to alter the original quote and intent by Sánchez. Whereas Sánchez referred to technology as a “wild colt,” Amnesty quoted Sánchez as saying Internet users were “wild colts that cannot be tamed”.

The single quotation from Freedom House also distorted Sánchez’s original words. In reference to state-sponsored counter-dissident bloggers, Freedom House asserted, “Sánchez stated that the interview corroborated” theories that State Security had created blogs to denigrate and discredit the citizen who criticizes the system”. However, Sánchez’s quote offers no corroboration, only speculation. She states, “[N]ow I have no doubts: the Cuban authorities are spending thousands of hours on the internet and unimaginable resources each year to counter some peaceful citizens who are simply offering our opinions”.

Committee to Protect Journalists, which used three quotations from Sánchez, was the only INGO to republish Sánchez’s question-and-answer blog with President Obama. Rather than summarizing the content, Committee to Protect Journalists reported the interview word for word, with no omissions or embellishments. Nevertheless, as indicated in the results above, in prefacing the interview, the Committee to Protect Journalists added content to the original blog post, stating that “Sánchez explained that the questions were based on issues ‘that keep me from sleeping,’ and were born from her personal experience” (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009). The latter part of this statement did not appear in Sánchez’s original blog.

Reporters Without Borders content yielded only one quotation truncated from Sánchez’s original post. In a report entitled “Enemies of the Internet,” the organization used an excerpt from an optimistic quotation from Sánchez in which she applauded the
evolving blogosphere and ensuing activism, calling Cuba a “virtual island.” Although a
direct quote, it was used out of context and placed it within Reporters Without Borders’
assessments of Cuba, stating, “Apparently Yoani Sánchez’s predictions that ‘the real
island is starting to convert into a virtual island’ will take a little longer than expected to
be realized”. The results of the verbatim analysis reveal that, in quoting Sánchez directly,
the quotations more often than not deviated from either the original content or the clear
intent of the source of the quotations. The results also show that Sánchez’s quotes,
correctly relayed or not, have been used to bolster the advocacy stance of the INGOs.

In terms of information dissemination, although with limited frequency, the
representations of the INGOs were negated by their characterization of GenY social
media content. During the 5-year period, Article 19 and the Inter American Press
neglected to post any information from GenY social media. Similar to the subsequent
analysis, while not per se erroneous, the lack of dissemination of vital information
constitutes an indirect inaccuracy simply through omission.

Again, Committee to Protect Journalists was the most accurate relayer of
Sánchez’s social media content. All of Sánchez’s information, posted by Committee to
Protect Journalists 11 times in 5 years, was disseminated correctly, mirroring the
statements made by Sánchez herself. Only one deviation could be isolated. While
Amnesty also correctly quoted Sánchez, all the information Amnesty gleaned from GenY
social media content was used in the context of state-sponsored repression, detentions,
harassment, and so on. Thus, GenY information was used selectively to support Amnesty
condemnation of Cuba. Although such events did occur, the information Amnesty used
did not represent the freedom of speech issues and advances, nor content generated by Sánchez within the 5 years analyzed.

More significant, Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders posted factually inaccurate content on at least one occasion, a significant number, given the infrequency with which the INGOs actually respond to GenY social media information. Freedom House information concerning the number of times Sánchez had been denied an exit visa was, depending on how one interprets the blog posts, off by 1–6 denials. Further, Reporters Without Borders’ posts were not only inaccurate but also contradicted Sánchez’s content outright, as demonstrated in its report that the police canceled a blogging meeting organized by Sánchez. In the referenced post, Sánchez made it clear the meeting was held and was a success.

Of further interest regarding Freedom House are data yielded from the interview with its director. Cynthia Romero (Freedom House) spoke about Sánchez and the blogging school she runs (Chapter 3). The interview revealed Freedom House is keenly aware of Sánchez’s success in bringing activist bloggers together and in promoting knowledge and use of social media. However, this information cannot be found in the organization’s social media content regarding Cuba.

The results establish that (a) INGO social media referred to GenY or Sánchez rarely, with the highest frequency ratio only 9:22 and the lowest 1:45 and (b) the representations made by the INGOs regarding GenY social media content was, at best, questionable. Thus, there is a clear disparity in both amount and substance of the content regarding Cuba on the INGO websites. Therefore, the sample INGOs social media content cannot not be relied upon as representing the local reality. Whether inadvertent or
programmatic, a disconnect between the local and the global has occurred, indicating the studied INGOs do, in fact, act as self-selecting actors in the advocacy for about freedom of speech in Cuba.

In and of themselves, the results of this particular analysis cannot be taken as conclusive. To strengthen the findings, a truncated mixed-methods analysis was conducted to complement and bolster the findings. Comparative textual and statistical analyses of INGO and GenY social media content were conducted within a more recent and shorter time frame to provide a snapshot of information reciprocity in the TAN, specifically addressing how much GenY content was available and how much of that content can be found in INGO social media reports.

As mentioned, the omission of pertinent information generated by Sánchez is relevant to the representativeness measure of accuracy. The INGOs studied view themselves (as claimed on their websites and confirmed in interviews) as investigators whose job is “to get the word out” (Singh, 2013). More importantly, as further discussed in the summary and concluding thoughts, the INGO reports on Cuba are viewed by supporters, influential policy makers, and decision-making intergovernmental bodies (IGOs) as being thorough, conscientious, and reliable information from reputable watchdog organizations. The international community gives great deference to these INGOs’ assessments and indices. Thus, examining the quantity of freedom of speech information actually generated by Sánchez through social media is necessary.

*Comparative textual analysis of GenY and INGO blogs and tweets.* Social media output from five of the INGOs and the GenY blog between the dates of February 24, 2014, and March 24, 2014, was qualitatively analyzed to investigate the amount and
substance of information output by GenY and accessible to the INGOs. INGO social
media were then assessed to determine how much of the information was absorbed and
redistributed through INGO social media. Dates were chosen based on Twitter data
constraints and the three significant dates previously identified.

**Results.** Sánchez posted six in-depth blogs during the selected time frame. In
comparison, Amnesty posted 36; Article 19, 28; Committee to Protect Journalists, 112;
Freedom House, 27; and Reporters Without Borders, 40 (Table 2). Of all the posts
assessed, only those by Reporters Without Borders referred to Cuba. None of the other
INGOs referred to Cuba, Sánchez, or information posted on Sánchez’s blog during this
time frame. Sánchez’s blogs were widely accessible, posted in Spanish at
lagenarciony.com, and translated into English and posted in both the Huffington Post and
a proxy blog. Both translated versions were posted, if not simultaneously, then within
one day of Sánchez’s original post. Sánchez’s blog on Huffington Post is a featured blog,
often making the front page as well as being accessible through the Americas section
(Huffington Post, 2014). Summarized below is the content of Sánchez’s blogs between
February 24, 2014, and March 24, 2014. As noted in Chapter 5, Sánchez’s blog usually
addresses sociopolitical and socioeconomic critiques of her government, with a strong
emphasis on information highly relevant to freedom of expression in Cuba.

In her post “Venezuela: With Eyes Wide Open,’ Sánchez encouraged and praised
the pro-democracy movement in Venezuela, drawing comparisons between Cuba and
Venezuela in the context of Latin American history and concluding,

Venezuela is going through difficult times, like all awakenings. The oligarchs in
red will not give up power voluntarily and Raul Castro will not let them so easily

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19 Again, Inter American Press was omitted from this inquiry due to a dearth of social media activity.
snatch away the goose that lays the golden egg. But at least we already know that Venezuelans will not walk the same road they imposed on us in Cuba. Meekness, fear, complicity, and escape as the only way out… those have been our mistakes. Venezuela doesn’t want to repeat them, it can’t repeat them. (Sánchez, 2014)

In a narrative regarding public meetings in which those who criticize economic and social conditions in Cuba are mocked, condemned, or silenced by repudiators (“Criticism: Constructive or Complacent?”), Sánchez advised that criticism is neither good nor bad, nor is it counterrevolutionary:

Criticism doesn’t need a name. It doesn’t need to be classified as “constructive” or “destructive,” but it should be delivered with total rigor, regardless. Like rubbing medicine on a festering sore, criticism hurts, it makes you cry, it’s torture… but it cures. (Sánchez, 2014)

In response to government calls for Cuban families to embrace a more ethical and moral existence (“Devaluation”), Sánchez blamed the Cuban government and Fidel Castro for attempting to socially engineer the society, thus creating the very “moral breakdown” it perceived.

One man — from the podium — screamed at us for fifty years. His diatribes, his hatred, his inability to listen calmly to an opposing argument, were the “exemplary” postures we learned in school. He instilled in us the gibberish, the constant tension, and the authoritarian index finger when we address others. He — who thought he knew everything but in reality knew very little — conveyed to us the pride of never asking forgiveness and of lying, that deception of rogues and scam artists that he was so good at. (Sánchez, 2014)

In “Challenges of the Cuban Press,” Sánchez critiqued the state-run media as a propaganda machine: “The Cuban official press can’t reform itself because to do so would be committing suicide. To report on the national reality it would have to renounce its role as ideological propaganda” (Sánchez, 2014; March 14). She called for a new breed of journalism. This post was not only a critique, but an exercise in activism because Sánchez announced she would be launching an independent digital newspaper:
The countdown to the digital media I’ve been working on for four years has
begun. A new professional challenge approaches, but I will not be alone; rather I
will be accompanied by a team of talented people, who want to do journalism
with a capital J. In the coming weeks this personal blog will be transformed—
right in front of your eyes—into a media of the PRESS. (Sánchez, 2014)

In “Why I Don’t Want to Be Federated,” Sánchez summarized her many reasons
for not joining the Cuban Women’s Federation (FMC), the organization established in
1960 by Fidel Castro with Vilma Espin. Her following remarks are of particular
importance,

- I suspect that a part of the four million women who make up the FMC have
  entered its rank purely automatically, as a mandatory process that takes place
  when you turn fourteen.
- I distrust a federation that benefits from the lack of freedom of association,
  which prevents Cuban from creating other organizations.
- I’m aware of the double standards of the FMC, which says it rejects violence
  against women but which has never condemned the acts of repudiation against
  the Ladies in White. (Sánchez, 2014)

In “A Few Days With Nauta,” Sánchez described the recent relaxation of restrictions on
e-mail access with the ETECSA delivery of service of e-mail to cell phones, previously
illegal.

I go home, stumbling at every step because I’m looking at the cellphone screen
where it shows new messages. First I write several friends and family members
warning them that “this email @nauta.cu is not reliable or secure, but…” And
then a long list of ideas for the uses of a mailbox that isn’t private, but that I can
check any time from my own cellphone. I ask several acquaintances to sign me
up for national and international news services via email. Within an hour a flood
of information and opinion columns is stuffing my inbox. (Sánchez, 2014)

Comparison of Sánchez’s RSS and blog posts and those of the INGOs. Between
February 24, 2014, and March 24, 2014, the Amnesty blog had no posts about Cuba or
links to any social media output by Sánchez. On March 7, 2014, Amnesty and Sánchez
both posted on their blogs. Amnesty’s blog did not link or post information regarding
Sánchez’s blog, an editorial entitled “Devaluation,” in which she strongly condemned
Raúl Castro’s call for Cuban families to take responsibility for and repair societal ethics and morality. In that post, Sánchez mentioned multiple instances she believed indicated the repressive nature of the State is responsible for the devaluation of the social fabric. One particular paragraph directly addressed the fear-inspired self-censorship exercised by Cubans:

They instilled in us the “Revolutionary promiscuity” that they themselves had already practiced in the Sierra Maestra, and incited us to laugh at those who spoke well, were deeply cultured, or showed any kind of refinement. This was carried out with such intensity that many of us faked speaking vulgarly, left off syllables when we talked, or shut up about our reading, so no one would notice that we were “weirdos” or potentially “counterrevolutionaries.” (Sánchez, 2014)

On March 7, Amnesty posted alerts in regards to a Tokyo women’s rights art campaign and the environmental crises in the Niger Delta (Amnesty, 2014). Similarly, there were no references to Cuba or Sánchez in the Amesty RSS feed. On those dates on which Sánchez blogged, the feed linked users to human rights issues in Syria, Venezuela, Malaysia, Russia, Azerbaijan, and China (Amnesty, 2014d).

Article 19 does not blog. The Article 19 RSS feed between February 24, 2014, and March 24, 2014, also contained no reference to Cuba or Sánchez. On those dates on which Sánchez blogged, the RSS feed linked users to freedom of expression headlines about Uganda, Brazil, the UNCHR, Myanmar, and Uruguay (Article 19, 2014).

The Committee to Protect Journalists blog did not refer, directly or otherwise, to Cuba or Sánchez, instead emphasizing freedom of expression in Turkey, Bahrain, Russia, Myanmar, South Sudan, Rwanda, and “the Occupied Palestinian Territory” during the time frame examined (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014). Nor did the RSS feed refer to Cuba or Sánchez, providing headlines and links on the relevant dates to China,
India, and Sudan, as well as to the issues highlighted in its blog (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2014).

Freedom House has posted little on its blog or RSS feed, posting cumulatively only 12 times during the dates in question. Two dates on which Sánchez posted in her blog—March 7 and March 14, 2014—, Freedom House also posted through both its blog and RSS. Freedom House did not link to Sánchez’s social media output on those dates. Rather, the posts were centered on Iran, Crimea, Russia, Sudan, and Zambia. However, Freedom House did refer to Cuba on February 24, 2014, in a report entitled “Rulers Who Use the Social Media They Ban” (Freedom House, 2014).

