EXPLORING AN UNDERDOG CAUSE:
WHAT HINDERS OR MOTIVATES PARTICIPATORY BEHAVIOR IN ANIMAL ADVOCACY

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by
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ABSTRACT

The animal advocacy movement struggles to implement extensive improvements to animal conditions. In order to achieve its goal of increased animal protection, this movement must recruit a greater number of active supporters. This requires a thorough grasp of the activation and continued participatory experiences of existing animal advocates.

In this dissertation, I conducted interviews and a focus group with 24 existing animal advocates to learn how they initially became involved; the nature of their perceived challenges with participation; how they surmount these obstacles; how they sustain motivation to act; what may deter them from action; which outreach communication tactics they find most effective/ineffective; and their impressions of the animal advocacy movement, its organizations, its communication strategies, and its terminology. From this data, I learned the factors that motivate initial involvement; the factors that help advocates to sustain their motivation to participate; and that impressions of the animal advocacy movement, its organizations, and its outreach communication can positively or negatively affect participation. Participants especially indicate the importance of focusing on hope and positivity in all contexts of their involvement, the value of social support, and the influence of communications on their experience.

This study begins to contribute to the surprising dearth of literature about animal advocacy. To this end, I consider how situational theory of publics can be more directly applied to animal advocacy research. Additionally, I intend for my findings to be applicable for animal advocacy organizations. By understanding the factors that inform the initial action, continued motivation, and related perspectives of existing animal advocates, animal advocacy organizations can increase effectiveness of outreach communication and develop efficient means to engage non-active animal lovers.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Western cultures tend to perceive human beings to be the one superior species (e.g., Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978). Dunlap and Van Liere (1978) argue that the dominant ideology in the U.S. and in the majority of developed nations involves human domination of nature and empathy for only human beings. This inherently renders all other species inferior. For many, this hierarchical structure (referred to as “speciesism” by authors such as Ryder, 2000) justifies widespread animal neglect and abuse. This constructed hierarchy must be acknowledged and reconsidered, because continuing to conceptualize animals as inferior beings will likely result in a continued disregard for their treatment.

U.S. laws reflect the dominant societal view that all other species are subservient to humans. Animals consequently receive fewer legal rights than human beings—and deficient animal protection laws directly allow poor human treatment of animals. Compounding the issue, the capacity for animal abuse has been amplified by contemporary capabilities in medical research, factory farming, and the use of animals for various other human-determined purposes. Legally, animals can be treated as objects: food for humans to eat, property for humans to own, furs and skins for humans to wear, entertainment for human purposes, and as a collection of body parts on which human scientists may test. Such behavior may technically be legal, but legality does not guarantee morality.

Given the multitude of animal species who endure maltreatment (e.g., Sollund, 2011), animal advocacy organizations work to overturn laws that allow harm to animals and to increase public concern for animal issues. However, despite their efforts, the animal advocacy movement struggles to attract participants to help the cause (Mika, 2006). Lack of animal advocacy support
may stem from the aforementioned hierarchical mindset, from improperly-utilized outreach communication tactics of animal advocacy organizations, or from other personal reasons for non-participation (e.g., Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Kruse, 2001; Mika, 2006). Numerous animal lovers therefore remain either uniformed about animal issues, misinformed about such issues, or apathetic to them altogether. Without public support, the animal advocacy movement cannot muster enough power to make large-scale improvements to animal conditions.

Organizations that strive to alter societal conventions (i.e., the conventions of treating animals as objects for human convenience or monetary gain) face the particularly daunting challenge of attempting to influence public opinion (e.g., Mika, 2006; Slawter, 2008). Social movement organizations (hereafter referred to as SMOs) are characterized by their goal of shifting particular social norms or practices (Tilly, 1994). The values and goals of a social movement may contrast the beliefs of the status quo (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Snow, Rochford, Worden, & Benford, 1986).

Animal advocacy encompasses an inherent ideology that conflicts with that of the public majority (e.g., Einwohner, 2002; Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993; Snow et al., 1986). Mueller and Dimieri (1982) posit that “the development of the proactive belief system arises as a challenge to older beliefs and the groups protected by them” (p. 659). Ideologically, the perspective that non-human beings deserve protection often runs counter to the dominant hegemonic view that humans have dominion over all other worldly creatures (Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Major, 1993). These ideological chasms can result in conflicts involving “value clashes and potential disconnects between the public’s definition of the ‘greater good’ versus the SMO’s” (Freeman, 2009, p. 73). Such clashes may perpetuate skepticism in non-supporters of the cause (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992). Further, the animal advocacy movement has yet to discover highly effective
means of persuading publics with ideological arguments and moral claims (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Snow et al., 1986).

Animal advocacy organizations may also utilize communication strategies that thwart achievement of their goals (Mika, 2006). Advocates’ tactics range from the mainstream-oriented and professional, to the radical, offensive, violent, and destructive (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992). These disparate methods can appeal to different audiences, and can effectively collect support. However, many animal advocacy strategies that are designed to garner support are ultimately unsuccessful (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Mika, 2006). This commonly occurs with extreme communication strategies that rely on shock value (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Mika, 2006). While radical appeals may attract attention to the cause, they can also deter potential supporters and push the opposition even farther away (e.g., Kruse, 2001; Mika, 2006; Smith, McCarthy, McPhail, & Augustyn, 2001).

**Participants equal power: the importance of increasing involvement**

Currently, on the whole, the animal advocacy movement (comprising all who actively participate to help animals) lacks the power to achieve its large-scale goals regarding increased animal protection (e.g., Ramirez De La Piscina, 2007; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). The movement could enhance this power, however, with the support of more participants (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; Stern, Dietz, Abel, Guagano, & Kalof, 1999). Public support is an essential component of a successful social movement (e.g., McCright & Dunlap, 2008; Stern et al., 1999). Prosocial organizations are dependent upon the general public for donations of various resources, including time and money—and, “the extent to which they are successful in getting these donations determines the extent to which the organizations can succeed in their mission of helping others” (Guy & Patton, 1989, p. 20). Individuals choose to donate resources for a variety
of reasons, and it can be reasoned from prior research (e.g., Guy & Patton, 1989) that greater public support may logically lead to increased monetary funding.

Increasingly, researchers recognize that both the general public and mass media are sources that have the ability to call policy makers’ attention to a movement’s issues (Neidhardt & Rucht, 1991). Although securing positive public opinion is insufficient on its own to necessarily effect social change, favorable reputation can increase the opportunities and resources for social movements (Beaford, Gongaware, & Valadez, 2000). For instance, a reputational shift in public acceptance of animal advocacy as credible, respectable, popular, and mainstream can ultimately benefit the cause (Mika, 2006). Thus, the mobilization of public support is critical in efforts to influence capable actors and to stimulate cultural progress (Stern et al., 1999).

Unfortunately, animal advocacy organizations have struggled to increase public involvement in the cause (Mika, 2006). If outreach strategies are constructed improperly, fewer people are likely to be convinced to care about a cause—and may even be deterred from it (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Mika, 2006). This may stunt active support. If constructed properly, though, an advocacy organization can potentially persuade more people to care about its cause, which may lead to increased active support (Mobley, 2007).

Numerous advocacy groups, championing various causes, work to spread their messages to particular publics (e.g., Farmer & Kozel, 2005; Henderson, 2005; Johnson, 2008; Slawter, 2008). In order for animal advocacy organizations to reach their varying goals related to increased animal protection, they must be able to effectively communicate their messages to non-participants (e.g., Mika, 2006) and to sustain participatory behaviors from active participants (e.g., Einwohner, 2002). Advocacy organizations hope that opinion change will ultimately lead
to action (e.g., Austin, Van de Vord, Pinkleton, & Epstein, 2008; Heath, Liao, & Douglas, 1995; Major, 1993). However, these organizations often struggle to gain public backing (e.g., Einwohner, 2002; Mika, 2006). Stereotypes, generalizations, and misinformation about a cause can negatively affect its credibility and subsequent support (Mika, 2006; Mobley, 2007). Reversing these stigmas has been shown to increase the likelihood of advocacy behavior (Mobley, 2007).

**Defining animal advocacy**

Animal advocates and animal advocacy organizations subscribe to varying degrees of what ideal animal protection should entail. Those who hold an animal welfarist perspective believe that change can be made within the existing system: that we may use animals for human purposes, but that we must aim to improve conditions and reduce suffering for these animals (e.g., Garner, 2002; Lovvorn, 2006). Examples of animal welfare organizations include The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Conversely, those who hold an animal rightist perspective believe that human benefit cannot justify the sacrifice of innate animal rights: that animals should be treated as autonomous beings with legal protections, and that they should not be used for human purposes (such as for research, food, entertainment, etc.) (e.g., Francione, 1995, 2000; Regan, 2004; Wise, 2000). An example of an animal rights organization is People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

In this study, I am not concerned with determining participants’ specific status as an animal welfarist or an animal rightist; rather, I focus on the reasons for initial and continued participation with animal protection, regardless of categorization. Therefore, I utilize the term ‘animal advocacy’ to refer to all efforts to increase protection for animals (encompassing both
animal welfare and animal rights). In the Methods chapter, I explain how I operationalize ‘animal advocacy’ for participant recruitment purposes.

**Defining prosocial behavior**

In this study, I aim to understand the reasons why some people who like animals have chosen to engage in animal advocacy prosocial behavior, including the factors and communications that shape their experiences. The term ‘prosocial behavior’ refers to an action that is costly for an individual (either monetarily, or in terms of time or effort) yet provides only minimal direct reward for that person (Schwartz, 1977; Thogersen, 1996). Prosocial behavior is characterized by altruistic goals of current and future benefit for a larger cause, such as for one’s community (Lee & Holden, 1999). Because animal advocacy efforts are inherently meant to benefit other species as opposed to benefitting oneself, because animals cannot explicitly ‘thank’ animal advocates (resulting in little direct reward), and because victories in the realm of animal advocacy can be challenging to achieve (again resulting in little direct reward), animal advocacy can be considered a prosocial cause. Prosocial movements engage in advocacy communication efforts in order to increase participatory behaviors of publics.

**Contributing to the understanding of animal advocacy**

Advocacy movements must not only aim to increase concern about a cause, but to determine how to translate attitude into action. Research consistently reveals that, despite people’s high levels of concern about a cause, few actually follow through with supporting behaviors—especially when these behaviors present particular costs (Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2005). In this study, I aim to better understand the motivating factors and communications that can elevate concern into participatory action.
**Research questions**

In order for animal conditions to improve, animal advocacy organizations must develop more effective outreach strategies—and, in order to develop effective outreach strategies, they must better understand which public(s) to target for involvement and how they can be realistically persuaded to help (Perloff, 2008; Shimp, 2003). To begin to address these issues, this qualitative study will explore what has motivated the participation of existing animal advocates: why people who participate in animal advocacy have chosen to do so. The goal of this study is to understand what active participants perceive to be the factors and/or communications that have motivated their active behaviors, how they maintain the motivation for continued participation, and their impressions of the animal advocacy movement and its outreach communication. Specifically, I pose the following three research questions:

RQ1: What factors or communication have worked to motivate action for existing animal advocates?

RQ2: What factors or communication have worked to maintain motivation of existing animal advocates?

RQ3: What are participants' impressions of animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communications, and the animal advocacy movement?

It seems logical that the most direct way to understand individuals’ perceptions is to ask them. Thus, I will explore these questions from the perspectives of the individuals themselves. I aim to learn participants’ perceptions of animal advocacy and their justifications for becoming and remaining active in the cause. I will therefore conduct interviews and a focus group with an active segment of the public to answer my research questions. I have chosen to conduct interviews and a focus group with participants from this active group because they can explain
what has worked to motivate them to participate in animal advocacy. From this data, I expect to better understand the factors and communications that motivate and/or maintain participatory action.

**Research goals: application of findings**

I hope that my findings can inform animal advocacy organizations about how animal lovers can be persuaded to engage in initial action, how they can be motivated to continue their participation, and how their perspectives regarding the animal advocacy movement can affect their involvement. In a prior study (described in greater detail in the Methods chapter), I assessed animal-loving participants’ personal, cultural, and social reasons (among other justifications) that deterred their participation in animal advocacy. Thus, in this current study, I will be sensitized to the personal, cultural, and social reasons for non-activity (as well as any other reasons that arise). My findings can also contribute to literature about situational theory of publics and animal advocacy in general.

This information can lead animal advocacy organizations to develop more effective promotional strategies. Ideally, implementation of this targeted outreach can increase public concern for animal advocacy, resulting in greater power for the movement. Increased power leads to greater funding, more opportunities for outreach communication and/or advertising (i.e., potentially influential mouthpieces like celebrities and politicians), and increased public credibility of animal advocacy—which can ultimately lead to increased animal protection.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I explore prior research that informs my understanding of animal advocacy, and reasons why individuals may or may not participate in the cause. I begin by defining animal advocacy as a social movement, then explore the ways that social movements communicate with publics (including the goals of public outreach, methods of transmission, and how the movement and/or movement organization motivates public participation). Next, I examine two-step flow (regarding actual interactions and celebrity influence) as another way that individuals learn about animal advocacy. I then review literature that informs how social movements have previously been studied. After that, I explore self-efficacy as a determinant of participatory behavior (as well as other motivating factors). Then, I explore what keeps advocates motivated to continue engaging in prosocial behaviors (including donor and volunteer behaviors, tactics that advocates use to sustain motivation, and other relevant factors). Once I establish these frameworks, I discuss useful ways to segment audiences based on situational theory of publics and its comparable alternatives. Next, I investigate practical applications of situational theory of publics, branding, and advertising appeals. Finally, I discuss how my project will address the gaps in literature concerning how participation in animal advocacy has been studied. I end this section by providing research questions that I will address in this study.

Social movements

I begin this section by defining and exploring the fundamentals of what constitutes a ‘social movement’ in order to justify animal advocacy as such. Beginning with foundational definitions and concepts lays an integral groundwork for the topics that I will cover in this study.
Background and definitions

In order to study the concept of the social movement, distinctions must be made regarding its definition. Below is Tilly’s (1994) widely-accepted definition of social movements:

A social movement consists of a sustained challenge to powerholders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those powerholders by means of repeated public displays of that population’s numbers, commitment, unity, and worthiness. A social movement embodies contentious interaction; it involves mutual claim-making between challengers and powerholders (p. 7, author’s italics).

While this definition has great utility and is highly popular, the definition proposed by Della Porta and Diani (2006) considers other characteristics of social movements:

Social movements are a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents; are linked by dense informal networks; [and] share a distinct collective identity (p. 20).

Della Porta and Diani (2006) contend that those involved in social movements are bound in cultural and/or political conflicts concerning either the opposition or the promotion of social change. The ‘dense informal networks’ referred to by Della Porta & Diani (2006) are what differentiate social movements from other forms of collective action. While other collective action may be coordinated largely by organizations, the process of the social movement simply entails “both individual and organized actors, while keeping their autonomy and independence, engag[ing] in sustained exchanges of resources in pursuit of common goals” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 21). In a social movement, no singular actor “can claim to represent a movement
as a whole” (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 21). Della Porta and Diani also use the term ‘collective identity’ in their definition of a social movement. By this, they refer to the commitment and common purpose which connects actors with similar goals. These collective identities transcend individual initiatives or events (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Understood together, the definitions provided by Tilly (1994) and Della Porta and Diani (2006) aptly address the richness of social movements and facilitate exploration of the multi-faceted term.

Based on its characteristics, animal advocacy can be considered a social movement. Foremost, animal advocates fundamentally challenge those in power through sustained action (Tilly, 1994). Participants in this cause work to promote social change, with the common goal of increasing animal protection (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). This common purpose supersedes the specific differences between the goals of particular animal advocates and animal advocacy organizations (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Animal advocacy can also be categorized as a social movement because it involves “both individual and organized actors”: individuals and organizations actively participating to help animals (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 21). Unfortunately, those involved in animal advocacy also have “clearly identified opponents” (e.g., clothing companies that use fur in their designs, or those who participate in the annual Canadian seal hunt) which further solidifies this cause as a social movement (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 20).

**How social movements use communications**

Social movements and SMOs utilize numerous outreach methods to reach their audiences. These tactics are critical to explore, as publics gather knowledge and form opinions about animal advocacy based upon these advocacy messages—and this can lead to prosocial behavior. In this section, I will explore the importance of advocacy communication, some of the
channels through which social movements and SMOs communicate, and the importance of representing the movement in ways that construct and maintain a positive reputation.

**The purpose of public outreach**

Research suggests that many people learn about advocacy issues through various media (Slawter, 2008). Sethi (2001) insists that “no struggle or social movement in these days of interconnectivity and brand imaging can hope to operate in isolation” (p. 269). SMOs must therefore engage in public outreach in order to gain support.

Foremost, the public must be aware of a social movement issue in order to advocate it. Mass media are ideal vehicles to address desired target publics. Consequently, social movements rely upon communication media to spread their messages. Recent decades have demonstrated an increase in mediated communications to reach desired publics (Koopmans, 2004). According to Martin (2008), people typically “either support or oppose policies and programs based on their media-driven perceptions of reality” (p. 181).

**How social movements use media to reach publics: methods of transmission and media channels**

During the past few decades, the relationship between social movements and political entities has evolved from direct, immediate, localized confrontations to indirect, mediated contact (Koopmans, 2004). Historically, SMOs “have incorporated new technologies into their tactical repertoires, whether newspaper, radio, television, film, magazines, or newsletters” (Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004, p. 265). The advancement of technology has provided an unprecedented variety of channels for SMO outreach.

Movements depend on media to achieve mobilization (making contact with their constituencies), validation (legitimizing the cause), and scope enlargement (broadening the
characteristics of the conflict) (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993). However, particular advocacy perspectives are often excluded from traditional news media altogether (Slawter, 2008). This dismissal—in conjunction with typically small budgets—has led social movements to seek alternative media vehicles (such as public demonstrations or protests) in addition to more mainstream types of outreach communication (such as traditional forms of advertising [e.g., Internet ads, print ads, television commercials, and billboards]) (Ramirez De La Piscina, 2007).

New technologies also provide autonomous outlets for representation of traditionally silenced or misrepresented groups. In particular, the Internet (including e-mail, organizations’ websites, social media sites, etc.) has become an invaluable resource for SMOs to independently and interactively disseminate information and for publics to access it without obstacles from mainstream media industries (Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Seo, Kim, & Yang, 2009) and “to increase awareness of organizational issues, activities, and goals” (Rohlinger, 2002, p. 491). Seo et al. (2009) state that the main online functions for SMOs are to raise money and to represent the organization in a desired image. Kenix (2007) argues that SMOs can “improve their public education, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, publicity, advocacy, service delivery, [public opinion] research and communication through an effective Internet presence” as well as facilitate communication between national and local SMO branches (p. 72). The Internet has thus become a massive resource for both access of information and for information dissemination.

However, it is in the best interest of SMOs to consider the potential consequences of the nature of their public delivery. Kruse (2001) and Smith et al. (2001) caution that the often-radical characteristics of public demonstrations, for instance, may negatively influence resulting media coverage of the cause. It would therefore benefit SMOs to devote significant attention to
their communication strategies to reduce the risk of deterring potential supporters or further putting off non-members (Kruse, 2001; Mika, 2006; Smith et al., 2001).

**Motivation for involvement: persuasion by organization/movement**

Shimp (2003) argues that, “when exposed to an advertisement, the consumer is not merely drawing information from the ad but is actively involved in assigning meaning to the advertised brand,” interpreting the text (p. 86). Thus, animal advocates must realize that individuals always interpret messages contextually. The evaluation of one campaign message has the power to color the impression of the particular animal advocacy organization which put it forth—and can also influence impressions of the entire animal advocacy movement.

Slawter (2008) provides an illustrative example of advocate representation. Environmental advocates developed a set of online videos focusing on environmental issues called TreeHuggerTV. Because advocates create and disseminate online content themselves, they alone determine how they want to represent their cause. TreeHuggerTV used the online infrastructure as an opportunity to reposition environmentalism as a mainstream cause rather than a radical one. Producers of the videos chose to “re-visualiz[e]” traditionally extremist images of environmental advocates as “hip, not hippie” (Slawter, 2008, p. 214). Slawter (2008) argues that environmentalists used this outlet “productively” to reframe the reputation of environmentalism and to gain mainstream media attention (p. 214). This positive reputational shift and increased coverage by mainstream media outlets may bolster the legitimacy of an advocacy group.