The post criticized Raúl Castro and his daughter Mariela Castro Espin for using Twitter, alleging the same was nearly impossible for Cuban citizens:

Since coming to power in 2008, President Raúl Castro has continued his brother Fidel’s record of restricting freedom of expression. Social media applications, such as Twitter and FaceBook, are largely inaccessible for everyday internet users in Cuba due to keyword filtering and blocking. However, Raul Castro, his daughter Mariela, and the government of Cuba have all made use of Twitter to promote the authorities’ interests. Mariela has even engaged in Twitter arguments with Cuban dissidents such as Yoani Sánchez, a well-known blogger and outspoken critic of the Castro regime. (Rassool, 2014).

Reporters Without Borders is the only organization that recognized through social media one of the dates of significance for Cuba. On February 28, 2014, Reporters Without Borders posted the following on its RSS:

Cuba - Dissident blogger completes year in detention February 28, 2014 AM
Reporters Without Borders reiterates its call for the release of Angel Santiesteban-Prats, a writer who completes a year in detention today and who began a blog in 2008 called Los hijos que nadie quiso that was openly critical of the government. Santiesteban-Prats was arrested on 28 February 2013 to begin serving the five-year jail sentence on trumped-up charges of “home violation” and “injuries” that he received at the end of a hasty and arbitrary trial on 8 December 2012. No hard evidence. (Reporters Without Borders, 2014)
Comparison of Sánchez’s tweets and those of the INGOs. For the same time frame, INGO tweets were compared with those of Sánchez and examined to discern whether information output through Sánchez’s Twitter account was represented (retweeted or mentioned) by the INGOs. Retweeting is perhaps the easiest way to disseminate social media content because all that is involved is clicking the retweet button Twitter provides to immediately share the tweet with followers (Twitter, 2014).

Despite her limited access to the Internet, Sánchez was able to tweet 140 times between February 24 and March 24, 2014. Twenty-seven of Sánchez’s tweets directly quoted her blog. Sánchez tweets when a new blog has been posted either on GenY or in the Huffington Post. An example is her tweet of March 14, 2014

14 Mar Yoani Sánchez @voanifromcuba
My new post on Huffington Post: The free press in Cuba, countdown has begun: http://t.co/M986ZKHYBJ

In addition, Sánchez’s tweets indicate newsworthy items she believed may be skewed or ignored by the official media:

13 Mar Yoani Sánchez @voanifromcuba
#Cuba Cuban official press stoped talking about #Venezuela, so we have to informations and are wishing to get updates

12 Mar Yoani Sánchez @voanifromcuba
#Cuba Video of the protesters on the 23rd Str, #Havana http://t.co/nakuuqXJx0 VIA @YouTube

12 Mar Yoani Sánchez @voanifromcuba
#Cuba I've compiled information from several sources about the serious problems in the #Mariel Port project

Further, Sánchez tweets instructions to her fellow citizens on how to use social media:

15 Mar Yoani Sánchez @voanifromcuba
#Cuba #Venezuela When there isn't #Internet connection, it is posible to twitt by #SMS http://t.co/p0CGZyi4X2
Twelve of Sánchez’s tweets during the period analyzed provided critical local information regarding freedom of expression in Cuba:

24 Feb Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
Today it's 6 years since Raúl Castro came to the Presidency of #Cuba via his blood ties #FamilyDynasty

26 Feb Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba Today a group of Cuban activists met in #Madrid looking for a minimum of common ideas. The previous meeting was in #Havana

3 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba I was reported arrests yesterday Sunday against @DamasdBlanco and activists in the municipality #Colon, province #Matanzas

3 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba Little by little, Cubans are not remaining silent anymore, it is a slow process, like waking up someone who is deeply asleep

3 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba These days it's been a year since the unjust conviction of the writer and blogger @Angelsantiesteban1 #Libertad

4 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba Telephone company #CUBACEL announces a new service to check the e-mail of #Nauta account service in the cellphone

6 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba I was informed that today were arrested by police Berta Soler, leader of the @DamasdBlanco and the activist @JAngelMoya

7 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba I was informed that were freed the activists Berta Soler of the @DamasdBlanco and her husband @JAngelMoya

8 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba Despite this being a very late decision & with very high prices, it is a new opportunity that opens up for the civic society #Internet

8 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba It is expected that starting from September the telephone company #ETECSA will open the #ADSL home internet service

12 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
#Cuba reaches 2 millions of mobile service users

14 Mar Yoani Sánchez @yoanifromcuba
The Countdown to an Independent Newspaper in #Cuba Has Begun http://t.co/WYaOJwGnoX
Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, of 251 tweets by Amnesty, none mentioned Cuba or Sánchez, nor did Amnesty retweet any of the 140 tweets by Sánchez. On the three dates of significance—February 24, February 28, and March 19, 2014—, Amnesty failed to recognize the anniversaries of Raúl Castro ascending to the presidency, Angel Santiesteban-Prats being detained, or the Black Spring. In addition, during that time, Article 19 tweeted 107 times, with no reference to Cuba or Sánchez, nor did Art 19 retweet any of the 140 tweets posted by Sánchez. On the three dates of significance, Art 19 was silent on the anniversaries of Raúl Castro ascending to the presidency, Angel Santiesteban-Prats being detained, or the Black Spring.

Between February 24 and March 24, 2014, Committee to Protect Journalists tweeted 368 times, with no reference to Sánchez, Cuba, Raúl Castro, Angel Santiesteban-Prats, or the Black Spring. Committee to Protect Journalists’s retweet record is strong, and the organization follows Sánchez. However, none of Committee to Protect Journalists’s retweets originated with Sánchez. Furthermore, Freedom House tweeted 607 times between during the period being observed without retweeting any of the 140 tweets by Sánchez. On the three dates of significance, Freedom House was silent on the anniversaries of Raúl Castro ascending presidency, Angel Santiesteban-Prats being detained, and the Black Spring. Freedom House did refer to Cuba in one tweet. On February 28, it tweeted in memory of former revolutionary Huber Matos: “Freedom House mourns the loss of veteran Cuban freedom champion, Huber Matos” (#freedomhousedc, February 28, 2014).
Finally, during the dates of observation, Reporters Without Borders tweeted 155 times and was the only organization to tweet about a date of significance for Cuba. On February 28, 2014, Reporters Without Borders tweeted the following:

RSF /Reporters Without Borders @RSF_Reporters Without Borders Feb 28 #Cuba - Un an de prison écoulé pour le blogueur Ángel Santiesteban-Prats http://ift.tt/1pE5UUe

No other tweets or retweets were recorded.

Discussion. Blogs, RSS feeds, and Twitter are used regularly in INGO advocacy and are considered, as indicated in the interviews, effective advocacy tools. However, this brief comparison of the amount of information disseminated by the local (GenY) that is accessed and reiterated by the global (INGOs) indicates a tendency to mute or ignore information related to Cuba. Such information is not only readily available but also constantly updated by Sánchez.

Thus, corroborating the results of the 5-year archival analysis of INGOs, again, a disconnect is apparent between Sánchez’s information and INGOs’ reciprocal dissemination of the same. It is another gap between the local and the global. In this case, the disconnect is not demonstrated by infrequency and questionable accuracy of disseminated information; rather, it is evidenced by the glaring omission of local information.

Comparative statistical analysis of INGO websites. To provide quantitative corroboration of information disparity, the social media output of the four most Internet-prolific INGOs (Amnesty, Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders) was analyzed to provide a statistical picture of information reciprocity.
Results. Using Text Miner, comparative analyses of INGO social media output confirmed surprising lack of interest in posting information on Cuba (Chapter 5). INGO sites were mined for start-list terms. Text Miner then scraped the INGOs’ websites for references to those phrases, revealing to what extent the INGO content included those words, names, and phrases. This analysis was performed between November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013, which marked an important landmark for freedom of expression in Cuba because Sánchez was granted exit from the country to make a well-publicized international speaking tour.

As shown in Table 4, Text Miner located the unique URL for each INGO during the dates in question. Amnesty’s yielded 442 items; Committee to Protect Journalists’s, 412; Freedom House’s, 46; and Reporters Without Borders’, 473. In total, 1373 unique URLs were mined.

Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URLs Collected Between November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URLs Mined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.amnesty.org">http://www.amnesty.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.cpj.org">http://www.cpj.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org">http://www.freedomhouse.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.en.rsf.org">http://www.en.rsf.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Text Miner then extracted content, searching each unique URL for the start-list phrases and words. Over 600,000 text records were mined (Table 5).
Table 5

Text Data Collected Between November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant text</th>
<th>Number of references</th>
<th>Number of documents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Castro</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.01614143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade embargo</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>0.728670254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom speech</td>
<td>7666</td>
<td>5.892390469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoani Sánchez</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.007686395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuban dissident</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.04688701</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion. As might be expected, the start-list phrase freedom of speech received the most hits, with other words and phrases being far less prominent. Trade embargo received the second highest number of hits at 948. However, matches to Cuba-specific text were insignificant. As shown in Figure 13, of the more than 600,000 records searched, less than 100 matches with Castro, Yoani Sánchez, or Cuban dissident were returned. While only a brief snapshot, the results also bolster the findings of the preceding comparative qualitative analyses.
The lack of reference to any of the start-list phrases further indicates that INGOs fail to use social media regularly to draw attention to issues relevant to Cuba. In fact, between November 1, 2012, and Jul 1, 2013, the INGOs failed to convey current information regarding the same despite the fact that, as discussed in Chapter 3, “Cuba’s most famous activist blogger” was touring the world and the United States to discuss freedom of expression and freedom of the press (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2013).

**Personal interviews with INGO staff from Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders.** In-depth qualitative analysis of personal interviews with representatives of three of the INGOs (Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders) was conducted to deepen understanding of INGO social media use and the perceptions of INGO staffers. The personal interviews were conducted over a one-year period. Kamal Singh, Committee to Protect Journalists; Cynthia Romero, Freedom House; and Delphine Halgand, Reporters
Without Borders, gave in-depth interviews ranging from 40–75 minutes. While there were interview questions and prompts, overall, the interviews were free-flowing conversations with spontaneous questions and insights from the interviewees. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

The interviews were analyzed through a systematic process of “sifting, charting and sorting material” by theme (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, & Ormston, 2013, p. 8). Transcripts were read repeatedly to identify the key themes and categories and coded according to common themes that arose (See Appendix D). Such analysis rendered a holistic picture of organizational use and advocates’ perceptions of relative use and utility of social media both in general and in relation to GenY.

Results. Systematic analysis of the interviews revealed four main themes: INGO mission, social media use and strategy, lobbying and funding, and Cuba and GenY. Where appropriate, the themes are divided into subcategories.

Concerning INGOs mission, all the interviewees perceived their INGOs’ missions as falling under the general rubric of freedom of speech. However, there were variations, with each organization considering its function distinct. For Singh, the Committee to Protect Journalists’ mission excludes some wider freedom of expression issues. “If you look at the content on our website, it’s not censorship. We’re not active on censorship” (Singh, 2013). However, Singh also believed that, despite Committee to Protect Journalists’ stated mission to promote “press freedom worldwide . . . by taking action wherever journalists are attacked, imprisoned, killed, kidnapped, threatened, censored, or harassed,” Committee to Protect Journalists also serves a broader mission. “You can see the title on our website that says “Defending Journalists Worldwide.’ We don’t only
defend journalists. We also operate at kind of a policy level, a more abstract level” (Singh, 2013).

While the interview with Romero from Freedom House was by far the most Cuba-centric, it was clear the Freedom House mission is broader than those of both Committee to Protect Journalists and Reporters Without Borders and, unsurprisingly, more inclusive of the concept of freedom in general. In the case of Cuba, Freedom House advocacy expands freedom of expression to include social justice advocacy, citing organizing and education efforts in the areas of Afro-Cuban and Cuban LGBT civil rights (Romero, 2013).

The Reporters Without Borders mission is “to report on a daily basis on press freedom violation all around the world in 180 countries” (Halgand, 2013). However, per U.S. director Delphine Halgand, the organization has undergone a pivotal turn in terms of this mission: “A few years ago, I think in 2008, we changed our mission from defense of the press, freedom of the press, to defense of freedom of information” (Halgand, 2013). Thus, Reporters Without Borders has worked on developing “a kind of very unique expertise to teach journalists and news provider how to protect themselves online, how to circumvent online censorship” (Halgand, 2013; Appendix D). This focus is a shift from the Reporters Without Borders’s previous agenda, which was more along the lines of Committee to Protect Journalists’s protection of journalists. Halgand predicted the shift will affect the Reporters Without Borders World Freedom Index in that “we are still called the world press freedom index but it’s the level of free flow of information” (Halgand, 2013).
Reporters Without Borders also claims to extend protection to bloggers by “defending the news providers, the people who bring information, who are able to give . . . Even if they are one-sided, it’s not part of the press; it’s part of the free circulation of information” (Halgand, 2013). Notably, Halgand saw bloggers as integral to Reporters Without Borders information gathering: “[I]f you want to have independent news, you have to look at the blogs” (Halgand, 2013).