**Two-step flow: an alternative to direct reliance upon media or organizations for influence**

While people often learn about issues from mass media sources, information is also obtained through social interactions and personal experiences (Weaver, Zhu, & Willnat, 1992). I
will explore two-step flow theory because people may specifically obtain information about animal advocacy through interpersonal communication (either actively or passively)—which may influence individual evaluations of the credibility of the movement, the reputation of animal advocates, the perceived lifestyle of animal advocates, the types of issues pursued by animal advocacy groups, and the options for participation (to name a few).

People realistically exist in, and are influenced by, their interpersonal networks (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). Two-step flow theory, first proposed by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet (1968), suggests that some individuals heavily expose themselves to media to learn about issues, and, in turn, inform and advise those with less interest, knowledge, or media exposure (Lowery & DeFleur, 1995). According to Yang and Stone (2003), “two-step flow theory states that opinion leaders, who are more likely to attend to the media for news and public affairs, will pass this information to the less media reliant through interpersonal communication” (p. 58).

People gather information about issues through these discussions with friends, family, and acquaintances. This interpersonal communication can consequently influence people’s perspectives concerning which topics are of importance (Yang & Stone, 2003). Encouragement to participate in animal advocacy may be facilitated by word of mouth communication, specifically. Word of mouth communicators are viewed as credible because they are not perceived to have particular vested interests in promotion, and their interpersonal communication can be meaningful for the conversation partner (Herr, Kardes, & Kim, 1991; Murray, 1991; Silverman, 2001). In fact, when people encounter new topics in media, their reliance on interpersonal communication can increase the salience of the issues for them (Erbring, Goldenberg, & Miller, 1980).
The influence of interpersonal discussion can even outweigh the influence of media, as was demonstrated by Atwater, Salwen, and Anderson (1985) concerning environmental issues. Additionally, Roberts and Leifer (1975) found that “the more controversial the issue, the less credible any source would be perceived to be” (p. 264). Interpersonal discussion involving controversial issues has also been shown to motivate participation in the political process (Sotirovic & McLeod, 2001). Wyatt, Kim, and Katz (2000) found that civic participation could be predicted more from one’s amount of interpersonal political discussion than from one’s newspaper readership, education, or trust in political sources. Because animal advocacy parallels environmentalism (in its prosocial interests in life and nature), and because it often involves controversial ideology, it seems logical that interpersonal communication can promote participation in the arena of animal advocacy, as well.

Individuals who are active in animal advocacy may serve as opinion leaders for others in their social networks. The information discussed by advocates, and the manner in which this information is relayed (e.g., by mainstream means or radical means), can influence non-participants’ perceptions of animal advocacy and of animal advocates—and, potentially, whether or not they choose to participate themselves. It seems logical that, by understanding the realistic, everyday ways that information about animal advocacy is shared among interpersonal networks, animal advocacy organizations could benefit by providing these potential opinion leaders with strategic recommendations for interpersonal discussion (e.g., effective talking points or ways to verbally frame the issues).

However, the potential for influence through discussion with an opinion leader does have its caveats. Because it is based on an opinion leader’s understanding and interpretation of information, the content discussed in interpersonal conversations may not always be accurate
(Eveland, 2004). Furthermore, in a concept dubbed opinion-sharing, Troldahl and Van Dam (1965-1966) found that conversations often occur between opinion leaders rather than between them and their followers. This finding may suggest that opinion leaders do not always attempt to share their information with lesser-informed others.

Celebrities as opinion leaders

An opinion leader need not be a person with whom an individual is personally acquainted. Individuals’ chief role models are, in fact, frequently celebrities (Brown, Basil, & Bocarnea, 2003). Because people often perceive celebrities to be likeable, believable, and trustworthy, they can be persuasive advocates for various causes (Silvera & Austad, 2004; Till & Shimp, 1998).

The process of ‘identification’ refers to the connection that individuals develop with celebrities, which is thought to increase the chances that individuals will adopt similar values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that the celebrities advocate (Austin & Freeman, 1997; Brown et al., 2003; Fraser & Brown, 2002). Identification involves the desire to assume the persona of a celebrity, or to be similar to him/her (Kelman, 1958). If an individual identifies with or respects certain celebrities, then observing these celebrities modeling particular participatory behaviors and highlighting the benefits of action can influence individuals to adopt these behaviors (Bandura, 1986). Research has shown that individuals tend to identify with those celebrities who are of their own gender, and to whom they are similar to in age (Fraser & Brown, 2002; Kelman, 1958)—although individuals may also identify with and admire celebrities who have dissimilar characteristics to their own (Brown & Fraser, 2004).

An individual’s regard for a celebrity spokesperson has been shown to motivate participation in a cause. In their study of young voter participation in the 2004 presidential
election, Austin et al. (2008) found that celebrity-endorsed pro-voting campaigns can motivate political engagement. An identification appeal could convey a societal issue as being relevant to an individual, which can heighten the individual’s interest in the issue (Kiousis, McDevitt, & Wu, 2005).

Although Austin et al. (2008) specifically explore young voter apathy, the same principles of celebrity endorsement can be applied to apathy regarding engagement in animal advocacy. With both topics, an individual may philosophically agree that participation is ideal—but may not actually follow through with related behavior. If interest in celebrity spokespeople has been demonstrated to encourage individuals to engage in voting behavior (e.g., Austin et al., 2008), it is reasonable to presume that this tactic potentially influences those who engage in animal advocacy behavior.

**Applying existing literature to inform new research**

In order to be fully informed regarding the theories and practices that can guide them, animal advocacy groups must critically examine how outreach communication of the animal advocacy movement has been handled thus far. Organizations should familiarize themselves with the strengths and weaknesses of previous animal advocacy campaigns, using them as a guide for how to run (and how not to run) their own operations. Existing literature can illuminate the reasons that individuals do or do not become involved in prosocial causes: crucial considerations for animal advocacy organizations.

**Useful prosocial literature**

A significant array of literature explores the ways that general or particular social movements, nonprofit organizations, and/or interest groups attempt to gain public support (e.g., Farmer & Kozel, 2005; Henderson, 2005; Johnson, 2008) but rarely does this research focus
specifically on animal advocacy. Most likely due to its underrepresentation as a public issue and a media presence, only a limited amount of literature addresses animal advocate communication tactics, public perception of animal advocacy, and what may attract or deter potential publics from participation.

In order to determine how an animal advocacy campaign should be properly executed, organizations must explore how other campaigns have been implemented in the past. Regardless of the particular cause at hand, different organizations must consider similar components of campaign strategy. Various causes yield promising commonalities in theory and influence (Andrews & Edwards, 2004). Research about other prosocial causes can therefore illuminate the ways that movements with similar goals handle projection- and reception-related issues.

For instance, characteristics of the environmental movement are topically similar to characteristics of animal advocacy—and the positive public trajectory of environmentalism can serve as a model for animal advocates. Major (2003) explains that “what evolved from a number of relatively small, grassroots movements in a number of countries was a public opinion revolution that has catapulted environmentalism onto the global political agenda” (p. 252). A major goal of the animal advocacy movement is to be on this global agenda, so it would be wise to examine what can be gleaned from the environmental movement, as well as from other prosocial movements and campaigns that have attained valuable clout. Consequently, I explore literature about health communication, public information campaigns, and environmentalism to direct the animal advocacy movement toward valuable approaches. Animal advocacy organizations can utilize the theories behind previous campaigns to guide their own plans for action, modeling their strategies after successful campaigns and being mindful of the weaknesses of these models.
Self-efficacy as a determinant of prosocial behavior

In this project, I intend to explore ways to motivate and maintain participation in animal advocacy. Assessing an individual’s level of self-efficacy can help to explain his/her reasons for participation or non-participation. Literature consistently finds that self-efficacy is a significant precondition for prosocial behavior (e.g., Bandura, 2001; McCluskey, Deshpande, Shah, & McLeod, 2004) and is “a strong predictor of behavioral intention” (Lee, Haley, & Avery, 2010, p. 49). Self-efficacy is defined as one’s “belief in [his/her] ability to act to solve problem [sic]” (Lee et al., 2010, p. 49); “the belief that one can make a difference” (Austin et al., 2008, p. 427); “a person’s perceived ability to complete a task successfully” (Hu, Huhmann, & Hyman, 2007, p. 254); or an evaluation of “how well one can execute courses of actions required to deal with prospective situations” (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). According to Bandura (2001), self-efficacy denotes one’s perceived aptitude. Lee et al. (2010) therefore reason that “efficacy measurement items should be phrased in terms of can do rather than will do” (Lee et al., 2010, p. 51). The word ‘can’ refers to one’s judgment of his/her capability of performing a behavior, whereas the word ‘will’ refers to one’s behavioral intention (Bandura, 2001). Additionally, the term ‘self-efficacy’ refers to an individual’s perceived abilities, whereas the term ‘collective efficacy’ refers to the perceived abilities of a group (Bandura, 1982; Guzzo, Yost, Campbell, & Shea, 1993). Collective efficacy has also been called ‘faith in others,’ referring to the trust in other actors (ex: scientists, governments, future generations, etc.) as efficacious (Berger & Corbin, 1992).

A related concept is that of outcome expectancy, or perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE) (which is more of a marketing term), which denotes “the belief that actions can solve problems” (Lee et al., 2010, p. 49; also discussed by Bandura, 1997). Outcome expectancy and
PCE denote the trust that one’s actions can contribute, can make a difference, and can help the world—or indicate the degree to which one thinks that his/her efforts would be futile (Lee et al., 2010). PCE has been demonstrated to predict prosocial behavior (Berger & Corbin, 1992), as operationalized by examining whether people “feel they have the power to change society through their consumption of socially friendly products” (Lee et al., 2010, p. 49). According to Rummel, Goodwin, and Shepherd (1990), exposure to advertising can heighten an individual’s perceived degree of PCE and self-efficacy.

Perceived self-efficacy has been consistently demonstrated to predict engagement in collective action spanning various issues (e.g., Edwards & Oskamp, 1992; Klandermans, 1984). Self-efficacy is a critical component of movement participants’ strategies to raise awareness, garner support, and initiate action for a cause (e.g., Klandermans, 1984). An individual’s perception of the likelihood that his/her action can contribute to solving the issue at hand can sway his/her interpretation of advocacy advertising (Haley, 1996). This could affect the degree of persuasive influence that advocacy advertising has on an individual.

Regarding involvement in the political process, individuals are inclined to participate to the degree that they perceive their behaviors can have an impact (Delli Carpini, 2000; Pinkleton & Austin, 2001). Additionally, Husaini et al. (2001) found that self-efficacy for early breast cancer detection is positively linked to the likelihood that a woman will engage in the behavior of getting a mammogram. Similarly, Manzo and Weinstein’s (1987) findings indicate that level of self-efficacy is related to environmental protection behaviors. In this case, individuals who were active with environmental issues had a greater likelihood than non-advocates to perceive that their actions could affect related policy (Major, 1993; Manzo & Weinstein, 1987). It seems
logical that similar notions of self-efficacy could help to explain the extent of individuals’ participation with animal advocacy.

A factor that may influence whether an individual participates in animal advocacy is consideration of task complexity—in this case, the ‘task’ being the action that the SMO asks the audience to take. Task complexity is “often operationalized as the number of brand attributes that must be considered” (Hu et al., 2007, p. 253). Research shows that, when faced with complex elements of a task, an individual is likely to feel low self-efficacy; conversely, when faced with feasible elements of a task, an individual is likely to feel high-efficacy (Cervone, 1985). This perceived feasibility in performing a behavior is a factor in behavioral intention (Lee et al., 2010).

Hu et al. (2007) found “that extensiveness of information search increases as people’s self-efficacy more closely match [sic] their perceived task difficulty” (p. 254). That is, the degree of an individual’s desire to learn about an issue is linked to the individual’s belief of whether he/she will be able to successfully complete a task—which is, itself, linked to how difficult the individual perceives the task to be. Those who have high self-efficacy tend to “engage in more extensive information search” as compared to those with low self-efficacy (Hu et al., 2007, p. 255). However, it is important to note that such results are typically derived in a planned research environment, and may therefore occur differently in instances of real-life information search (Hu et al., 2007). Furthermore, self-efficacy is one’s own perception and “may or may not reflect an individual’s true level of competence” (Austin et al., 2008, p. 427).

**Other factors that impact motivation to participate in advocacy**

Besides self-efficacy, there are multiple other factors that can determine an individual’s likelihood to participate in animal advocacy. In this section, I will explore various behavioral
determinants that can be used to understand why those who like animals may refrain from animal advocacy participation; what may work to motivate these inactive individuals; and what has worked to motivate existing animal advocates. All literature examined (both in this section and throughout the project) is intended to address these questions.

To motivate apathetic individuals, it is crucial to consider their unique circumstances and comfort levels (McDevitt & Chaffee, 1998). Providing familiar social associations can form bonds of trust that motivate participation (Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004). Thus, communications relating to these associations—either through interpersonal relationships or through admired social groups—may be likely to stimulate prosocial behaviors (Keum, Devanathan, Deshpande, Nelson, & Shah, 2004). This can be useful information for animal advocacy organizations.

Inclination to participate in a social movement could be tied to an individual’s perception of the movement’s credibility and to their trust of that group. Due in part to radical outreach strategies of some animal advocacy groups, the animal advocacy movement’s credibility is often questioned by the public (e.g., Mika, 2006). Therefore, in order to understand an individual’s reasons for participation or non-participation, it is crucial to identify whether one’s evaluation of the animal advocacy movement is influenced by one’s perception of the movement’s reputation. The interview questions that I plan to ask will address this issue.

Assessment of credibility not only stems from reactions to organizational outreach, but may also develop from an individual’s personal experiences. According to Gunther (1992), “credibility is not a trait that people ascribe consistently to a channel but, rather, a highly situational assessment” (p. 149). Gunther asserts that an individual’s trust or mistrust of a social group is typically a response originating from situational experience with these groups or their
issues, rather than from “a dispositional view [that] predicts a reflex trust response across situations” (Gunther, 1992, p. 149). This links to literature discussed previously concerning the potential for interpersonal influence through two-step flow. Through my interview questions, I plan to assess individual experience and social interaction as determinants of perceptions that either inhibit or motivate participatory behavior.

Stemming from the work of Salmon (1986) and Sherif and Hovland (1961), Gunther (1992) argues that “identification with a group can define a fundamental sense of involvement” (p. 152). That is, members of a particular group have a greater likelihood of higher involvement with issues and information concerning that group than are non-members (Gunther, 1992). According to Gunther, “membership in political, religious, ethnic, or other social groups carries with it attitudes, beliefs, and a personal stake in group concerns” (Gunther, 1992, p. 152). Sometimes termed ‘ego-involvement,’ this involvement measure “is associated with a strong and often enduring sense of self” (Gunther, 1992, p. 152). These concepts can help to understand why some individuals choose to participate in animal advocacy.

Gunther (1992) also proposes “a connection between an individual’s personal stake in an issue and media credibility judgments” (p. 150). Individuals who are highly involved with an issue—as exhibited “by their highly partisan or polarized attitudes”—may be more “skeptical of mass media” than individuals who have low involvement (Gunther, 1992, p. 150). This may lend support to the persuasive potential of two-step flow and other interpersonal communication, as these methods bypass the direct media exposure that highly involved people may mistrust.

While much literature focuses on benefits/rewards and costs/punishments as motivators of prosocial behavior (e.g., Heath et al., 1995; Mathur, 1996), Lee and Holden (1999) argue that behavioral motivation can derive from feelings of distress and empathy. Because animal
advocacy necessarily involves a sense of empathy for other beings (and possibly feelings of distress due to their maltreatment), this notion is especially apt for understanding reasons for action in animal advocacy.

Looking to literature concerning participation in other prosocial causes can also illuminate the path for animal advocacy. A considerable amount of research explores motivations of pro-environmental actions (e.g., Berger & Corbin, 1992; Lee & Holden, 1999), which may also be applied to animal issues. For instance, research shows that an individual’s degree of knowledge concerning environmental issues is among the greatest predictors of environmentally-related behaviors and attitudes (Sia, Hungerford, & Tomera, 1985-1986; Young, 1980). In her study of environmental concern, Major (1993) found that problem recognition (as a measure of awareness of environmental issues) motivates communication behavior. Moreover, in their study exploring perceived economic risks and benefits of a specific environmental threat (a chemical power plant), Heath et al. (1995) conclude that those who experience high levels of involvement—whether positive or negative (opposing or supporting the plant)—have a greater likelihood of engaging in behaviors to remedy or secure their risks or benefits, respectively. More specifically, Heath et al. (1995) found that individuals who exhibit a high level of negative involvement have a greater likelihood of engaging in activist behaviors than those with positive involvement.

However, some literature indicates that attitudes about environmental issues have not been found to accurately predict behaviors (e.g., Heslop, Moran, & Cousineau, 1981). This could apply to animal advocacy, as well. Consequently, researchers have attempted to identify other variables that determine environmentally conscious behaviors. These variables include perceptions of consumer effectiveness (Berger & Corbin, 1992); faith in other people (Berger &
Corbin, 1992); affect (Smith, Haugtvedt, & Petty, 1994); and various demographic traits (Soutar, Ramaseshan, & Molster, 1994). However, while these variables help to explain some predictors of environmentally conscious behaviors, researchers argue that a more extensive framework is needed to understand what motivates these actions (e.g., Lee & Holden, 1999; Stern, Dietz, & Kalof, 1993).

Batson (1987) posits that there are three potential paths that can motivate an individual to engage in prosocial behavior. This framework can be useful for understanding why some individuals choose to participate in animal advocacy. Each path is activated when an individual recognizes another’s need (Lee & Holden, 1999). In the first path, an individual is driven by an egoistic opportunity to reap either material, social, or self-perceived rewards/benefits for helping and/or to minimize material or social punishments/costs for not acting (Lee & Holden, 1999).

In the second path, recognition of another as being in need (an animal, for example) leads the individual to feel distress, which leads to the egoistic motivation reduce this negative feeling (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). For both the reward-seeking/punishment-avoiding path and the distress reduction path, the options for behavioral response are to either take action oneself, have another person act, or escape the difficult or distressing situation to avoid costs or negative thoughts (for example, changing the television channel from a program that causes distress to one that does not) (Lee & Holden, 1999).

The third path is distinguished by its requirement that an individual adopt the perspective of another (“i.e., imagining and feeling how that person is or will be affected by environmental problems” [Lee & Holden, 1999, p. 377], or imagining the suffering of animals). This leads to feelings of empathy and sympathy, which motivate an altruistic desire to reduce the other entity’s need (Lee & Holden, 1999). Lee and Holden (1999) explain that “the adoption of
another’s perspective tends to be facilitated by a personal experience with a similar situation or an attachment to the other person (such as kinship, perceived similarity, or attractiveness)” (p. 377). For this empathy-altruism path, the options for behavior response are either to take action oneself or to have another person act (Lee & Holden, 1999).

All three paths necessitate that an individual’s self-efficacy motivates his/her own pro-environmental behaviors, and/or that an individual’s perception of others’ efficacy motivates him/her to encourage others to act (Lee & Holden, 1999). For a more detailed explanation of Batson’s model of prosocial behavior, see Batson (1987, 1991) or Lee and Holden’s (1999) analysis of this model. In addition, some research suggests that gender is a predictor of supporting prosocial causes (e.g., Lee et al., 2010). To review a more in-depth discussion of gender as a behavioral predictor, see Lee et al. (2010).

An array of research also addresses what motivates people to volunteer, or to become involved in prosocial causes (e.g., Bartos, 1980; Mathur, 1996; Perloff, 2008). This literature need not be specifically about animal advocacy in order to help inform reasons for participatory behavior in animal causes. According to Snyder, Clary, and Stukas (2000), an individual’s reasons may include the desire to express altruistic or humanitarian values, to learn about other ways to live, to reduce guilt of privilege, to participate in a cause which is respected by important others, and to enhance one’s career.

Perloff (2008) insists that “the more that a persuasive appeal can explain how the advocated position satisfies needs important to the individual, the greater its impact” (p. 116). Therefore, in order to recruit supporters of animal advocacy, a researcher must first understand individuals’ underlying propensity for volunteerism. Condemning those with opposing views to one’s own (ex: hunters) “may be less useful than probing why the individual feels the way he or
she does and gently nudging the individual toward change” (Perloff, 2008, p. 119). Matching a campaign message to this motivational function can increase the chances of persuasion (Perloff, 2008).

**Existing advocates: what keeps them motivated**

While much research focuses on the initial persuasion to participate in prosocial causes, other literature explores those who already engage in these behaviors. In this section, I examine the dynamics of donor and volunteer behaviors and the factors and strategies that help advocates to sustain their participation in social movements. This literature can inform why active audience segments become active and remain active.