Concerning social media use and strategy, conversations regarding social media landscape yielded common subcategories: social media evolution, primary platform and uses, and leverage. Each of the INGO representatives perceived the social media landscape as a work in progress. Romero (Freedom House) stated that the organization was “kind of going with it as it grows” and described a somewhat disjointed policy of social media use, loosely coordinated from the DC office:

"Right now, we sort of like we have appoint person in each of our field offices, a social media person. Everything kind of gets vetted in terms of what comes out from here in D.C. but we’re trying to sort of loosen that a little bit so that we could jus to be more responsive." (Romero, 2013)

Halgand (Reporters Without Borders) viewed social media as a confluence of expression and technology: “social media changed the landscape. . . . [I]t’s an explosion of media, explosion of voices” (Halgand, 2013). According to Singh (Committee to Protect Journalists), many NGOs have been “behind the game” (Singh, 2013). Similarly, Romero believed that Freedom House is not using social media to its full potential: “[I]t’s still trying to develop its own identity and then become popular” (Romero, 2013).

Of all the interviewees, Singh was the most detailed as to the trajectory social media was taking in his organization, Committee to Protect Journalists. Hired in 2010 for the specific task of getting a real social media network up and running, Singh believed, “
[T]hings were stagnant” (Singh, 2013). To coordinate a more thorough social media campaign strategy, Singh began experimenting with different platforms, such as Google+, Vimeo, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook Causes (Singh, 2013).

Concerning primary platform and uses, interviews revealed Twitter as the preferred platform for Committee to Protect Journalists and Freedom House. It was perceived as the most useful network in furthering advocacy goals. Singh stated that he “put more effort into Twitter because I just saw more opportunity for kind of interaction, and just all sorts of engagement” (Singh, 2013).

Romero thought Twitter the best platform to use in the Americas and indicated that Twitter use is “more prevalent . . . . I feel like people are more likely to use Twitter than Facebook in Latin America” (Romero, 2013). Freedom House also uses other platforms, including SMS campaigns which, because of regional technological limitations (“the ‘stone age’”), are an effective mode of communication in Cuba and the Americas. In addition, Freedom House releases freedom alerts all the time when we see that the activists or journalists or others are in danger. Or if we see like a particular trend, let's say like huge amounts of arbitrary detention in Cuba then we'll release a freedom alert. (Romero, 2013)

Halgand was silent concerning Twitter and, as noted above, thought bloggers the most important resource. Reporters Without Borders, however, was the only organization represented in the interviews to have an actual “Internet desk”: “What we call Internet desk is a team dedicated to following bloggers’ arrests, Internet law and things like that” (Halgand, 2013).

The interviews showed a divergence in perception as to the purpose these social media platforms serve in advocacy. Despite the fact that Singh saw Committee to Protect Journalists as a research organization, he noted that the “primary thing is to get the word
out” (Singh, 2013). Notably, the “word” is not local information; rather, it is the organization’s own research agenda:

We are a research-based organization. But the complaint was, okay, we do all this great research. We feel like no one’s, not enough people are actually looking at it. So social media, that’s one of the big things we use it for, to get our, you could say to increase traffic. It’s kind of self-serving, but we’re trying to increase traffic to our website, right. (Singh, 2013; Appendix D)

In contrast, Halgand downplayed the importance of the Reporters Without Borders Internet desk, indicating the local journalists who collaborate with the organization are still the most useful in terms of information, concluding that “the social media didn’t change so much the way we work, because the way we work is we have local, we have one local main correspondent in one country [with] . . . open access, . . . so we build our local network” (Halgand, 2013). For Romero, the question was not how much information could be collected from local sources but “how do you make that ricochet back onto the island?” (Romero, 2013). Romero considered social media as a means for informing the local public about the activities of their fellow citizens engaging in activism and using that information as a potential galvanizing force for change.

While the interviews revealed none of the organizations have a clear social media strategy, the interviewees appeared cognizant of the power of social media to provide leverage, that is, using information politics to apply international pressure to further their agenda. Singh theorized how Committee to Protect Journalists could use FaceBook Causes to leverage for more humane treatment of imprisoned journalists: “So if we sent a whole mess of petitions over to the jail that the person is in, and then we put a cover letter that translated into, from English to Chinese and Tibetan, the guards see it, then they say, hey someone on the outside cares” (Singh, 2013). Although unfamiliar with the theoretical concept of information and leverage in a TAN, when asked whether Reporters
Without Borders used the information it collects at the Internet desk to apply “shame and blame” leverage on governments, Halgand answered affirmatively, stating, “I did not know that’s the theoretic name, but that’s what we do” (Halgand, 2013).

Romero noted that information collected and distributed through Twitter has been an effective strategy in exerting leverage on the Cuban government:

[S]o there's been an increase in arbitrary detentions in the past few years compared to in the past, where people would kind of get detained and would have long prison sentences. Now, you see more people being detained, but for shorter periods of time. And part of that I think is just strategic, because the government... that that's less likely to raise red flags with the international community. You will get groups like us, releasing a press release or freedom alert around that arbitrary arrest. . . and they're out the next day (Romero, 2013).

Romero claimed Cuban activists feel more secure because of this phenomenon; however, as shown in the analyses above, Freedom House rarely, if ever, conveys information gained via Twitter or other social media platforms, so the extent to which Freedom House is applying leverage is largely unknown.

When asked about organizational fundraising and financial support, each of the interviewees emphasized the nongovernmental nature of their organizations. Per Singh and Romero, Freedom House and Committee to Protect Journalists rely almost wholly on foundations and grants (Romero, 2013; Singh, 2013). Singh noted that individual donations are rare and that social media drives for donations have been largely unsuccessful and are not a real priority for the organization (Singh, 2013).

In terms of funds provided to local activists, Committee to Protect Journalists was silent on this issue while both Halgand and Romero stressed that organizational funding of local activists in Cuba and elsewhere is an indirect process for two important reasons: (a) perceived danger to the local activists and (b) the damage outright Western funding might do to the credibility of those activists. However, Romero noted a fair amount of
aid was reaching Sánchez from “foreign assistance groups” seeking to cultivate her as “an agent for social change” (Romero, 2013).

Freedom House is perhaps the most proactive in terms of indirectly aiding activists in Cuba and elsewhere. Romero stated the organization directs funds to other organizations that provide aid to the activists because it is “more effective just to support them in the portals that they manage themselves.” One such example is a Spanish web portal in which,

they received the stories from inside the island. They have a website that transmits that information. And what’s good about them, and what’s innovation from other websites that have been created like that before is two things: First, they vet the information that they get from the island, and they send it back. (Romero, 2013)

Of the three organizations, Reporters Without Borders interviewee Halgand was the only INGO representative to admit funding from a governmental organization. Although Reporters Without Borders also relies on grants from foundations, according to Halgand, funds from the European Union comprise a “good part” of the donations received by the INGO (Halgand, 2013).

Concerning the theme of lobbying, the interviews revealed indirect lobbying of governments by the INGOs. Romero noted, although “we can’t lobby, . . . “we do advocate” (Romero, 2013). She described this advocacy as talking regularly with members of Congress about Cuba programming: “So we do talk regularly with Congress, members of Congress, about the utility of Cuba programming and just showing what works and what is innovative, and what is cutting edge” (Romero, 2013). Furthermore, Freedom House has taken advantage of the recent relaxation of travel visas in Cuba to use local activists to advocate in the United States:
For instance, this past year, when the activists were coming out of the island, we took several of them on the hill to talk about their programs. We specifically reach out to critics of U.S. assistance to Cuba so they could see that this activist we're bringing to you are doing some really cutting edge things. (Romero, 2013)

Singh considered lobbying a subset of program work or, as noted earlier, “abstract policy work.” He described how Committee to Protect Journalists tries to seize opportunities as they arise to influence government officials:

We have consultants that are abroad. For example, Mexico. We have a Mexico representative, essentially a consultant. We call them reps, a Committee to Protect Journalists representative. That person is well situated to go and talk. If we need a meeting with high-level people, then that person can do that. Or if it’s high enough, then it could involve people, or higher level staff here and/or board members together. The folks here met with former president Calderon, and it was the executive director, the senior program officer here, and so on and so forth. (Singh, 2013)

As the U.S. director for Reporters Without Borders, to Halgand, advocacy is the passage of information: “We relay the information we got from the grounds and to the State Department” (Halgand, 2013). However, at least in the United States, Halgand admitted that the information she relays is often editorialized by the State Department and that “when they quote us, it’s not us anymore who say that; it’s the Department of State” (Halgand, 2013). At the time of the interview, Halgand was trying to change that fact by preparing reports and statements on countries the State Department could “cut and paste” into its annual reports.

In terms of the main theme of Cuba and GenY, the interview with Romero (Freedom House) was the most Cuba-specific one, revealing that Freedom House’s primary concern is to get information into Cuba rather than broadcast outside the island. However, the interviewees all revealed an extremely important fact. Not one of the organizations interviewed maintained a presence in Cuba at the time of the interviews. Reporters Without Borders director Halgand stated the organization had not had staffers
on the ground there for 7 years. She noted, “[A]fter the experience that our
correspondent was jailed for 7 years in Cuba, we had to develop a unique way to work
with Cuba” and that “[i]n Cuba, we don’t have one correspondent; we have contacts”
(Halgand, 2013).

In fact, at the time of the interviews, none of the organizations had a research,
Internet, or advocacy division focused on Cuba. Despite the fact that Romero stated she
had been working on Cuba for 10 years, she admitted that Freedom House does not “have
. . . active Cuba programming right now” (Romero, 2013). In addition, Singh noted,
while Committee to Protect Journalists maintained it had a regional Americas desk, no
one person was assigned to monitor Cuba. In fact, he argued that Committee to Protect
Journalists should not direct its staffers to monitor social media:

I’m not sure that you can- If you’re talking about, like, I mean, we’re almost kind
of like a news- In some ways we’re like a news organization, right? We’re
journalists. There are a lot of journalists, or former journalists here, right . . . . I
mean, if you went to CNN or Reuters, then are their social media editors telling
all the reporters there, saying, okay, you need to do this every day? That’s
unlikely, right? (Singh, 2013)

Interviews with Reporters Without Borders and Committee to Protect Journalists
representatives also revealed staff changes that affected Cuba research. The one Cuba
expert for Committee to Protect Journalists, Gypsy Guillén Kaiser, had recently left the
organization to “go back to school.” Halgand indicated that “the . . . head of our
Americas desk . . . just left” (Singh, 2013; Halgand, 2013). Additionally, she candidly
revealed that the person who had filled that position “would not know more than me so
much . . . because he [the former head] had all of the background” (Halgand, 2013).

The interviews indicated a tendency for these organizations to prioritize Africa,
Asia, and the Middle East over Cuba in their research, support, and monitoring activities.
When asked whether Reporters Without Borders interacted with advocates or government officials who focus on Cuba, Halgand noted that, for Reporters Without Borders, the focus is “more on Asia and Middle East than Latin America” (Halgand, 2013). Romero spent significant time discussing Africa and the attention directed toward new technologies and activism in the region:

So like SMS campaigns for instance. We are all sort of trying to figure out whether it’s effective and now even whether it’s safe but mobile seems to be where it’s at right now for Cuba. The way at least I see it and this may prove not the right approach, but from a strategy level, I’ve been trying to find out more about what African activists are doing. (Romero, 2013; Appendix D)

A consistent theme set forth by Singh was that of autonomy. It seems the Committee to Protect Journalists regional desks are left to pursue their own agenda, with very little coordination or direction”

The regional accounts, we try to give people autonomy. I think that makes sense in all sorts of ways, not just in terms of resources. Things won’t get bottled up with me, but also just if people get empowered. They’re naturally the experts in the region anyway, so they should be in charge of it. In some cases they’re tweeting in other languages, so I’m going to be- I’m not fluent in Spanish, so I’m not the best person to do that. (Singh, 2013)

Despite relative organizational inattention to Cuba, each interviewee was aware, to varying degrees, of Yoani Sánchez and GenY. Romero appeared to be the most knowledgeable about GenY and appeared to recognize the potential the blog offers:

[S]he’s actually found ways to take the skill sets that made her a good blogger, and train other people who are then training other people on those skill sets. Whether it’s the actual art of blogging or well, shouldn’t be really an art, but just the concept and giving people a platform to do that. To like post this and other things, and then also the digital security. So she’s doing more now, and now even more recently working with HRDs on using digital tools for human rights documentation. So anything that’s on the tech side, she’s really become sort of the leader of tech related capacity building within civil society on the island. (Romero, 2013)
Notwithstanding the fact that Freedom House has no Cuba program, Romero had clearly thought of the impact Sanchez has had and how it might be used"

[W]hat impact is Yoani having. It is a question that a lot of us ask ourselves, right? Because what’s coming out of her and out of other sort of bloggers in Cuba is just a lot of good, real analysis about what's happening on the island. That’s informing in a more robust way, people’s understanding about Cuba’s reality on the outside. (Romero, 2013).

While largely unfamiliar with the events and activists in Cuba, Singh was aware of her work and had met Sánchez during her world tour when she breakfasted at Committee to Protect Journalists headquarters, (Singh, 2013).

Halgand, however, had little knowledge of Sánchez, despite the emphasis she placed on the Reporters Without Borders mission to train bloggers in the art of avoiding censorship and governmental monitoring. She was unaware of Sánchez’s blogging school while expressing a familiarity with “her work,” In fact, when discussing Sánchez and blogging, Halgand expressed surprise that Reporters Without Borders had no program in Cuba: “[So], we didn’t do a workshop in Cuba, how surprising” (Halgand, 2013).