**Motivations for continued donor and volunteer behaviors**

Individual charitable gift-giving behavior has been documented as accounting for the majority of philanthropic contributions to nonprofit organizations—far more than contributions from corporations and other foundations (Haggberg, 1992; Harvey, 1990; Webb, 1993). Studies show that gift-giving may be stimulated by individuals’ self-interests (Pitts & Skelly, 1984). According to Sherry (1983), these motives may be of an altruistic nature, in which the individual is motivated by the recipient’s benefits, or may be agonistic, in which the individual is motivated by his/her own satisfaction from donating.

Mathur (1996) explores charitable behaviors motivated by agonistic feelings. Mathur notes that most charitable giving involves exchanges of nonmarket commodities, such as monetary contributions, donation of material goods, or volunteering. However, Becker (1974, 1976) argues that the distinction or status received from gift-giving can be conceptualized as commodities in this exchange.
Research indicates that older individuals provide the most charitable donations to nonprofit groups (Edmondson, 1986), demonstrating a positive correlation between donor age and likelihood to contribute (Midlarsky & Hannah, 1989; Nichols, 1992). Nonprofit gift-giving of older adults comprises a variety of donation behaviors, including the donation of time, money, material goods, and skills (Mathur, 1996; Moschis, 1992). Survey data suggests that adults between the ages of 50 and 64 donate approximately 3% of their annual incomes to nonprofit organizations, which is the most of any surveyed age group (Edmondson, 1986). Households with older individuals have been found to contribute to nonprofits 12% more than other households, and are highly responsive to direct mailing solicitations (Nichols, 1992). Furthermore, individuals aged 65 and above have been shown to perform more volunteer efforts than younger age groups, based on demographic proportions (Bartos, 1980; Mathur, 1996).

Propensity for older adults to donate time and skills has been attributed to their potential lot of free time due to retirement, having grown children who no longer present daily responsibility, and perhaps the death of a spouse (Markson, 1973). Because older people may lack as much social interaction as younger people, they may substitute for lack of familial or social contact by engaging in volunteer work or donor activities (Mathur, 1996). Mathur (1996) suggests that older adults may perceive charitable giving as a way to increase their sense of personal control, social interactions, social status, self-esteem, and psychological feelings of well-being. Older individuals are motivated to exchange their time, money, or material goods in order to receive these benefits (Mathur, 1996).

**Other factors that sustain motivation to participate**

If an individual has a high level of self-efficacy, failure to achieve particular goals is unlikely to deter him/her from continued participation (Bandura, 1986). Austin et al. (2008)
found that involvement in an issue is positively associated with self-efficacy. And, for the purposes of my current study, those who already participate in animal advocacy are likely to be involved with the issues.

Austin et al. (2008) also found that, if a celebrity whom an individual admires suggests that the individual’s involvement in a cause can make a difference, the individual’s level of self-efficacy will increase. A successful celebrity appeal “encourages fans to become more aware of the personal relevance of issues, which motivates them to use the media to learn more, thereby further increasing efficacy” (Austin et al., 2008, p. 433). Thus, use of celebrity appeals may not only be useful for initially increasing an individual’s levels of involvement and self-efficacy, but may also be strategically used to maintain high levels of these characteristics over time.

**Bolstering the motivation of existing advocates**

Advocates experience successes, but also endure failures to reach their goals (Einwohner, 2002). Championing a struggling cause and defending it against opposition can take a psychological toll on an animal advocate (e.g., Einwohner, 2002). Einwohner (2002) argues that, given the challenging nature of advocacy, individuals attempt to reduce feelings of frustration by convincing themselves that their efforts make an impact. She explores what keeps activists motivated when faced with frustration or defeat, exploring “the ways that the activists made sense of their accomplishments and how they worked actively to see the positive in their efforts, even in the case of ostensibly negative results” (Einwohner, 2002, p. 513). Animal advocates employ “strategic interpretive efforts” to sustain the sense that their participation is helping to achieve objectives (Einwohner, 2002, p. 510).

Einwohner (2002) argues that perception of self-efficacy not only sparks an individual’s initial decision to engage in advocacy behavior, but that it must be maintained in the long-term to
justify continued advocacy. She examines the efficacy maintenance mechanisms that help ‘activists’ cope with opposition and remain loyal to their causes (Einwohner, 2002). Einwohner (2002) proposes that self-efficacy maintenance serves a strategic function for participants: justifying their advocacy efforts, thwarting their feelings of frustration, and helping them to make sense of unsuccessful campaigns (although this efficacy varies by context and issue). Her research reveals animal advocates’ perceptions of their own roles in the effort for animal advocacy, as well as their rationalizations for the techniques that they use. This self-awareness can stimulate advocates to thoroughly consider the prospective effects of their media outreach strategies.

Based on interviews with and observations of members of a Seattle, Washington animal rights organization, Einwohner (2002) proposes that activists use four “fortifying strategies,” or efficacy maintenance strategies, to sustain morale and justify sustained advocacy: seeing the positive, celebrating victories, thinking cumulatively, and claiming credit (p. 516). These strategies are not mutually exclusive, nor must they all be used in every instance by every advocate. I will briefly discuss each strategy.

First, even if the advocates felt that their efforts did not achieve intended goals, they never perceived an endeavor to be a complete failure; instead, they always pointed to something positive about the action (‘seeing the positive’) (Einwohner, 2002). A second fortifying strategy was for advocates to keep morale high by celebrating and/or publicly affirming their successes, no matter how small (‘celebrating victories’) (Einwohner, 2002). This was achieved by calling attention to victories at advocate meetings and by engaging in enjoyable social events. Third, advocates were able to maintain their motivation by viewing especially challenging tasks as being achievable incrementally, through a series of small advances (‘thinking cumulatively’)
Einwohner reasons that, by adopting this outlook, the advocates “reinterpreted events in order to find evidence of some kind of advance—and every advance, no matter how small, was seen as bringing the group that much closer to its ultimate goals” (Einwohner, 2002, p. 518). Fourth, advocates felt that their efforts were responsible for generating successful outcomes (‘claiming credit’) (Einwohner, 2002). This is in line with social psychological research that indicates that people are more inclined to take credit for victories than they are of taking responsibility for negative outcomes: what is known as self-serving attributional bias (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Despite potential feelings of pessimism in the face of opposition or failure, Einwohner (2002) argues that advocates employ any or all of these strategies to sustain their motivation to participate in animal advocacy.

An individual may engage in varying degrees of these efficacy strategies throughout his/her time as an advocate (Einwohner, 2002). Furthermore, Einwohner (2002) found “that the longer one participates in collective action, the greater the effort it may take to maintain perceptions of efficacy” (p. 523). She argues that “the burden of maintaining these perceptions over time may itself contribute to activist burnout and, ultimately, demobilization”—especially for animal advocates, who have face an especially challenging trajectory due to inadequate support (Einwohner, 2002, p. 523).

In order to understand the thought processes of these advocates, next I will discuss the importance of proper audience segmentation. Classifying individuals based on particular characteristics will help me to place them the appropriate categories. This segmentation will guide me to ask targeted interview questions that are relevant to participants.
Segmenting audiences

To increase potential effectiveness of prosocial campaigns, one must understand its audiences. This involves segmenting the audience as the campaign’s goals see fit; appropriately tailoring messages to these segments; considering proper placement of media messages; using relevant arguments; employing repetition of messages through various media and interpersonal venues; focusing on high production value of these messages to increase credibility; maintaining focus on an entertainment value in the message; utilizing both media messages and local contacts; emphasizing enforcement of laws and policies when appropriate; and maintaining realistic expectations for the campaign’s outcomes (Perloff, 2008).

When designing and implementing such campaigns, advocates must understand that no ‘general public’ exists; rather, messages must be targeted to selected groups. Advocates should aim for effectiveness (examination of target audiences) rather than for efficiency (projecting the message to “the greatest number of people for the least amount of money”) (Schultz & Barnes, 1999, p. 312). The contemporary U.S. landscape comprises persuaders and audiences with varying sociological backgrounds. Thus, one cannot assume that another individual will consider a message in the same way as the communicator, or as any other individual (Perloff, 2008). Audience segmentation therefore aims to make the best predictions for attitudinal and behavioral change based on what is currently known in persuasion literature. This educated targeting serves to decrease chance as much as possible.

Audience segmentation theory: situational theory of publics

An effective way to segment advocate audiences is to apply the situational theory of publics. Conceptualized and developed by Grunig beginning in 1966, the situational theory of publics is “a device to segment the publics of organizations according to the nature and extent of
their communication about problems or issues that result” when organizations interact with publics (Grunig, 1989, p. 4). Grunig argues that publics’ communication behaviors “can be best understood by measuring how members of publics perceive situations in which they are affected by organizational consequences” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 148). Situational theory is therefore used to explain how various publics are likely to react to the effects of organizational communication: why some publics communicate actively, others passively, and still others not at all (Rawlins, 2006). Because the theory segments audiences based on communication processes and issues, situational theory may be “more relevant to public relations than are segmentation techniques taken from marketing…which segment on the basis of potential demand for products” (e.g., demographic segmentation) (Grunig, 1989, p. 4).

Dewey (1927) proposes the widely-accepted definition of a public as a group who is exposed to a problem, who recognize it as such, and who organize themselves to address it. Publics emerge independently and select an organization (Grunig & Repper, 1992). A public may also be defined as “a group with which an organization wants to build a relationship” (Hallahan, 2001, p. 29).

**Tenets of the situational theory of publics**

The situational theory of publics addresses the extent of publics’ awareness of an issue and the extent of their action about it. The four public types that audiences may be segmented into are ‘active,’ ‘aware,’ ‘latent,’ or ‘non-publics.’ According to Rawlins (2006), non-publics are those who are not exposed to an issue or problem; latent publics are those who are exposed to an issue or problem “but do not recognize it as problematic”; aware publics are those who recognize an issue or problem; and active publics are those who take action concerning an issue or problem (p. 9).
In order to determine which audience members belong in each segment, situational theory looks to “three variables that explain why certain people become active in certain situations” (Rawlins, 2006, p. 9). The independent variables of ‘problem recognition,’ ‘constraint recognition,’ and ‘level of involvement’ determine the dependent variables of ‘information seeking’ (also called active communication behavior) and ‘information processing’ (also called passive communication behavior). Grunig (1989) notes that “recent research has added cognitive, attitudinal, and behavior effects to the list of dependent variables” (p. 5).