Discussion. The interviews provided many insights into the general trend of INGO social media use, any strategies used by the INGOs, and their interactivity with Cuba and Sánchez. The interviews made apparent that none of these organizations has a clear social media advocacy strategy. Committee to Protect Journalists appears to have prioritized social media interaction; however, the organization’s emphasis on regional desk autonomy shows a lack of coordinated advocacy effort. In addition, as revealed by Singh, the motivation for increasing social media presence is not to gain access for more information but to direct traffic to the Committee to Protect Journalists site so that their research is readily available. Freedom House is concerned with how social media can
inform publics. In Cuba, the emphasis is not on collecting and broadcasting local information globally but on how to inject that information back into Cuba with the hopes of sparking some type of movement. The interview with the Reporters Without Borders representative revealed that, although the organization is the only one to have established an Internet desk to monitor blogs, the U.S. director favor traditional local correspondents. Its radical shift in mission from “protection of journalists” to the “protection of the free flow of information” appears to be still underway, and its understanding of how to use social media to further this goal remains incoherent.

However abstractly, representatives of each organization acknowledged the potential for social media to exert leverage in advocacy. The issue with all of those interviewed seemed to be that they simply had not formulated policies and trajectories for social media advocacy so that, for each INGO, social media advocacy is a work in progress. Thus, social media is used haphazardly, on an ad hoc basis, with no clear framework for its use nor particularized agenda.

The fact that the organization representatives recognized the potential for leverage indicates they were well aware of the necessity for collecting information to use for this purpose. However, again, it is clear that such a strategy is not prioritized in advocacy initiatives. Surprisingly, none of the interviewees mentioned social media as a vehicle for fundraising, perhaps because of the grant-dependent nature of the organizations and the fact that these, as with most INGOs, have limited human resources to mount sophisticated development campaigns.

In terms of providing financial support to local activists, the only organization with a coordinated funding effort is Freedom House. Freedom House funding,
necessarily, is indirectly channeled, however, to protect local activists and to boost activist credibility by distancing them from ideological influence. Perhaps the most important facts revealed is that the INGOs have no physical presence on the island and they did not have at the time of the interviews (and in some cases had not had for years) any type of Cuba programming. Nevertheless, each organization presents a yearly report in which Cuba is poorly rated in terms of freedom and freedom of expression. Such a finding raises questions about research rigor, accuracy, and—ultimately—credibility. How is it possible for INGOs with little or no interactivity with local Cuban activists and no staff assigned to monitor, investigate, or research contemporary issues in Cuba provide such detailed analyses regarding conditions within the country?

**Summary of Results and Conclusions**

Four separate measures were used. When triangulated and taken cumulatively, they provided strong evidence of a significant disconnect between the local and the global, resulting in information gatekeeping. As shown in the 5-year comparative qualitative analysis of INGO and GenY social archives, a prominent disparity exists in social media content. Despite the substantively relevant and prolific content made available on GenY social media, INGO social media content on the same was infrequent and unrepresentative of the local.

Further, an in-depth comparative textual analysis of GenY and INGO blogs and tweets from a shorter time frame revealed the same issue. An enormous amount of information relevant to freedom of speech was generated by the local (GenY). This information was almost wholly absent in the INGO blogs and tweets, further establishing the INGO tendency to mute or ignore readily available Cuba-relevant information.
The statistical analysis of INGO websites and the frequency with which they referred to the Cuba-specific terms of GenY, Castro, Cuban dissident, and Yoani Sánchez, as well as the more general phrases of freedom of speech and trade embargo corroborated the findings from the two previous measures. Of 600,000 records searched, less than 100 matches with the Cuba-specific terms were retrieved. Such an extremely low yield quantitatively established INGOs’ failure to use social media regularly to draw attention to issues relevant to Cuba.

Finally, information gathered from the personal interviews conducted with Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders representatives indicated a disparity information produced by the local and transmitted to the global. Among other findings, the interviewees revealed similar incoherencies in social media strategy as well as the fact that not a single organization interviewed had a program of research—social media driven or otherwise—dedicated to information gathering in Cuba.

As documented in preliminary analyses, free speech INGOs spend significant time in their tweets, blogs, and RSS feeds drawing attention to acts they perceive violate free speech, often perpetrated by nondemocratic regimes. As such, their failure to pick up or convey information from local Cuban activists is, at best, indicative of neglect rather than purposeful gatekeeping. However, it emphasizes the amount of attention and investigation that INGOs devote to issues of free speech in Cuba, which the results indicate as very little. Thus, the credibility of INGOs’ evaluations of freedom of expression in Cuba, especially the Freedom House and Reporters Without Borders annual
assessments that consistently condemn the Cuban government as being one of the most repressive, must be re-examined.
CHAPTER 7
IMPLICATIONS, TRAJECTORIES, AND CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

This study addressed social media use in the TAN that exists between freedom of speech advocacy INGOs and local Cuban activists. In so doing, it was necessary, first, to confirm the existence of a TAN among the INGOs and that Yoani Sánchez’s social media, referred to collectively as GenY, was included in that TAN. As shown in Figures 11 and 12, a network does exist among the INGOs studied and GenY. Within this network is the opportunity for reciprocal flows of information from the local that should translate to INGO advocacy on the global scale (Keck & Sikkink, 1998).

Once the TAN was verified, the more critical inquiry became the extent to which these INGOs use the social media output of GenY in their advocacy for freedom of speech in Cuba. The underlying query was to what extent do the INGOs function as information gatekeepers. Answering this question required contextualizing the day-to-day use of social media by both the INGOs and GenY.

As demonstrated in the qualitative analyses of social media content produced respectively by the INGOs and GenY during two bounded time frames—January 1, 2009, to January 1, 2014, and February 24, 2014, to March 24, 2014—, all parties examined used social media to produce content relevant to freedom of speech. However, these findings established a significant disparity between the substance and amount of Cuban information and the reciprocal use of such by the INGOs. As demonstrated by the frequency indicator developed in Chapter 5, GenY social media content is almost wholly absent from INGO social media advocacy. Further, as shown by the corresponding representativeness indicator, that content disseminated by the INGOs is, at times,
“repackaged” and, at other times, contradictory to the original content posted by Sánchez. Both measures confirmed that, intentionally or otherwise, the INGOs played a role in information gatekeeping.

These results were bolstered by quantitative measures, which analyzed the amount of INGO online content dedicated to advocacy for freedom of speech in Cuba between the dates of November 1, 2012, and July 1, 2013. As shown in Chapter 6, INGO online advocacy for Cuba was nominal at best, with only 100 references found in 600,000 records mined, thus indicating a lack of attention to Cuba-specific advocacy. The results are surprising because the INGOs examined maintain consistent hard-line anti-Castro narratives in their annual assessments and freedom indices. The relative dearth of information is made more relevant when the assessed dates are put into context. The time frame selected encompassed those dates in which Sánchez was granted exit from the country to make an unprecedented world speaking tour. Throughout this tour in the United States and other nations, Sánchez was subject to numerous, well-publicized acts of repudiation, such as the pro-Castro, anti-Sánchez demonstration during her panel presentation at the New School in New York (Fusco, 2013). Such acts are typical advocacy fodder for these INGOs, whose stated missions, in varying degrees, are to serve as free-speech watchdogs and to bring attention to such actions as these, which are perceived as injurious to free speech.

The results were then triangulated with personal interviews with upper level staff at three of the INGOs. As discussed in Chapter 6, the interviews revealed that INGO social media advocacy strategy is developing and remains uncoordinated and fairly haphazard. The interviews also showed, while these INGOs recognize the potential of
social media use for advocacy, information gathering through social media is not a priority. Rather, social media are used to “get the word out” about INGO activity, research, and agenda (Singh, 2013).

Perhaps the most important finding from the qualitative assessment of the interviews was that none of the organizations interviewed had representatives in Cuba or even Cuba-specific programming. This finding is significant because it undermines the credibility of INGO literature on Cuba. As discussed in detail below, INGO literature is perceived as well-informed, accurate, and credible and is highly influential when it comes to U.S. and international policies toward Cuba. Thus, if the credibility of INGO advocacy be eroded, international relations with Cuba must be reassessed.

Each of the analyses, standing alone, provides only anecdotal confirmation that the INGO free speech TAN members are functioning as information gatekeepers, whether proactively or solely through omission. Taking the measures cumulatively, however, the findings establish a strong foundation with which to identify the gatekeeping role played by these INGOs. The conclusions are supported by a chain of evidence and derived from multiple sources; therefore, results are legitimized (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Clark, 2007).

**Limitations**

**Practical limitations.** The research may be vulnerable to several criticisms. The most obvious criticism is, of course, that country studied has been estranged politically, ideologically, and culturally from the author’s home country, the United States, for more than 54 years. Therefore, the typical sociocultural disconnect found between researchers and subjects of different nationalities is exacerbated by political and ideological
divisions, creating the potential for latent subjectivity bias. However, this obstacle is not insurmountable because measures were taken to differentiate freedom of speech ideologies and provide an in-depth exploration into the history of Cuba and free speech. More importantly, the real issue is not the “Cubanness” of Sánchez and GenY, nor is it about the rightness or wrongness of INGO or Cuban concepts of freedom of speech. Rather, the research is about information flows and analyzes social media use and the relative inputs and outputs of INGOs and GenY, as well as any correlations, deviations, or omissions in the exchange of information.

Nevertheless, it is often repeated knowing the “real Cuba”—and by extension the opinions and agenda of the Cuban citizen, in this case, Sánchez—is difficult. This issue may be attributed, in part, to the centuries-long systematic repression of freedom of speech, in place long before Castro came to power. It may also arise, as many Castrophobes insist, from the culture of fear that results from restraints actively perpetrated by the regime. These restraints include the overt practices of the Comites en Defensa de la Revolución (paid watchdogs) and those tasked with assuring “acts of repudiation, against dissidents; the Brigadas de Acción Rapida and Sistema Único de Vigilancia y Protección; as well as the more insidious covert operations of the chivates or dobles. It may even be that, as often accused by her critics, Sánchez is, in fact, a paid agent for Western governments seeking to propagandize against the Castro government with intent to transform the nation into a capitalist democracy (Cuban Blogger Denounced by Italian Translator, 2014).

For whatever reason, information gathered from Cuba must always be viewed with a suspicious eye, even if it comes in the form of an activist blog. However, it is
important to remember that the veracity of the original content is not the issue raised in the research questions. Aside from the descriptive and informative assessment of social media practices in INGOs, this research is no more Cuba centered than it is technology centered. It makes no difference whether the local information that is (or is not) gathered, translated, and disseminated by the INGOs is truthful or not. The questions here addressed the information exchange and whether INGOs act as gatekeepers. The substance of Sánchez’s social media posts, although fascinating and noteworthy, is not the focus. It is whether and how the INGOs use the information and whether and how the information informs their advocacy for Cuba.

In addition to cross-cultural issues, there was a potential language obstacle. The author speaks Spanish minimally and reads proficiently, but the analysis required cultural and literal specificity. However, the language barriers were obviated by Sánchez’s network of translators who translate every post, blog, and tweet accurately and in a timely manner. Thus, English language (among numerous other languages) portals are available for analysis, for example, @yoanifromcuba and genarcionyen.wordpress.com.

**Methodological limitations.** This research is also vulnerable to the problems that accompany any research involving qualitative data analysis and coding in general. Coding is an interpretive technique to both organize the data and provide a means to introduce the interpretations of it (Franklin & Ballan, 2001). The coding method is often criticized on the grounds that it seeks to transform qualitative data into “quasi-quantitative” data, causing the data to lose richness, nuance, and individual character (Franklin & Ballan, 2001). The concern is that the researcher will become removed from the data and the inherent iterative nature of qualitative research will be lost (Smith, 2007).
However, the criticism may be rebutted when the researcher has thoroughly explicated definitions of codes and linked the codes clearly to the underlying data (Smith, 2007). The rationale for coding in this research is clearly linked to the data through the creation of an Excel spreadsheet in which all pertinent interview reflections and quotations were recorded. The interviews were analyzed through a systematic process of “sifting, charting and sorting material” by theme (Ritchie et al., 2013, p. 8). Transcripts were read repeatedly to identify the key themes and categories and coded according to common themes that arose (Appendix D). This process served to restore any richness that might be absent from a mechanical list of codes, as well as bring a heightened transparency to the data (Ritchie et al., 2013; Agarwal, Young, Jones, & Sutton, 2004).

The research entailed using several knowledge discovery databases (KDDs), that is, Issuecrawler, SAS Text Miner, and Tweet Tunnel. While other KDDs exist, they are fee-based (as is SAS) and often costly, thus narrowing the technology choices with which to perform analysis. KDD is an evolving field. One practical criticism of data mining software is that it is constantly being upgraded, producing newer and better versions of the software. The improvements include added functionality, increased usability, and improved performance, which can render previous research results immediately obsolete (Collier, Carey, Sautter, & Marjaniemi, 1999). However, as noted earlier, the research is centered on patterns of information exchange and is less dependent on the substance of the information than it is on the ways in which the information is repackaged, rebroadcast, or unobserved.

Additionally, data constraints limited this research. Tweet Tunnel is the only program available for accessing archived tweets. It is a useful program; however, it will
not search more than the most recent 3500 tweets (Tweet Tunnel, 2014). Thus, tweet data
could be collected for only a short period of time. Thus, the data were limited in that
tweets could not be analyzed within the 5-year bounded time frame, which may have
provided deeper insight into INGO information collection. However, the tweet analysis
remains relevant because it provided a snapshot of activity in which information
reciprocity was clearly rebutted. Further, the more longitudinal analysis and quantitative
results served to complement and corroborate that snapshot.

Despite multiple attempts to gain interviews with all the studied INGOs, only
Committee to Protect Journalists, Freedom House, and Reporters Without Borders
granted interviews. Amnesty policy stated that it will not aid in any academic or
scholarly research agenda (Amnesty, 2014a), Article 19 would not respond to repeated
correspondences, and the relevant Inter American Press representative was relocated to
Uruguay for the year. Therefore, personal interview data were limited in breadth.
However, the personal interviews were conducted to provide holisticism and insight
rather than conclusions, thus remaining pertinent as a source of data corroboration.

Similarly, although the author was able to travel to see Sánchez speak during her
tour, an opportunity to interview her did not occur. An interview with Sánchez would
have been most beneficial in regards to her perception of INGO use of her social media
output and her sense of how high a priority Cuba was in terms of the INGO agenda.
Notwithstanding, a rich amount of data was collected from the personal interviews and
was useful in both the descriptive and critical analyses. Further, because the primary
research question was centered on INGO use of social media, an interview with Sánchez
would have been instructive but not necessary in terms of measurement.
Last, as with most qualitative inquiry, the research may be challenged on grounds of reliability and external validity. Joppe (2000) defined reliability as “the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study” (p.1). The key to reliability is consistency or trustworthiness. As Guba and Lincoln (1994) asked, “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?” (p. 289). The consistency of data in this present research was achieved through triangulation of multiple measures in the form of quantitative and qualitative analyses complemented by personal interviews.

External validity refers to the generalization of research findings, either from a sample to a larger population or to settings and populations other than those studied. More precisely defined,

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit “the bull’s eye” of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others. (Joppe, 2000)

It should be reiterated, in qualitative inquiries, generalization is made to theory not to populations or settings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); furthermore,

[Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The research builds a complex, holistic pictures, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting. (Creswell, 1989)]

In this research, the goal is to explore those “dense exchanges of information” within a TAN, not to test hypotheses for predictive purpose or causal connection. Thus, measures were appropriate.
However, to assuage positivist criticisms of the project, the research included source triangulation to provide increased rigor and validity. The logic of triangulation is based on the premise that no single method can adequately solve the problem of rival explanations (Golafshani, 2003). Its function is to locate and reveal the understanding of the object under investigation from “different aspects of empirical reality,” thus defending extrapolations that a study’s findings are the artifact of a single method, single source, or single investigator’s bias (Denzin, 1978). In this present study, the research is triangulated with multiple sources as well as with the use of mixed methods of analyses.

Guba and Lincoln (1994), in their alternative evaluating criteria for qualitative research, suggested using transferability, dependability, and transferability to judge the quality of research rather than reliability and validity (Ryan & Cronin, 2007). It is the task of qualitative researchers to provide thick and holistic descriptions so results of the inquiry are transferable (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Again, triangulation was applicable in this research because the conceptual analyses were derived from the data and checked for consistency with different data sources (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Dependability is achieved with transparency and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Ryan & Cronin, 2007). Researchers must question the neutrality of their sources and of themselves, following Guba and Lincoln: “How can one establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are determined by the participants and conditions of the inquiry and not by the biases, motivations, interests or perspectives of the inquirer?” (p. 289). The inevitable specter of subjectivity is less of a threat where, as in this research, there is a triangulation of multiple sources and methods (Creswell, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Dependability also involves the researcher giving sufficient information to determine how thoroughly a study has been conducted (Ryan & Cronin, 2007). The research must provide a navigable trail from which can be drawn the same or comparable conclusions. This is achieved by producing evidence of a decision trail at each stage of the research process to provide evidence of the theoretical and methodological decisions made (Ryan & Cronin, 2007). Chapter 5 provided ample dependability for this research. All decisions involving the theoretical framework, research design, methodological sampling, data collection, and choice of analyses were clearly explicated and a rationale provided for each.

Finally, transferability refers to whether findings can be applied outside the context of the study situation (Ryan & Cronin, 2007). A study is determined to have met the criterion of transferability when the findings can “fit” into other contexts (Ryan & Cronin, 2007). The research herein meets the criterion of transferability because the descriptive findings inform outside the confines of the Cuban paradigm. While the case study centers on the information exchange between the INGOs and GenY, the results bring valuable insight into the processes integral to information flows. Thus, the research is applicable across national boundaries to citizens for whom the INGOs advocate.

Implications

Theoretical implications. This research contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship in a number of ways. As noted earlier, the TAN model is usually applied in communications and international relations literature to explain global social movements. However, Keck and Sikkink (1998) specifically contemplated TANs as external forces capable of directing pressure to affect and alter domestic sociopolitical issues as well.
The literature, until now, has been largely silent on the processes by which a TAN might use social media as a tool for both inter and intra-national advocacy.

Additionally, communications and political science literature routinely disregards individual participants as members in a TAN, notwithstanding Keck and Sikkink’s inclusion of individuals within the model (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Social media and Web 2.0 have increased the opportunity for interactivity between actors in a TAN, as well as provided new avenues for individuals to become influential and participatory actors. This research brings the literature into today’s era of digital activism and burgeoning horizontal communications by updating the TAN model in terms of current communications technologies and individual networkers. It will be particularly useful in future research for scholars who wish to explore in greater depth how new technologies play a part in the boomerang and spiral models that are derivative of the TAN.

This present research is enlightening in that it adds to general scholarship on Cuba. Most communications and foreign policy literature remains firmly entrenched in Cold War propaganda. Further, very little research has been conducted on the generation now poised to take charge in the coming decades. Yoani Sánchez may prove to be a powerful representative of that generation, as indicated by the influence of GenY. This research not only presents an introduction to Sánchez and GenY but also moves analysis of Cuba away from an outdated paradigm.

**Practical implications.** This present research is crucial for foreign policy decision makers because it sheds light on the credibility of INGO advocacy in regards to Cuba. INGOs, such as those studied, are integral to the process of public diplomacy and international lawmaking and policy formulation either as consultants or as initiators of
important international conventions (Eftekhari, 2011). In fact, with the exception of Article 19, each of the INGOs studied enjoys consultative status with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN, 2014). Consultative status gives INGOs the right to participate in the deliberations, make recommendations, present conclusions and findings, and advocate for international policy (Willets, 2001). In addition, these and other INGOs are widely deferred to in the International Criminal Court (ICC) and consistently present reports and assessments as evidence in human rights cases (Willets, 2001). INGO influence in transnational politics is strong; therefore, the information presented by them should be well researched, well informed, and accurate. These present results bring into question whether these criteria are being met.

Thus, the findings should have an impact on government and IGO policy in Cuba. Policymaking leaders rely on the information they receive from INGOs. They tend to accept the reports, evaluations, indices, and other analyses produced by the INGOs at face value and assume credibility and accuracy (Eftekhari, 2011). The U.S. will undoubtedly rely on information from theses INGOs when considering further normalization of relations with Cuba. It cannot be underestimated how decisions based on INGO information affect the Cuban government and, by extension, Cuban citizens. Among others, decisions regarding foreign aid and investment, treaty participation, trade embargoes, formal and informal international diplomacy, and even international tourism are all influenced by INGOs (Eftekhari, 2011). The power of the INGOs to influence global politics mandates their assessments of Cuba be unimpeachable, yet these results indicate such is not the case. Therefore, the findings in this research, which implicate a breach in the credibility of INGO analyses of Cuba, should caution institutional and
governmental leaders concerning the weight they give to the information received from INGOs when making important foreign policy decisions.

Furthermore, the research is valuable to the INGOs as well because the results demonstrate a disconnect in information exchange between the local and the global, one that would probably come as a great surprise to those interviewed and other dedicated INGO staffers. Whether the disconnect exists because of financial and other practical constraints, ideological bias, or institutional procedure remains unanswered and, as discussed below, is ripe for future research. However, the results reveal that information gatekeeping, at least in the case of Cuba, is a recurring phenomenon. To bolster the rigor of their own research, enhance credibility, and use information more efficiently in their advocacy, INGOs could use this study to rethink social media strategy and as a rationale for developing more coherent methods of information gathering in hard to reach countries whose activists are using networking to bring the local into the global dialogue.

Research Trajectories

This study lays the foundation for many future research projects. As noted, the research has not answered the question of why INGOs are gatekeeping information. Answering this question is the logical next step and is extremely important in terms of INGO credibility. Two related factors should be examined in greater detail: resources and ideological agenda.

A recurrent theme in the interviews not applicable to the results was the scarcity of financial and human resources. Staff is spread thin, with over 180 countries to monitor. The question of whether the INGOs are simply too overburdened and underfunded to perform their stated missions thoroughly is an area for exploration. Such
a study should entail multiple personal interviews with a large-N sample of INGOs (free speech and otherwise), with questions specifically targeting the allocation of financial and human resource capabilities.

In addition, ideological bias must be explored. Most INGOs, especially those advocating for human rights, come from a liberal ideological perspective. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of INGO social media content can shed light on the extent to which INGOs are pushing an ideological agenda. If an INGO "cherry picks" or spins information to suit or reinforce its ideology, that INGO may be considered a self-interested actor rather than a collaborative advocate, leaving the INGO susceptible to criticism on many levels, not least of which include oligarchism, cultural imperialism, and elitism.

Thus an in-depth mixed-methods framing analysis is recommended for future research. Such a study might use critical rhetorical analyses of social media content as applied to non-democratic nations. Such an approach could be complemented by a quantitative analysis of INGO sentiment through a program such as SAS Sentiment Analytics, through which software automatically extracts sentiments in real time or over a period of time with statistical modeling and rule-based natural language processing techniques. The resulting reports show patterns and detailed reactions that classify the sentiments expressed (SAS, 2014).

An alternative method of analyzing ideology would involve an in-depth study of donor ideology. As revealed by the interviews, the INGOs studied are largely grant and foundation dependent to maintain their advocacy agenda. Whether the INGOs are influenced or coerced, even indirectly, by their donors is an important issue and directly
related to the credibility of any reports generated by the INGOs. A detailed exploration of those organizations that fund INGOs would bring insight concerning possible ideological influences that might be correlated with INGO information gatekeeping.

Finally, this present research could be expanded and measures developed to assess the functionality of the other types of politics in the TAN model, that is, symbolic, leverage, and accountability. Such a study can evaluate to what degree INGOs use these politics and how effectively they use them and explore the extent to which social media have affected TAN politics of persuasion.

**Concluding Thoughts**

This research was focused not only on assessing how INGOs use social media in their advocacy but also whether they might play a gatekeeping role in transmitting information from the local to the global. Using Cuba and activist Yoani Sánchez’s GenY social media, the study tracked the relative inputs and outputs of free speech information in both INGO and GenY information. The results revealed an extreme disparity between the amount of local information available to advocacy INGOs and the amount of that information actually absorbed and transmitted accurately through INGO social media campaigns. The findings are significant for many reasons, not the least of which is the influence the INGOs have on international foreign policy decisions. The credibility of annual indices, such as Reporters Without Borders’s *World Press Freedom Index* and Freedom House’s *Freedom of the Press*, must be re-evaluated in light of these findings, especially because international relations with Cuba will no doubt undergo a significant transformation with the inevitable passing of both Castros. In addition, global public opinion has shifted to a more tolerant and expansive approach to Cuba, unlike the
entrenched Cold War tropes found in U.S. government and INGO advocacy policy and literature. Almost daily, headlines and editorials recognize that Cold War attitudes have little place in contemporary international relations and that a reassessment of current diplomacy is in order (e.g., “In Cuba, Misadventures in Regime Change,” 2014).

Given the results of this research, INGO advocacy for freedom of speech and other civil and political rights in Cuba must also be re-assessed. That many openings in political rights and civil liberties have occurred in Cuba in the past five years is difficult to dispute. Since 2010, policy reforms have accelerated, with many approved by the Sixth Congress of the PCC in April 2011, including the following:

- The legalization of computer ownership (New York Times, 2010).
- The elimination of restrictions on private property ownership, including homes and automobiles (New York Times, 2011).
- The loosening of restrictions on private enterprise (USA Today, 2012).
- The elimination of exit visas (even for “dissidents like Sanchez) as a requirement for international travel (Huffington Post, 2014)
- ETSCA new policy of granting Smartphone access to the Cuban Intranet (Huffington Post, 2014).
- The release of all dissidents jailed in the 2003 Black Spring arrests.

Despite these reforms and the fact that GenY has been vocal in discussing them, this information is largely absent in INGO social media advocacy literature and reports. In fact, the annual evaluations rendered by the INGOs regarding civil liberties in Cuba appeared virtually unaltered for each of the 5 years examined. Despite the wealth of local information blogged and tweeted by Sánchez and other GenY activists, the INGOs have not assimilated most of this information into their global advocacy agenda. More troublesome is that the information transmitted by INGOs cannot be confirmed as accurate or current. Whatever the reason for INGOs’ omitting and distorting the local
information, the result is information gatekeeping, and the credibility of what information reaches the international community must now be viewed with skepticism.
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APPENDIX A: YOANI SANCHEZ BLOG INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT OBAMA

President Obama's Answers to My Questions

Posted: 03/18/2010 5:12 am EDT Updated: 05/25/2011 2:40 pm EDT

As I reported yesterday, I submitted seven questions to the American president, Barack Obama. He kindly took the time to respond; following are the answers I received from the White House.

President Obama's Responses to Yoani Sanchez's Questions

Thank you for this opportunity to exchange views with you and your readers in Cuba and around the world and congratulations on receiving the Maria Moore Cabot Prize award from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism for coverage of Latin America that furthers inter-American understanding. You richly deserve the award. I was disappointed you were denied the ability to travel to receive the award in person.