Grunig (1997) explicates each of these variables (based on Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Concerning the independent variables, he defines problem recognition as “the extent to which individuals recognize a problem facing them” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 149). Grunig argues that publics will engage in active communication behavior if “they perceive that something needs to be done to improve the situation” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 149). Constraint recognition is defined as “the extent to which individuals see their behaviors as limited by factors beyond their own control” which may either be psychological (as in instances of low self-efficacy) or physical (for example, a lack of money to donate to an organization) (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 149). Grunig defines level of involvement as “a measure of how personally and emotionally relevant a problem can be for an individual” (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 149). Individuals are more likely to have higher involvement in an issue that demonstrates personal relevance (Dervin, 1989). The variable of involvement can also reflect an individual’s altruism concerning others’ well-being (Heath & Douglas, 1991a). In terms of animal advocacy, it seems logical that those who care about the welfare of other beings will be more likely to demonstrate involvement than those without that altruistic sense.
Regarding the dependent variables, information-seeking individuals are those who actively seek information and attempt to understand it (Grunig, 1997). This communication behavior leads to aware or active publics. Conversely, information-processing individuals are those who do not specifically seek information, but will process information to which they are randomly exposed, exerting no effort to do so (Grunig, 1997). These individuals may simply attend to information that happens to cross their paths.

Thus, the degree to which an individual experiences these three independent variables determines the degree of action represented by the two dependent variables. This dependent variable acts to place individuals in the audience segments of ‘active,’ ‘aware,’ ‘latent,’ or, by default of exclusion, ‘non-publics.’ Individuals who engage in information-seeking behavior are considered active publics (i.e., belonging to the active audience segment) while those who engage in information processing behavior are considered passive publics (i.e., belonging to either the aware or latent audience segments). Non-public audience segments are inherently excluded from this model because, by definition, they do not even encounter the information to be processed in either of these two ways.

Interaction of the independent and dependent variables can help predict the activity level of publics. Whether or not publics become active (i.e., moving from passive information processing behavior to active information seeking behavior) “can be predicted by whether the problem involves them, whether they recognize the problem,” and level of self-efficacy about fixing the problem (Rawlins, 2006, p. 11). A public is most likely to actively seek information if problem recognition is high, level of involvement is high, and constraint recognition is low (Pavlik, 1988; Grunig, 1989; Grunig, 1997). That is, publics tend to seek information if they
recognize a problem, the situation seems relevant to them, and they perceive their circumstances as allowing for action (Grunig, 1989).

Active information seeking (and its related independent variables) is more likely to result in communication effects than is information processing (Grunig, 1982; Grunig, 1989). These active audience segments “develop more organized cognitions, are more likely to have attitudes about a situation, and more often engage in a behavior to do something about the situation” (Grunig, 1989, p. 5-6). For instance, according to Major (1993), the behavioral type known as ‘problem facers’ exhibit high problem recognition and low constraint recognition, regardless of whether involvement is high or low. The problem facing group can therefore be most closely equated with the active public of situational theory. Major (1993) notes that these characteristics may explain “why the problem facers were more likely to be members of environmental organizations” (Major, 1993, p. 266).

Conversely, publics may only “randomly process information about” situations in which they have high problem recognition but low involvement (Grunig, 1989, p. 5). These factors denote aware publics. While these aware publics do process information and may engage in action, they “are limited by lower levels of involvement and problem recognition, or higher levels of constraint recognition” (Rawlins, 2006, p. 9). Even more passive are latent publics, who “aren’t cognizant of how an issue involves them, or don’t see it as a problem” (Rawlins, 2006, p. 9). Due to this low involvement and low problem recognition, latent publics may not even consider degree of constraint.

However, Rawlins (2006) argues that placement in a particular audience segment does not signify a permanent classification on the active/passive continuum. He argues that even a latent public “could become active or aware as information changes its cognitions about the
issue” (Rawlins, 2006, p. 9). Because organizations understand that audiences may shift between these four segments depending upon the given issue and individual circumstances, they construct outreach messages for the purpose of either increasing activity of passive publics, or maintaining activity of active publics. Thus, segmenting animal advocate audiences based on situational theory, the question becomes how one is to persuade active, aware, and latent publics to participate in animal advocacy issues. The ultimate goal would be to maintain active segments within that category, and to shift aware (and latent) publics to active ones.

**How situational theory of publics has been studied in the literature**

Because of its utility for segmenting audiences based on how they relate to issues, situational theory of publics is typically studied with regards to activating audiences about various advocacy causes. Situational theory of publics is often applied with respect to environmental advocacy organizations (e.g., Grunig, 1989; Murphy & Dee, 1992) or animal advocacy organizations (e.g., Werder, 2006). For example, Grunig (1983a) has used situational theory to develop patterns to predict which publics will be most likely to exhibit active communication behavior when presented with particular environmental issues (such as strip mining, extinction of whales, and air pollution). According to Grunig (1983a), environmental publics deemed to be in the active category had a greater likelihood of joining environmental groups than were those deemed inactive or non-publics. Literature about advocacy organizations generally supports the theory “when it asserts that issues and people’s differing perceptions of them (problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement) are necessary conditions for the presence of publics and for membership and participation in activist groups” (Grunig, 1989, p. 13).
Researchers also study situational theory of publics in terms of organizational outreach methods. Werder (2006) studied the theory by focusing on how organizational public relations message strategies may influence the three independent variables of the situational theory of publics. By examining how organizations communicate with publics, researchers may be better equipped to identify which types of communication tactics will be most likely to produce high involvement, high problem recognition, and low constraint recognition in their audiences.

Grunig has used the situational theory of publics to understand what incites people to participate in activist causes (e.g., Grunig, 1989). Because both activist groups and publics emerge based upon “situational issues,” Grunig argues that “few if any members of the [an activist group] will come from a public that is apathetic on all environmental issues” (Grunig, 1989, p. 13) and that “members of an activist group…[are unlikely to come] from an apathetic public” (Grunig 1989, p. 17). However, Hallahan (2000a) argues that organizations should devote more effort to communicating with inactive publics (i.e., the latent and non-public segments). Hallahan therefore expands the ‘latent’ and ‘non-public’ segments to include ‘inactive’ and ‘aroused’ groups. He defines ‘inactive publics’ to be “groups that have only minimal motivation, ability, or opportunity to know about, talk about, or participate in efforts to influence the policies or practices of organizations” (Hallahan, 2000a, p. 499). Later, Hallahan explains that an inactive public may entail “a group of people who share a common set of symbols and experiences” (p. 502). Hallahan defines ‘aroused’ publics as those who demonstrate” low levels of knowledge” but “include people who have recognized a potential problem or issue” (Hallahan, 2000a, p. 505) and have a heightened level of involvement that increases their likelihood of information seeking (Rawlins, 2006). These researchers attempt to bolster situational theory of publics by adding these dimensions.
A similar alternative to situational theory of publics

Researchers have also developed other terms to categorize the activity of publics that parallel the four segmented publics of situational theory. For instance, Dunlap and McCright (2008) propose four categories that indicate degree of social movement identity. ‘Active participants’ are those who personally participate to achieve the movement’s goals; ‘sympathetics’ are those who support the movement’s goals and efforts, but do not personally participate; ‘neutrals’ are those who demonstrate minimal interest or opinion regarding the movement’s cause; and ‘unsympathetics’ are those who have no concern for the cause, may oppose the movement’s goals, and may support a countermovement’s goals (Dunlap & McCright, 2008). While McCright and Dunlap (2008) focus especially on the differences between ‘active participants’ and ‘unsympathetics,’ I plan to focus on the ‘active participants’ category (which greatly coincides with situational theory’s ‘active’ category).

Practical applications for advocate audiences

From the extensive review of literature in this chapter, several practical applications emerge regarding how to operationalize motivation for prosocial behavior. This section provides functional considerations concerning animal advocacy audiences.

Application of situational theory of publics

Although people clearly have interests and concerns in general (for example, concern about crime rates), these issues may remain dormant until aroused (for instance, by a campaign) (Grunig, 1989). Therefore, research on situational theory of publics suggests that activist campaigns should focus on arousing interest in the given issue(s). According to Hallahan (2000a), “creating awareness is a prerequisite…for advocacy” (p. 465).
Research also informs organizations as to which types of publics they should interpellate. Based on situational theory research, it is argued that “an organization seeking to identify and communicate with relevant publics should worry about educated activists and devote most of its efforts to communicating with them” (Anderson, 1992, p. 155; Galloway, 2005; Grunig, 1977). Galloway (2005) advocates organizational attention to these active audience segments, as well as an emphasis on communication of issues.

However, as discussed above, Hallahan (2000a) urges researchers to consider the potential for activity in inactive publics. According to Hallahan, even inactive publics have the potential to become active under the right circumstances. Hallahan’s advice to organizations would therefore be to not focus solely on already-active segments, as Grunig (1989) and Galloway (2005) suggest—but, rather, to include inactive groups within this focus.

In this project, I will explore active audiences (i.e., those who care about animal issues and participate in animal advocacy). I aim to determine which factors motivate individuals to begin their action; how they overcome frustrations to maintain this action; and how their impressions of animal advocacy organizations, animal advocates, and animal advocacy outreach tactics can affect their perspectives and participation. My findings can also be utilized to more effectively target not-yet active animal lovers.

**Application of branding literature**

Though this project does not necessitate an exhaustive review of branding literature, particular elements may be helpful. For the purposes of my study, a ‘brand’ can refer to the reputation of a particular animal advocacy organization or to the reputation of the entire animal advocacy movement.
What is known as ‘brand knowledge’ comprises both brand awareness and brand image (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). Regarding brand awareness, over time, individuals come to associate certain attributes with a specific brand (advocacy organization) to form a perception of it (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). Brand image, on the other hand, indicates what other favorable and unfavorable concepts individuals associate with the brand (advocacy organization/animal advocacy movement).

A communicator can activate the storage of brand information (and increase chances of subsequent actions) by increasing the volume of messages and one’s attention to them (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). Another option is for a communicator to increase relevance to individuals’ interests (Schultz & Barnes, 1999).

Such approaches require a better understanding about potential supporters of animal advocacy. Schultz and Barnes (1999) recommend that communicators conduct research among existing supporters and prospective supporters to bolster this knowledge. This is what I plan to achieve in my study.