Your blog provides the world a unique window into the realities of daily life in Cuba. It is telling that the Internet has provided you and other courageous Cuban bloggers with an outlet to express yourself so freely, and I applaud your collective efforts to empower fellow Cubans to express themselves through the use of technology. The government and people of the United States join all of you in looking forward to the day all Cubans can freely express themselves in public without fear and without reprisals.

QUESTION #1. FOR YEARS, CUBA HAS BEEN A U.S. FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE AS WELL AS A DOMESTIC ONE, IN PARTICULAR BECAUSE OF THE LARGE CUBAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY. FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, IN WHICH OF THE TWO CATEGORIES SHOULD THE CUBAN ISSUE FIT?

All foreign policy issues involve domestic components, especially issues concerning neighbors like Cuba from which the United States has a large immigrant population and with which we have a long history of relations. Our commitment to protect and support free speech, human rights, and democratic governance at home and around the world also cuts across the foreign policy/domestic policy divide. Also, many of the challenges shared by our two countries, including migration, drug trafficking, and economic issues, involve traditional domestic and foreign policy concerns. Thus, U.S. relations with Cuba are rightly seen in both a foreign and domestic policy context.

QUESTION 2: SHOULD YOUR ADMINISTRATION BE WILLING TO PUT AN END TO THIS DISPUTE, WOULD IT RECOGNIZE THE LEGITIMACY OF THE RAUL
CASTRO GOVERNMENT AS THE ONLY VALID INTERLOCUTOR IN THE EVENTUAL TALKS?

As I have said before, I am prepared to have my administration engage with the Cuban government on a range of issues of mutual interest as we have already done in the migration and direct mail talks. It is also my intent to facilitate greater contact with the Cuban people, especially among divided Cuban families, which I have done by removing U.S. restrictions on family visits and remittances.

We seek to engage with Cubans outside of government as we do elsewhere around the world, as the government, of course, is not the only voice that matters in Cuba. We take every opportunity to interact with the full range of Cuban society and look forward to the day when the government reflects the freely expressed will of the Cuban people.

QUESTION 3: HAS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT RENOUNCED THE USE OF MILITARY FORCE AS THE WAY TO END THE DISPUTE?

The United States has no intention of using military force in Cuba. The United States supports increased respect for human rights and for political and economic freedoms in Cuba, and hopes that the Cuban government will respond to the desire of the Cuban people to enjoy the benefits of democracy and be able to freely determine Cuba's future. Only the Cuban people can bring about positive change in Cuba and it is our hope that they will soon be able to exercise their full potential.

QUESTION 4: RAUL CASTRO HAS SAID PUBLICLY THAT HE IS OPEN TO DISCUSS ANY TOPIC WITH THE U.S. PROVIDED THERE IS MUTUAL RESPECT AND A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD. IS RAUL ASKING TOO MUCH?

For years, I have said that it is time to pursue direct diplomacy, without preconditions, with friends and foes alike. I am not interested, however, in talking for the sake of talking. In the case of Cuba, such diplomacy should create opportunities to advance the interests of the United States and the cause of freedom for the Cuban people.

We have already initiated a dialogue on areas of mutual concern - safe, legal, and orderly migration, and reestablishing direct mail service. These are small steps, but an important part of a process to move U.S.-Cuban relations in a new and more positive, direction. Achieving a more normal relationship, however, will require action by the Cuban government.

QUESTION 5: IN A HYPOTHETICAL U.S.-CUBA DIALOGUE, WOULD YOU ENTERTAIN PARTICIPATION FROM THE CUBAN EXILE COMMUNITY, THE CUBA-BASED OPPOSITION GROUPS AND NASCENT CUBAN CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS?

When considering any policy decision, it is critical to listen to as many diverse voices as possible. When it comes to Cuba, we do exactly that. The U.S. government regularly
talks with groups and individuals inside and outside of Cuba that have an interest in our relations. Many do not always agree with the Cuban government; many do not always agree with the United States government; and many do not agree with each other. What we should all be able to agree on moving forward is the need to listen to the concerns of Cubans who live on the island. This is why everything you are doing to project your voice is so important - not just for the advancement of the freedom of expression itself, but also for people outside of Cuba to gain a better understanding of the life, struggles, joys, and dreams of Cubans on the island.

QUESTION 6: YOU STRONGLY SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES. BUT, CUBANS CONTINUE TO HAVE LIMITED ACCESS TO THE INTERNET. HOW MUCH OF THIS IS DUE TO THE U.S. EMBARGO AND HOW MUCH OF IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT?

My administration has taken important steps to promote the free flow of information to and from the Cuban people particularly through new technologies. We have made possible greater telecommunications links to advance interaction between Cuban citizens and the outside world. This will increase the means through which Cubans on the island can communicate with each other and with persons outside of Cuba, for example, by expanding opportunities for fiber optic and satellite transmissions to and from Cuba. This will not happen overnight. Nor will it have its full effect without positive actions by the Cuban government. I understand the Cuban government has announced a plan to provide Cubans greater access to the Internet at post offices. I am following this development with interest and urge the government to allow its people to enjoy unrestricted access to the Internet and to information. In addition, we welcome suggestions regarding areas in which we can further support the free flow of information within, from, and to Cuba.

QUESTION 7: WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TRAVEL TO OUR COUNTRY?

I would never rule out a course of action that could advance the interests of the United States and advance the cause of freedom for the Cuban people. At the same time, diplomatic tools should only be used after careful preparation and as part of a clear strategy. I look forward to visit a Cuba in which all citizens enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other citizens in the hemisphere.
## APPENDIX B: INGO VERBATIM REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INGO</th>
<th>INGO TEXT</th>
<th>SANCHEZ TEXT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>5.28.2010</td>
<td>… Chinese authorities have found themselves unsettled or outwitted by internet users – a wild colt that cannot be tamed, in the words of Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>4.2.2009</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The authorities consider the technology as a “wild colt” that must be tamed, but we independent bloggers want the wild colt to run freely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>2.6.12</td>
<td>“I feel like a hostage kidnapped by someone who won’t listen or give explanations. If all this effort helps to shine a light on the migratory absurdity we Cubans are trapped in,</td>
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<td>1.31.12</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>“I feel like a hostage kidnapped by someone who won’t listen or give explanations. If all this effort helps to shine a light on the migratory absurdity we Cubans are trapped in, then it was worth it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>3.30.12</td>
<td>Blogger Yoani Sánchez has been one of the few who has been able to send regular tweets, but has been unable to receive text messages or calls. One tweet reads “anyone who wants to communicate with me, best to use smoke signals!”</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Blogger Yoani Sánchez has been one of the few who has been able to send regular tweets, but has been unable to receive text messages or calls. One tweet reads “anyone who wants to communicate with me, best to use smoke signals!”</td>
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**Unverifiable, repeated verbatim at:**

| Art19 | No Quotes |
| 9/10/09 | Sánchez, who started blogging in April 2007, was the first to write under her own byline. Her blog, Generación Y…as its introduction |
| (n.d) | I graduated in Philology, and am a lover of technology, literature and journalism. I live in Havana and try, every day, to help build a plural and inclusive Cuba with room for all Cubans. |
says, "citizen journalists" can offer "opinions that don't have room in official Cuban outlets or any other publication that is conditioned by political requirements."

Committee to Protect Journalists 11.19.2009

On her blog Generación Y, where she has posted Obama's answers to her seven questions, Sánchez explained that the questions were based on issues "that keep me from sleeping," and were born from her personal experience.

11.18.2009

After months of trying I managed to send a questionnaire to the American president, Barack Obama, with some of the issues that keep me from sleeping.

Committee Tweet/Unverifiable
"I feel like a
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>2.9.12</td>
<td>to Protect</td>
<td>hostage kidnapped by someone who doesn't listen nor provide explanations. A government with a ski mask and a gun in a holster,“</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Journalists</td>
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| 6.17.13| FH                | In February 2013, Yoani Sanchez interviewed blogger Eliécer Avila, a former UCI student—and leader of Operación Verdad. Referring to the group as the “kilobyte police,“ Sanchez stated that the interview “corroborated“ theories that State Security had created blogs to “denigrate and discredit the citizen who criticizes the system."
<p>|       |                   | 2.11.13                                                              |
|       |                   | Sometimes, I confess, I thought they were paranoid delusions in my mind, but now I have no doubts: the Cuban authorities are spending thousands of hours on the internet and unimaginable resources each year to counter some peaceful citizens who are simply offering our opinions. |
| 4.2.2009| Reporters Without Yoani | Apparently Yoani                                                      |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Borders 3.12.12</th>
<th>Sanchez’s predictions that “the real island is starting to convert into a virtual island” will take a little longer than expected to be realized.</th>
<th>The Internet is becoming a public square for discussion where we Cubans write our opinions. The real Island has started to be a virtual Island. More democratic and more pluralistic.</th>
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<td>SIPIAPA</td>
<td>No Quotes</td>
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APPENDIX C: CORRELATIVE INFORMATION

1. The authorities continued to block access to the websites of bloggers and journalists critical of the government. Criminal charges such as "dangerousness" continued to be used to restrict dissidents from exercising freedom of expression, association and assembly. Independent journalists and bloggers faced harassment. Some were threatened with criminal prosecution and a number were detained (Amnesty Annual Report, May 28, 2010)

Those who have blocked the site from inside Cuba can take much of the responsibility for the increase in the number of hits. With their clumsy actions, they don’t seem to notice that nothing is as attractive as that which is forbidden (Sanchez, 2009; January 8)

2. In September, Yoani Sánchez, author of the popular blog Generación Y, was denied an exit visa by the Cuban authorities. She had been due to travel to the USA to receive the Maria Moors Cabot prize for journalism at Columbia University. She was also denied an exit visa to travel to Brazil following an invitation from the Brazilian Senate to present her book at a conference and address the legislature (Amnesty Annual Report, 2010).

When you read this post I will be sitting in the waiting room of the Plaza Municipality Office of Immigration and Emigration. Among military uniforms, my passport waiting for a permit to travel that has been denied me on two occasions. During the last year, the obedient soldiers dedicated to limiting our freedom of movement have not permitted me to accept international invitations. In their databases next to my name there must be a mark condemning me to island confinement. The possessive logic of this Daddy-State sees it as normal that I, as a punishment for writing a blog, like a box on the ears for having believed myself to be a free person, will not receive the “white card” (Sanchez, 2009; March 20)

This time they’ve been more direct: “You are not authorized to travel,” the woman told me quietly, almost nicely, dressed in her olive-green. My attempt to get permission to leave ended without much delay and with the same negative response. I demanded an explanation from the officer, but she was only a wall of contention between my demands and her hidden bosses (Sanchez, 2009; March 21)

3. Prisoner of conscience Orlando Zapata Tamayo died on 23 February following a prolonged hunger strike. He was one of 75 people arrested during a crackdown by the authorities in March 2003, and was serving a 36-year prison term at the time of his death (Amnesty Annual Report, 2011).
This afternoon, hours after the death of Orlando Zapata Tamayo, Reinaldo and I were able to approach the Department of Legal Medicine, where autopsies are performed, in Boyeros Street.

A cordon of men from State Security were watching the place, but we managed to approach Reina, the mother of the deceased, and ask her the questions in the recording posted here (Sanchez, 2010; February 23).

4. All media remained under state control, impeding Cubans’ free access to independent sources of information. Content on and access to the internet continued to be monitored and, on occasion, blocked. Police and state security officials continued to intimidate and harass independent journalists, scores of whom were arrested and imprisoned only to be released days or weeks later without charge or trial. Many of the detainees reported that they were put under pressure to stop taking part in dissident activities, such as anti-government demonstrations, or sending reports to foreign media outlets (Amnesty Annual Report, 2011).

We bloggers came later, among other reasons because the technology came to us slowly. I dare say that the authorities did not imagine that citizens would appeal to a global resource to express themselves. The government controls the television studio cameras, the radio station microphones, the pages of the magazines and periodicals located on Island territory, but up there, far from their reach, a satellite network—demonized but essential—offers to those who aim for it, the opportunity to “hang” their opinions in practically unlimited form (Sanchez, 2010; January 12).

Just yesterday, on the eve of the presentation in Chile of a compilation of my blog posts under the title Cuba Libre, I received a report from the Customs Department of the Republic. It confirmed the confiscation of ten copies of my book sent via DHL. In the rancid and brief words of the bureaucracy, it explained:

Physical inspection of the package found documents whose content goes against the general interests of the nation, and for this reason they have been seized consistent with the established legislation (Sanchez, 2010; April 8).

More than 60 days ago I sent several Cuban institutions a complaint for illegal detention, police violence and arbitrary imprisonment. After the death of Orland Zapata Tamayo, successive illegal arrests prevented more than one hundred people from participating in the activities surrounding his funeral. I was among
the many who ended up in a jail cell on February 24, when we went to sign the condolence book opened in his name. The level of violence used against me, and the violation of the procedures for detaining an individual at a Police Station, led me to file a claim with little hope that it would be heard in court. I have waited all this time for the response of both the Military Prosecutor and the Attorney General, holding back this revealing testimony, painful evidence of how our rights are violated.

Fortunately, my cell phone recorded the audio of what happened that gray Wednesday, and even after being confiscated it recorded the conversations of the state security agents and the police – who wore no badges – who had locked us up by force at the Infanta y Manglar station. The evidence contains the names of some of those responsible, reveals the background of the police operation against dissidents, independent journalists and bloggers. I have sent copies of this dossier of a “kidnapping” to international organizations concerned with Human Rights, protection of reporters, and all those related to abuse (Sanchez, 2010; May 14).

**Article 19:**

A textual analysis of Art19 content determined that none of Art19’s online content contained information from the GenY blog.

**Committee to Protect Journalists:**

1. Several Committee to Protect Journalists sources said the government employs computer science students to monitor the content of independent blogs. García Quintero calls them a “a type of cyber police. … If they can figure out the codes to get into one of our blogs, they go in and try to take it down.” Yoani Sánchez, for example, said in late 2008 that her blog had been hacked and taken down for several days (Committee to Protect Journalists Special Report, 2009; September 9).

2. Yoani Sánchez, who signs her name to her blog, says that openness can disarm government efforts at harassment (Committee to Protect Journalists Special Report, 2009; September 9).
Those who have blocked the site from inside Cuba can take much of the responsibility for the increase in the number of hits. With their clumsy actions, they don’t seem to notice that nothing is as attractive as that which is forbidden (Sanchez, 2009; January 8).

3. For the vast majority of Cubans, private Internet access is still restricted by law. Resolution 180 of 2003 allows only those with Cuban convertible currency—a monetary form generally used by foreigners—to obtain individual Internet access. The government-owned Internet service provider, ETECSA, must approve all connections. In practice, then, individual access to the Web is restricted largely to foreigners, intellectuals with links to the government, and high-ranking officials, as well as to certain doctors in hospitals, academics in universities, and government-owned companies. Accessing the Web through the state’s Internet service provider also requires a government-issued password. Like most commodities in Cuba, these passwords are available on the black market at steep prices.

Located at one corner of Céspedes park is a modern office of the telecommunications company ETESCA where you can send a fax or connect to the Internet. However, this latter is possible only if you can prove you weren’t born in Cuba or have lived, for many years, hundreds of kilometers from this country. I knew this when I went in and saw the questioning faces of the staffers while they looked at my clothes, to see if I was a foreigner or a simple national. As I am skilled in the art of slipping through the narrowest cracks, I spoke a ridiculous hodgepodge of English and German so they sold me a card to access the web. From there I sent the post of last Sunday and watched how they refused the Internet connection to several Cubans who entered. Offering no arguments, with a simple “access is only for tourists,” they prevented my fellow citizens from sitting at the idle computers at the end of the room. One, particularly upset, protested. He said something like, “this is a lack of respect,” and I, not able to continue faking that I was German, made a small correction: “This is another lack of respect, one more in an already long list.” A minute later I was asked to leave the premises. I’d already managed to leave my text in this wide open space, where no one requires me to show my passport (Sanchez, 2009; February 4).

5. Despite all of these limitations, Cuban bloggers still find ways to upload their stories. They write at home on personal computers (some cobbled together from black market parts) and load their information on flash drives that they can take to cafés, hotels, or diplomatic venues. Some say they are able to sporadically post directly to their blogs when they are able to access them from the island. But
most e-mail their posts to friends abroad who load them onto their respective Web sites.

The portal Desde Cuba, where this blog and others are housed, has come out with its statistics. Even though I don’t put too much stock in the numbers, the fact is that the data are too good to hide. I still believe that most of the people I meet in the street who tell me they read this site didn’t get here through an internet connection, but rather though copies on CDs, flash memories, and emails sent by family and friends abroad (Sanchez, 2009; January 8).

6. "It was a very pleasant surprise," Sánchez said, acknowledging that the chances that Obama would reply were minimal. Before responding to the questions, Obama thanked Sánchez for the opportunity to exchange views with her and her readers in Cuba, and congratulated her for receiving Columbia's University Maria Moors Cabot Award for excellence in Latin American reporting.

“Thank you for this opportunity to exchange views with you and your readers in Cuba and around the world and congratulations on receiving the Maria Moore Cabot Prize award from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism for coverage of Latin America that furthers inter-American understanding. You richly deserve the award. I was disappointed you were denied the ability to travel to receive the award in person.

Your blog provides the world a unique window into the realities of daily life in Cuba,” Obama wrote. "It is telling that the Internet has provided you and other courageous Cuban bloggers with an outlet to express yourself so freely, and I applaud your collective efforts to empower fellow Cubans to express themselves through the use of technology. The government and people of the United States join all of you in looking forward to the day all Cubans can freely express themselves in public without fear and without reprisals" (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009; November 19).

**President Barack Obama:** Thank you for this opportunity to exchange views with you and your readers in Cuba and around the world and congratulations on receiving the Maria Moore Cabot Prize award from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism for coverage of Latin America that furthers inter-American understanding. You richly deserve the award. I was disappointed you were denied the ability to travel to receive the award in person.

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efforts to empower fellow Cubans to express themselves through the use of technology. The government and people of the United States join all of you in looking forward to the day all Cubans can freely express themselves in public without fear and without reprisals (Sanchez, 2009; November 19).

7. Acclaimed Cuban blogger Yoani Sánchez has had her share of honors lately. Last year alone, her blogging, which offers a personal and critical view of life in Cuba, was honored by the Dutch Prince Claus Fund, the International Press Institute, and the Danish Centre for Political Studies. This week, Sánchez received a very different type of distinction—from the Cuban government. She was featured on Monday night's installment of "Las Razones de Cuba" (Cuban Reasons), a state-sponsored TV program and website that chronicles perceived threats to the government and singles out independent journalists as enemies of the state.

Monday night's half-hour program was dedicated to the topic of "Cyberwar." ("Not a war of bombs and weapons, but one of information, communications, algorithms, and bytes," the announcer intoned). About halfway through the half-hour broadcast, sinister music announced Sánchez's appearance, next to the word "cybermercenary." The program went on to list her international accolades along with the prize money that accompanied each award. Next came some fuzzy footage of Sánchez entering foreign embassies in Cuba. She was criticized for having secured an interview with U.S. President Barack Obama in 2009.

The program's message was clear: Independent bloggers such as Sánchez are being paid by foreign interests to undermine the state.

Luckily, we are told as the music changes, there are hundreds of bloggers who believe in the government. "Las Razones de Cuba" ends on a positive note with Cuba striding triumphantly into the future with an army of pro-government techies to overcome the menace of cybermercaneries such as Sánchez (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011; March 25).

In a blog post last week, Sánchez herself commented on the program's unintended effect after watching Dagoberto Valdes, director of the online news magazine Convivencia, get a mention on the program:

A websurfer is well aware of the hits an attack on national television can bring to any website, even in a country with connectivity as low as this one. But beyond my enthusiasm for these statistics, I realize that my friend is taking a public stoning on prime time television. Dago is strongly denigrated with no right to reply, demonized in a way that causes several colleagues to call me, frightened, "Will he be imprisoned? Shot?"
Had I hired an ad agency and a nimble publisher to disseminate the work of the alternative bloggers, I probably would not have accomplished such wide awareness of our existence, within Cuba, as that achieved thanks to the “Cyberwar” program shown Monday on official television. The tangible result is that my phone hasn’t stopped ringing and I’m hoarse from talking to so many people who have come to show me their solidarity….

What’s happening on this island such that those of us “stoned” by official insults have become so attractive? What happened to the time when aggravating State media represented years and years of ostracism and vilification? When did the spontaneous anger against those slandered, the sincere punch in the face for the stigmatized, fade away? I swear I was not prepared for this. I imagined that 24 hours after this pack of lies, told in emulation of Big Brother, everyone would pull away, stare fixedly at the cobwebs on the wall whenever I passed by. The result, however, has been so different: a complicit wink, a pat on the shoulder, the pride of neighbors who are surprised because a certain quiet and frail little woman who lives on the fourteenth floor is apparently enemy number one — at least this week — until the next to be stoned appears.

And I’m not the only one. Almost all the bloggers whose names and images appeared on the “Interior Ministry Soap Opera” are experiencing similar situations. Vendors at the farmers market who hand them a piece of fruit in passing, drivers of collective taxis who say, “You don’t pay today, sir, it’s on the house.” If the scriptwriters of that courtroom TV show had calculated such a response at the grass roots level, I think they would have refrained from putting our faces on television. But it’s already too late. The word “blog” is now irrevocably linked with our faces, glued to our skin, associated with our actions, tied to popular concerns, and synonymous with that prohibited zone of reality that is becoming more and more magnetic, more and more admired (Sanchez, 2011; March 23).

8. High-tech attacks against Internet journalists aren’t needed if access barely exists…[P]rominent bloggers such as Yoani Sánchez have been smeared in a medium accessible by all Cubans: state-run television (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011; May 2).

What’s happening on this island such that those of us “stoned” by official insults have become so attractive? What happened to the time when aggravating State media represented years and years of ostracism and vilification? When did the spontaneous anger against those slandered, the sincere punch in the face for the
stigmatized, fade away? I swear I was not prepared for this (Sanchez, 2011; March 23).

9. If the revolving jailhouse door of low-level repression seems more benign than lengthy prison terms, the death in May of dissident Juan Wilfredo Soto gives one pause. Soto, a member of the Central Opposition Coalition and a former political prisoner, was arrested by two police officers when he refused to leave a public park. After handcuffing Soto, police beat him with batons, according to independent Cuban press reports. Soto was released from custody but died days later from what officials called “multiple organ failure due to pancreatitis,” an assertion met with disbelief by independent journalists and opposition groups (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011; July 6).

But just as I put the finishing touched on my little material chronicle, Juan Wilfredo Soto died in Santa Clara and it all became senseless.

The police batons are thirsty for backs in these parts. The growing violence of those in uniform is something that is whispered about and many describe it detail without daring to publicly denounce it. Those of us who have ever been in dungeon know well that the sweetened propaganda of “Police, police, you are my friend,” repeated on TV, is one thing, and the impunity enjoyed by these individuals with a badge is another thing entirely. If, on top of that, those arrested have ideas that differ from the prevailing ideology, then their treatment will be even harsher. Fists want to convince them where meager arguments can’t succeed.

I don’t know how the authorities of my country are going to explain it, but I doubt, this time, they will manage to persuade us it wasn’t the fault of the police (Sanchez, 2011; May 8).

10. Independent journalists pay another high price: They continue to be subjected to “acts of repudiation,” the term for rallies at which government supporters gather outside the homes of people perceived as being critical of the state. In extreme cases, journalists and political dissidents are prevented from leaving their homes by chanting crowds of government supporters (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011; July 6).

We are experiencing another turn of the screw of intolerance. Just when individual daring is gaining ground here and there, the times of admonishment come along. The first signs appeared with the TV serial called “Cuba’s Reasons,” whose script seems to have been written in Stalin’s Russia rather than on this 21st Century Caribbean island. Then came the “rapid repudiation rallies,” increased
police operations, monitoring cellphones in real time, detentions and searches. All this while the official press continues to say that “the improvement of the economic model” is well underway and that the Cuban Communist Party’s Sixth Congress “has been a resounding success.” We, meanwhile, face the shock of the correctives; no boldness is left without its everlasting punishment (Sanchez, 2011; May 20).

11. Cuban human rights defender Laura Pollán, who died Friday from respiratory complications at a Havana hospital, fought a mighty battle against the Cuban government for almost a decade. (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2011; October 17).

Laura is gone and now all the acts of hatred against her resonate even more grotesquely. Laura is gone and we are left with a country slowly waking up from a very old totalitarianism that doesn’t even know how to say “I’m sorry.” Laura is gone, to the sadness of her family, her Ladies in White and of every gladiolus that has grown and will ever grow over the length and breadth of this island. Laura is gone, Laura is no more (Sanchez, 2011; October 15).

Freedom House

1. Moreover, in recent years, the Cuban government refused on multiple occasions to issue Yoani Sánchez a travel visa that would have allowed her to receive various prizes or honors overseas (Freedom House, Annual Report, 2010; April 18).

When you read this post I will be sitting in the waiting room of the Plaza Municipality Office of Immigration and Emigration. Among military uniforms, my passport waiting for a permit to travel that has been denied me on two occasions. During the last year, the obedient soldiers dedicated to limiting our freedom of movement have not permitted me to accept international invitations. In their databases next to my name there must be a mark condemning me to island confinement. The possessive logic of this Daddy-State sees it as normal that I, as a punishment for writing a blog, like a box on the ears for having believed myself to be a free person, will not receive the “white card.”

The least I desire on this Friday of bureaucracy and expectation, is that it ends with someone putting their hand on my shoulder to tell me, “We were wrong about you, you can leave.” I do not think they will amend “the error” of blocking my travel, nor do I nurture the slightest hope of boarding the airplane on March
29. I will sit in the crowded lobby of the mansion at 17th and K for only two reasons: to inconvenience them with my pigheadedness and to claim my rights. To show them the visa document that authorizes my entry to many parts of the world, while “they” curb my travel. I will be there, confident that one day all this machinery to extract profits and generate ideological loyalties—which the exit permit has become—will cease to exist (Sanchez, 2009; March 29).

2. Freedom House calls on the Cuban government to immediately release Yoani Sanchez, Cuba’s most famous blogger, and to end its stranglehold on freedom of information on the island.

Sanchez, along with her husband and another activist, was detained on Friday while traveling to the eastern city of Bayamo to cover the trial of a Spanish citizen, Angel Carromero who is facing trumped-up charges of vehicular manslaughter by the Cuban authorities. Carromero was the driver in a suspicious car crash in July that led to the death of renowned Cuban activists Oswaldo Payá and Harold Cepero. This latest arrest is part of a concerted effort on the part of the Cuban government to squash dissent and suppress information surrounding Payá and Cepero’s mysterious deaths. In July, over 50 activists were arrested on their way to Payá’s funeral (Freedom House, 2012; October 5).