**Application of advertising appeal literature**

During the interviews and focus group, I expose participants to six stimulus materials (all advertisements from animal advocacy organizations). Therefore, a brief review of literature about advertising appeals will also help to contextualize this study. This body of literature is complex, and I do not intend to provide a comprehensive overview. I simply intend to scratch the surface regarding advertising appeals in order to introduce the types of appeals demonstrated by my stimulus materials (to be categorized and addressed in greater detail in the Methods chapter).
In a media atmosphere dense with advertising content, advertisers compete to capture audience attention (Putrevu, 2008). Advertisers rely on a variety of tactics, including (but not limited to) a focus on humor, sexuality, fear, and celebrity spokespeople (Putrevu, 2008). I will briefly explore various types of advertising appeals that are relevant to the stimulus materials used in this study.

Prosocial advertising, like advertising for animal advocacy, is considered to be a moral type of appeal. In contrast to advertisements that center only on the self-interest of the audience members (e.g., how a health-related choice may affect one’s own health) (Loroz, 2007), advertisements in a prosocial context (e.g., for the environment) also encourage audiences to help others (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Hockett & Hall, 2007; Loroz, 2007). Such appeals may highlight not only self-interest, but the interests of “others who may benefit or suffer as a result of a given behavior” (Loroz, 2007, p. 1004). In these “help-other” ads, as labeled by Bagozzi & Moore (1994), “the threat...is not of danger to the message recipient...but rather to someone else” (for example, in anti-child abuse advertisements) (p. 56). Hockett and Hall (2007) also support the use of moral appeals for issues of animal protection. These advertisements typically request that audiences “donate their time or money to a worthy cause” (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994, p. 56).

Feelings of compassion, sympathy, and empathy have been shown to stimulate behavioral change (Davis et al., 1996). Specifically, altruism has been demonstrated to motivate environmental behaviors (Eagly & Kulesa, 1997). This speaks to the potential of engaging these values when designing prosocial appeals (Eagly & Kulesa, 1997), including those for animal advocacy.

In advertising literature, appeals tend to be roughly divided into the categories of rational appeals and emotional appeals (Belch & Belch, 2004). Rational appeals target logical reasoning
and tend to provide objective information about the features of the advertised product (or requested behavior), focusing on the measurable advantages and disadvantages of purchase or action (Churchill & Peter, 1998; Edell & Staelin, 1983). Holbrook (1978) contends that rational appeals create a sense of credibility about the advertised product, thereby stimulating positive evaluation.

Conversely, emotional appeals are meant to arouse an individual psychologically (Hawkins, Best, & Coney, 2003) through engagement with one’s symbolic, social, or affective needs (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). Such advertisements tend to contain little information (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009), and characteristics of the product (or requested behavior) are interpreted subjectively (Belch & Belch, 1990).

Advertisers recognize the persuasive potential of targeting audience emotion (Kelsmark, Dion, Abratt, & Mischel, 2011). For instance, it has been demonstrated that attitude change is more likely through emotional arousal rather than through rational appeal (e.g., Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Vincent & Dubinsky, 2005). Specifically, when studying reactions to public service advertisements, Bagozzi and Moore (1994) found that the arousal of emotions such as anger or sadness resulted in higher levels of attitude change and behavioral intention as compared to the response to rational appeals. This finding could be helpful for designing animal advocacy communication.

Emotional advertising appeals can either exhibit a positive valence or a negative valence (e.g., Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009; Taute, McQuitty, & Sautter, 2011). Positively valenced emotional appeals arouse feelings such as (but not limited to) love, joy, warmth, pride, or friendship, while negatively valenced emotional appeals arouse feelings such as (but not limited to) anger, shame, guilt, or fear (e.g., Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009; Taute et al., 2011). Emotional
appeals are considered to heighten an individual’s response to an advertising message, regardless of positive or negative valence (although reasons for positive versus negative response are strongly contested) (e.g., Homer & Yoon, 1992; Moore & Harris, 1996).

Advertisers may also utilize various attention-grabbing tactics and/or shock value to attract audiences (Kelsmark et al., 2011). This is often in the form of sexual appeals (e.g., Kelsmark et al., 2011). Sexual appeals are typically characterized by sexual explicitness (e.g., sexualized language or behavior) or nudity (e.g., visual cues of sexuality, such as degree of dress or provocative posture) (LaTour & Henthorne, 1993; Putrevu, 2008; Reichert, 2003).

Research indicates both the positive and negative effects of sexual appeals. This strategy has been shown to make advertisements more noticeable, and to therefore attract attention (Dudley, 1999; Reichert, Heckler, & Jackson, 2001). However, other studies have found that sexual appeals do not necessarily increase purchasing, and that use of this tactic may actually be counterproductive (Liu, Li, & Cheng, 2006; Martin & Prince, 2005) or poorly received by audiences (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994; Tai, 1999). Additionally, for audiences with high levels of involvement, this type of appeal could distract from important message characteristics, thereby reducing the advertisement’s effectiveness (Putrevu, 2008). These factors could result in detrimental effects for a cause like animal advocacy.

Another tactic employed to attract audience attention is the use of fear appeals. The emotion of fear is described as the negative experience of feeling particular levels of worry or concern, or feeling anxiety, fright, or nausea (Henthorne, LaTour, & Nataraajan, 1993; LaTour & Rotfeld, 1997; LaTour & Tanner, 2003; Rogers, 1983). This emotional response is triggered by a threat of danger that an audience member perceives to be relevant and significant (e.g., Belch & Belch, 2004; Easterling & Leventhal, 1989). Fear appeals motivate individuals to act to
reduce the threat, and, consequently, the fear (e.g., Bagozzi & Moore, 1994). A fear appeal is considered to be direct if it “[focuses] on the welfare of the message recipient” or indirect if it aims to “motivate people to help others who are in danger” (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994, p. 56). Thus, in the case of animal advocacy, fear appeals would be indirect. However, research has demonstrated mixed results regarding whether a higher level of fear decreases the persuasiveness of an advertisement (e.g., Albarracin & Kumkale, 2003) or increases its persuasiveness (e.g., Mongeau, 1998).

Fear appeals may also present graphic images meant to evoke the distinct emotion of disgust. The emotions of both fear and disgust are characterized by a highly arousing nature, a negative valence, and a potential response of avoidance (e.g., Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000). However, these emotions differ in the sense that disgust is a response to that which is perceived to be repulsive (e.g., Woody & Teachman, 2000). Haidt et al. (1994) determined seven specific categories of disgust elicitors. For more detailed information about the characteristics of disgust, see Haidt et al. (1994).

Fear and disgust are often studied together (e.g., Woody & Teachman, 2000). Because fear appeals often contain elements that elicit disgust (or other emotions), both of these emotions (as well as others) may be considered when assessing the effectiveness of a message (Dillard & Peck, 2001). For example, Leshner et al. (2010) found that inclusion of disgust-eliciting images may serve to distract an individual from other message characteristics. However, they maintain that low-fear messages can benefit from disgust-eliciting imagery (Leshner et al., 2010).

I will briefly revisit each type of appeal when I introduce the stimulus materials in the Methods chapter. I aim to justify my tentative categorization of each advertisement based on this literature.
Gaps in the literature: how my study will contribute

As stated above, only a small amount of literature specifically attends to the factors that motivate individuals to participate in animal advocacy. For instance, in a very rare example of this type of study, Mika (2006) conducted focus groups with non-members of the animal advocacy movement in order to examine their evaluations of stimulus materials depicting animal advocates’ framing techniques. However, this is different from my current study because Mika’s participants were ostensibly members of latent publics and non-publics, whereas my participants are members of an active public; Mika’s study explored participants’ reactions to stimulus materials in order to explore the effects of framing methods, whereas I utilize stimulus materials to learn participants’ perceptions of the effectiveness of these materials, and to understand what motivates (or de-motivates) participation; and I also propose to analyze the factors that keep the active segment active. Researchers recognize that more studies must be done that can apply to multiple social movements (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; Minkoff, 1999; Van Dyke, 2003). While my study will certainly apply to animal advocacy, hopefully it will also provide cross-applicability to various causes.

This current study is needed to answer the questions that existing literature does not address. Literature tends to focus only on the organizational projection and subsequent audience reception, rather than adopting the perspective of an agentive audience with complex reasons and circumstances constructing their thoughts and behaviors. It has been noted that, although individuals may claim to support a prosocial cause (like green marketing, in the case of Mandese, 1991 and Vaidyanathan & Aggarwal, 2005), many deem efforts to be costly and therefore refrain from helping (Mandese, 1991). However, seldom does existing research ask individuals for their perspectives regarding perceived reputation of animal advocacy and the
specific factors that may instigate or deter participation. In fact, a surprisingly small amount of literature addresses animal advocacy at all.

My formative, descriptive research is needed in order to determine what may motivate and sustain participatory behavior for animal advocacy. Due to the lack of literature on this subject, I plan to form, construct, and identify data, while describing variables and constructs. I aim to learn the characteristics about people that lead them to participate by asking the people themselves. As proposed by Major (1993) in reference to public relations efforts toward environmental publics, in order to effectively communicate with desired publics and influence their opinions, SMOs must understand these publics’ communication behaviors and attitudes. In this qualitative study, I will begin to fill these glaring omissions in the literature.

**Research questions**

By asking the following questions, I plan to extend research on social movement participation by understanding:

**RQ1:** What factors or communication have worked to motivate action for existing animal advocates?

**RQ2:** What factors or communication have worked to maintain motivation of existing animal advocates?

**RQ3:** What are participants' impressions of animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communications, and the animal advocacy movement?

All interview questions and sub-questions will hopefully elicit responses that will illuminate individuals’ reasons for initial and sustained action, which may elucidate the factors that motivate and/or restrain receptive publics.
Chapter 3

Methods

Personal interest

I have always loved animals. Growing up, I craved interaction with animals—but was only allowed to have pets that could be kept in small cages. I consequently showered my guinea pigs and hermit crabs with affection, and looked forward to visiting the homes of friends and neighbors who had dogs or cats. I would almost be more excited by the prospect of playing with a friend’s pet than of playing with the friend.

As I grew older, I dedicated extensive thought to human conceptions of other species and our resulting treatment of them. Stories or images of animal abuse have always pained and frustrated me, and have left me feeling helpless. As a teenager, I was especially driven to challenge the mainstream human/animal hierarchy. I vowed to reduce my contribution to animal suffering by becoming a vegetarian. However, after a year of vegetarianism, I decided that individual abstinence cannot have the level of impact that I desired. I resolved to no longer feel powerless to help a cause that affected me so deeply.