The sweat of the three women who put me into a police car still sticks to my skin and in my nostrils. Huge, hulking, ruthless, they took me into a windowless room where the broken fan only blew air towards them. One looked at me with particular scorn. Maybe my face reminded her of someone in her past: an adversary in school, a despotic mother, a lost lover. I don’t know. What I do remember is that, on the evening of October 5, her look wanted to destroy me. She was the one who ferreted around under my skirt with great delight, while two other uniformed policewomen grabbed me for the “search.” Rather than seeking out some hidden object, the purpose of this search was to make me feel violated, defenseless, raped.

Every six hours they changed my guards. On the midnight shift they were noticeably less strict, but I locked myself in my silence and never responded to their questions. I evaded myself. I chose to tell myself, “They’ve taken everything, even the clip that holds my hair, but — ridiculous searchers — they have not been able to take from me my inner world.” Thus I decide to take refuge, during the long hours of my illegal confinement, in the only thing I had: my memories. The room wanted to appear neat and clean, but everything had its share of filth or breakage. The granite floor tiles were covered with a good dose of accumulated grime. I stared at the figures made by the little pebbles cast in each tile and the
gobs of dirt. After a while faces jumped out of this constellation. Characters flourished in the rough floor of my cell in the police station in Bayamo (Sanchez, 2012; October 6).

3. During a March 2012 visit to the island by Pope Benedict XVI, bloggers and dissidents reported that their cell phones were not working. One independent journalist who investigated the situation found that calls were being automatically redirected to a phone number belonging to the Ministry of Interior. All calls from dissidents’ cell phones are monitored and the service is cut regularly to those working as freelance journalists or voicing views the government does not approve via citizen journalism. In October 2012, during the criminal trial concerning the wrongful death of long time civil rights activist Oswaldo Payá, dissident blogger Yoani Sánchez’s phone was reportedly disconnected and her Twitter account was reportedly blocked (Freedom House, 2013; June 17).

After the storm, may also come the storm, the hurricane, the tornado. A few days ago we thought the punishment would be concentrated between Monday and Wednesday of last week, that it would last only as long as Benedict XVI was on Cuban soil. We lived those intense days between prayers and screams, with full plazas and packed dungeons. Our mobile phones, instead of bringing us communications, were turned into little boxes of silence, useless gadgets. Only when the Pope’s plane took off, did they begin the releases from the cells and reconnect some of the mobile phones that had been “out of service.” It seemed that by Saturday or Sunday the exhaustion of the forces of repression would give us a break (Sanchez, 2012; April 23).

4. Despite the abuses suffered by dissidents, 2013 brought a notable loosening of travel restrictions. As part of immigration reform, bloggers previously denied exit visas, including Yoani Sánchez, Orlando Luis Pardo, and Eliecer Ávila, were allowed to travel abroad. In early 2013, Sánchez, who was finally permitted to leave Cuba after having been denied an exit visa 21 times in the past five years, began an 80-city, 12-country tour, with the aim of bringing awareness to Cuba’s active civil society and blogosphere. Her speeches have since received international attention (Freedom House, 2013; June 17).

I returned home and listened to the Cuban president’s speech before the National Assembly. Almost at the end, he announced that they were “working to implement an upgrade of the existing immigration policy.” In my hands, however, I now have all the forms to get a travel permit and a passport filled with visas I haven’t been able to use. This coming Thursday I am supposed to leave for the BlogHer event in San Diego, but it is unthinkable that the new flexibility will go through fast enough for me to board the plane in time. Listening to the new Maximum Leader, I
was reminded of a friend who said, half jokingly, half serious, “In Cuba not even the widest openings are that open, nor are the closures that closed.” In this case I can’t let go of the skepticism that comes from my own personal experience, with 16 denials of a travel permit in just four years (Sanchez, 2011; August 2)

But something has changed for me since January 14 when the Migratory Reform announced last October went into effect. After waiting 24 hours outside the Department of Immigration and Aliens (DIE) I knew that finally they would issue me a new passport. With twenty “white cards” – the former exit permit – denied in five years, I confess I was more skeptical than hopeful. Even now, I will only believe I made it when I watch the plane lift off from inside.

It has been a long battle fought by many. A very long road of demanding that entering and leaving our country is an inalienable right, not a gift to be given. Although the flexibilizations in Decree-Law 302 are insufficient, not even these would have been achieved if we’d stood around with our arms crossed. They are not the fruit of a magnanimous gesture, but the result (Sanchez, 2013; January 17).

Reporters Without Borders

1. Some dissident voices have been targeted by the authorities. The blogger Yoani Sanchez (www.desdecuba/generacionY), laureate of the Ortega y Gasset prize in the “digital journalism” category, cannot leave Cuba since the authorities refuse to give her a passport. The authorities have also used their power of dissuasion to cancel a meeting she tried to organise between the island’s bloggers in December 2008. Her blog is one of the rare breaches in the information control dam, and has led to her being accused of “illegal activity” (Reporters Without Borders, 2010; March 12)

Today, Sunday morning, we had the most interesting meeting. Young people filled with discontent and with desires to make things change, received us to hear about the Cuban blogosphere. Shy at first, but, after a few minutes, with many questions about the multifaceted and flexible tool that is a blog. Now we’ll see if they join the Voces Cubanas [Cuban Voices] project.

I was in the sanctuary of the Virgin of Charity of Cobre, an island within the Island. Where, in the same glass case, offerings for the freedom of political prisoners and the insignias of the Rebel Army coexist. There, I left my Ortega y Gasset prize for journalism, the best place it could possibly be. Fortunately, the long arm of the censor does not enter her temple. Around Cachita stretches, still, one of the few strongholds of plurality that you can see in this green crocodile of a country (Sanchez, 2009; February 2)
Today at 3 in the afternoon we managed to present Orlando Luis Pardo Lazo’s book. After sneaking through the alleys of Cerro to lose the two “securities” who were following us, we ended up at the Capitol and took a bus through the tunnel under the bay. Tension, fear and doubt joined us on our brief journey to the fortress of La Cabaña. Orlando was thinking of his mother, with her high blood pressure, frightened by the threatening phone calls. My mind was on Teo at his school, unaware of the fact that maybe nobody would be there when he returned home. Fortunately, they were only ghosts.

The police operation had—we understood it a posteriori—an intention to intimidate, but there was little they could do in front of the cameras of the foreign press and of the writers who were invited. We began, sitting on the grass, speaking with a group of fifteen people, and ended with the closing applause of more than forty. We were surprised by the presence and solidarity of several young writers and poets with books published by the official publishing house. Also by the attendance of some Latin American novelists who supported us with words and hugs. There were Gorki and Ciro of the group Porno Para Ricardo, Claudia Cadelo of the blog Octavo Cerco, Lía Villares, author of the blog Habanemia, Reinaldo Escobar, blogger of Desde Aquí, Claudio Madan and others whose names I won’t mention, so as not to cause them harm (Sanchez, 2009; February 17)

2. These bloggers do not have direct access to their websites, which are not hosted on the island. They have to publish their writings and posts via friends in foreign countries. They do that by following a well-tested procedure: they prepare their content in advance, copy it onto a USB flash drive, and send it via email from a hotel. The USB flash drives, which are being passed from one blogger to another, have become the new vectors of freedom of expression in Cuba – the local “samizdat.” (Reporters Without Borders, 2012; March 12)

The portal Desde Cuba, where this blog and others are housed, has come out with its statistics. Even though I don’t put too much stock in the numbers, the fact is that the data are too good to hide. I still believe that most of the people I meet in the street who tell me they read this site didn’t get here through an internet connection, but rather though copies on CDs, flash memories, and emails sent by family and friends abroad.

Those who have blocked the site from inside Cuba can take much of the responsibility for the increase in the number of hits. With their clumsy actions, they don’t seem to notice that nothing is as attractive as that which is forbidden.

Enjoy the numbers, but don’t get caught up in the statistics... the best thing that has happened to us is not reflected in this curve that goes up and up (Sanchez, 2009; January 8)

3. In the last few months, the authorities have begun to unfavorably view this dissemination of news that has been outside of their control and to be offended by
the increasing popularity of some of these bloggers, such as Yoani Sanchez and her blog, Generacion Y. Voted by Time magazine in 2008 as one of the year’s 100 most influential people, she has been hounded by a genuine defamation campaign on the island. Accused of being a mercenary serving a foreign power, her name has been dragged through the mud by the state media. On November 6 of last year, state security policemen assaulted Yoani Sanchez and blogger Orlando Luis Pardo on the eve of a demonstration. A third blogger, Luis Felipe Rojas, was arrested twice in December 2009 and is being kept under house arrest (Reporters Without Borders, 2012; March 12).

“Don’t even think about going to 23rd Street Yoani, because the Union of Young Communists is having an event,” shouted some men who got out of the Chinese-made Geely, which reminded me of a sharp pain in my lumbar zone. I lived through something similar already last November 4...(Sanchez, 2010; January 30)

4. In 2009, the regime became wary of the growing popularity of certain bloggers, notably Yoani Sanchez. The latter has been repeatedly assaulted, interrogated and targeted by genuine slander campaigns, while other bloggers, such as Luis Felipe Rojas, have been arrested several times (Reporters Without Borders, 2012; March 12)

We were going to spend Reinaldo’s birthday listening to the songs of Pedro Luis Ferrar at a concert titled “Velorio” at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Vedado. But it happened that the culture police didn’t let us enter, using their bodies like a barricade between the door and the seating area. They accused us of wanting to organize a supposed provocation there even though, for us, they and the official television cameras they’d called to film us provoked the major commotion. I believe these anxious boys of State Security are watching a lot of Saturday movies, since our plan was rather familiar—we even took our son—and consisted of listening to the songs of the well-known musician and then dropping in at a friend’s house.

At the Museum entry a real repudiation meeting* was waiting for us, all it lacked to be complete was the eggs and the blows. A man who didn’t identify himself—continuing the style of not showing one’s face—yelled at me that I wanted “to destroy Cuban culture” and that that space was “only for the people.” It seems that what happened at Tania Bruguera’s performance has rubbed the nerves raw among the bureaucrats who saw the spectacle. They fear we’ve returned to seize the microphones, as if it weren’t better to put a loudspeaker on every corner for everyone who wants to say something. I must point out that many of those who witnessed this abuse of institutional power avoided greeting us, in view of the huge operation surrounding the place. Nevertheless others, whose names I withhold to protect them, showed solidarity and weren’t afraid of being seen with us....
Since I know they read my blog—all those who prevented me from going inside the railing seemed to know me—I want to tell them that they are not going to force me to withdraw into my house. I do not think I’ll stop going to concerts, clubs, cultural or humorous events. I’m a cultured person, even though they want to reserve such an appellation for a group of ideologically-screened chosen ones. They will have to stand guard in the doors of every theater, club and music room. I could show up at any of them. Who knows if I might climb to the dais and take the microphone (Sanchez, 2009; July 11)

5. Generación Y, a blog by Havana-based Yoani Sánchez (@yoanisanschez), quickly became very popular after its April 2007 launch. Since winning an award by the Spanish daily El País in 2008, its readers have grown steadily, especially abroad. It takes a critical look at the everyday economic and social problems that Cubans have to deal with. Imaginative methods, including the use of USB flash drives and CDs, have to be used to circulate her posts in Cuba, where most of the population is limited to a highly-censored Intranet. Sánchez is subject to strict government censorship and smear campaigns, and has even been physically attacked. She was ranked by Time Magazine as one of the world’s 100 most influential people in 2008, like Zeng Jinyan (see below) in 2007 (Reporters Without Borders, 2012; May 9)

Rumors spread, murmurs become official notes and newspapers report – several weeks later – what the whole country already knows. We have gone from rationed information to a veritable “coming out” that flows in parallel with the censorship of the official media. Our glasnost has not been driven from offices and ministries, but has emerged in mobile phones, digital cameras and removable memories. The same black market that supplied powdered milk or detergent now offers illegal Internet connections and television programs that arrive through prohibited satellite dishes.

This is how we learned of the events in Venezuela during the last week. My own cell phone has been on the verge of collapse from so many messages telling me about the student protests and the closure of several television stations. I forward copies of these brief headlines to everyone in my address book, in a network that mimics viral transmission: I spread it to many and they in turn inoculate a hundred more with the information. There is no way to stop this form of broadcast news, because it does not use a fixed structure but mutates and adapts to each circumstance. It is anti-hegemonic, although the little word acquires different connotations in the Cuban case, where the hegemony has belonged to the newspaper Granma, the TV show The Round Table, and the DOR* (Sanchez, 2010; February 1)
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW CODING

Full code results in Excel format may be accessed at the following link:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1hWvESwF4Ztjnr48RthdUoJNfL.5svF9wBgDh2Nirm0-g/edit?usp=sharing
KATHARINE REED ALLEN
Ph.D. Candidate, Mass Communications
College of Communications
Penn State University

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Mass Communications, Pennsylvania State University, 2015

J.D., Roger Williams University School of Law, May 1999

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Course Instructor

COMM 403: Mass Communications Law, Honors
COMM 419.04: World Media Systems, Penn State University
COMM 410: International Communications, Penn State University

TEACHING AWARDS

- 2012 Deans Excellence Djung Yune Tchoi Graduate Teaching Award

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

COMPASS Fellow, Washington, DC: Summer 2011
Center for Global Studies Career Development Award: Spring 2011

PUBLICATIONS