I realized that, to make large-scale improvements to animal conditions, I should actively extend my efforts. I have volunteered at a bird rescue and research facility, participated in animal interest groups at two universities, adopted a cat from a local shelter, focused extensive academic research projects concerning the promotion of animal advocacy, presented an individually-written research paper about animal advocacy at an academic conference, and held a public relations summer internship with The Humane Society of the United States, which claims to be the largest and most influential animal advocacy organization in the U.S. My main reason for earning a Ph.D. is not only to conduct this research, but to attain a degree that will bolster my
credibility when attempting to recommend effective outreach strategies for animal advocacy organizations. My ultimate career goal is to implement these outreach communication methods to increase public interest in animal issues, which I hope will ultimately improve conditions for animals.

I believe that a main goal for the animal advocacy movement should be to eliminate pain, fear, and suffering for animals. The basis for my beliefs lies in the ethical justification of treating sentient beings in a gentle, respectful manner, and allowing species to live—as much as possible—in the ways that they are naturally intended to live. Rather than placing humans at the pinnacle of an assumed hierarchy in which other species necessarily fall short in comparison, I celebrate and admire the differences among species and think that all are part of a harmonious system.

I tend to philosophically align with an animal rights perspective. However, I understand the logic from both the animal rights and the animal welfare perspectives, and I struggle between what I believe to be ideal and what I believe to be attainable. I wonder if a goal of animal welfare is more realistically achievable for our current world. My own stances continue to evolve, and I can identify with arguments from multiple outlooks. For instance, I am undecided regarding the morality of humans eating other animals, which is further complicated by considerations of nutrition and animal mistreatment. As stated above, I ultimately aim for a general goal of improving the quality of life for animals. To this end, I focus attention on shifting public opinion to consider non-human beings from an ethical standpoint (i.e., questioning the cultural assumption of a human/animal hierarchy), which will hopefully place greater importance on their health and well-being.
My previous research on animal advocacy issues has informed this current project. In the past, I have examined literature including (but not limited to) public information campaigns, mobilization, public opinion, analysis of narratives, analysis of qualitative transcripts, the use of focus groups for qualitative research, outreach communication efforts of nonprofit social movement organizations, branding, framing, and semiotics. In my Master’s thesis, I compared and critiqued the philosophies and outreach communication tactics of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), concluding that animal advocacy organizations should maintain legitimacy through professional, mainstream, positive interaction with publics.

In my final paper for CAS 562 (Communication Arts and Sciences: Qualitative Research Methods) in Fall 2008 at Penn State, I conducted interviews and a focus group to better understand why graduate students who like animals may refrain from participation in animal advocacy. From this study, I learned that individuals may be deterred from participation based on the radical outreach methods used by animal advocacy groups, the perceived critical (i.e., nagging) nature of animal advocacy messages, the perception of ‘advocacy’ as too large-scale and nebulous of a concept about which to feel efficacious, lack of a sense of connection to the issues, and the transient nature of the graduate school lifestyle. My data indicated that participants would be more likely to act if the animal advocacy movement came to them with easy ways to help. To attract potential participation, I concluded that animal advocacy messages should be framed in non-threatening, relatable terms, with clearly-stated goals; that organizations should provide accessible means for publics to learn about participation; and that organizations should publicize options for local involvement. This research has guided my conceptions of effective and non-effective means of communicating animal activist information with publics.
As supported by Rubin and Rubin (2005), I conducted this study through the lens of these perspectives, experiences, and prior research. This self-reflection was part of my methods; rather than aiming to overcome or ignore my background, I acknowledged my unique path and considered it at every stage of this project. I believe that I related more deeply to the experiences of my participants, and to the resulting analysis, because I share the drive for animal protection and have participated myself. By placing myself as a researcher within the context of animal advocacy, I hope that I have achieved more nuance and transparency than I could have achieved otherwise.

**Research goals**

The goal of this project is to learn ‘active’ participants’ reasons for initial participation in animal advocacy, continued participation in animal advocacy, and impressions of animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communications, and the animal advocacy movement in general. A qualitative study is crucial to this goal; asking individuals about their perceptions, experiences, concerns, and behaviors is the most direct way to attain rich, explanatory answers to these questions. By conducting individual interviews and a focus group with these individuals, I hope to better understand the factors involved in their opinions and decisions about participation in this cause. Significant research has been conducted concerning how general or specific social movements and/or SMOs have attempted to mobilize publics (e.g., Farmer & Kozel, 2005; Henderson, 2005; Johnson, 2008), but very little work explores animal advocacy specifically. I plan for my research to begin to fill this gap.

The substantive interest of this project concerns participant discourse about animal advocacy generally, and discourse about participation in animal advocacy specifically. This involves participants’ impressions of animal advocacy, its public stereotypes, and mediated
coverage of the cause. Epistemically, I aim to explain how those who like animals justify their action, through dialogue, within the aforementioned cultural contexts.

**Unit of analysis**

I analyzed individual interviews and a focus group to learn about individual perspectives. I compared this data across individuals. The phenomena under study are participation in animal advocacy, motivations and strategies for continued participation, and opinions about and experiences with animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communications, and the animal advocacy movement in general. While organizations produce these outreach communications, what produces these *phenomena* under study—the unit of analysis—is the individual. Individual participants explain their perspectives, which guide this active behavior.

**Operationalizing “animal advocacy”**

Participants were eligible to participate if they were at least 18 years of age and fit the description of an ‘animal advocate.’ For the purposes of this study, an ‘animal advocate’ was defined as one who has engaged in one or more of the following in one’s adult life: monetary donation to an animal advocacy cause, working or volunteering with an animal advocacy group (including university-based animal advocacy organizations), being a vegan or vegetarian specifically because of concern for animals, adoption of a pet from an animal shelter (one’s own adoption, as opposed to one’s parents’ adoption of a family pet or roommates’ adoption of an animal), and/or engaging in academic research pertaining to animal advocacy issues. Participants all live in or near State College, PA and match the above criteria. A participant was excluded if I determined that I had a closer relationship to him/her than that of a passing acquaintance (i.e., an existing friendship or a student/professor relationship would have been excluded); if a participant was under the age of 18 years old; if a participant did not match my
aforementioned criteria for an ‘active’ audience segment or an ‘animal advocate;’ or if a participant could not attend an interview or focus group session in the State College area during the time period of the study.

While I do not use the term ‘animal lover’ in my recruitment material, I utilize it in this study. I designate an ‘animal lover’ as an individual who likes animals, and who is philosophically receptive to initiating participation—but who is not active in animal advocacy. Throughout the study, I refer to ‘animal lovers’ as those who have the potential to participate but are currently inactive, while I refer to ‘animal advocates’ as those who are already active.

**Operationalizing the concepts of situational theory of publics**

For the purposes of this study, I define problem recognition as the degree to which a participant indicates (either implicitly or explicitly) that he/she recognizes animal advocacy to be a valid issue (resulting in a high or low degree of problem recognition); I define involvement as the degree to which a participant indicates (either implicitly or explicitly) that he/she is concerned about the cause, and that the cause is relevant enough to him/her to become involved (resulting in a high or low degree of involvement); and I define constraint recognition as the degree to which a participant indicates (either implicitly or explicitly) a high or low degree of self-efficacy about helping the cause, as well as his/her assessment of psychological and/or physical constraints (resulting in a high or low degree of constraint recognition). I recognize that a participant engages in active information seeking behavior if he/she indicates an active investigation for information, whereas I recognize that a participant engages in passive information processing behavior if he/she indicates that he/she only engages in animal-related information upon chance encounter. I took note of instances of high/low problem recognition,
involvement, constraint recognition, active information seeking, and passive information processing when coding my data, and then utilized this data in my analysis.

I consider all participants in this study to belong to the active segment of situational theory of publics. As described in the Literature Review in greater detail, an active audience is characterized by high problem recognition, low constraint recognition, and high level of involvement, which all lead to active information-seeking behavior (Grunig, 1989; Grunig, 1997; Pavlik, 1988). All participants exhibit high problem recognition (because they all recognize animal advocacy to be a valid issue) and high involvement (because they are all concerned enough about the cause to become involved). Participants do vary with level of constraint recognition and level of information-seeking behavior. Although low levels of these typically characterize an aware audience, the high levels of problem recognition and involvement demonstrated by participants still place them firmly within the active category. (In the Discussion chapter, I will revisit this inconsistency in participants’ levels of constraint recognition and information-seeking behavior, and how it affects my application of situational theory.)

Though I do not specifically test situational theory in this study, I apply its concepts to recruit participants and to investigate the reasoning behind participant activity. I found support for some aspects of situational theory, but not for all (as it applies to this study specifically). Consequently, based on my findings, I expand the application of situational theory by proposing that ‘active’ may not always be a broad, sweeping category: that multiple factions may exist within the active audience segment.

Therefore, I utilize situational theory in this project 1) to examine the dimensions of its concepts (e.g., exploring how constraint recognition [self-efficacy] affects participant
motivation); 2) to ensure that I have recruited participants with a base level of activity (characterizing the active audience segment); and 3) to propose that, for application to animal advocacy audiences with similar characteristics to participants in this study, situational theory could address participatory behavior, that multiple sub-categories could be developed within the wide-ranging active segment, and that there may not always be a relationship between constraint recognition and level of information seeking.

Methods of data collection

I selected my sample based upon characteristics that 1) identified them as ‘animal advocates’ (by my definition above) and 2) placed them in the ‘active’ category of situational theory (as explained above). Individual interviews and one focus group with this sample were the methods of data collection. I selected these qualitative methods because direct conversations can produce deeply contextual and descriptive responses from participants, which are critical for my research goals.

I conducted each interview individually until I reached ‘theoretical saturation’ (the point at which the researcher no longer hears new information from participants) (Maxwell, 2005). I gathered data from each participant only once. An individual was either an interview participant or a focus group participant, but not both. After the completion of all of the interviews, I conducted one focus group of four participants in order to confirm the validity of the interview data and to accrue new data.

Rationale for choosing to conduct interviews

As discussed earlier, there is very little existing research concerning reasons for participation in animal advocacy, coping mechanisms for maintaining motivation to participate, and opinions about animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communication materials
(such as advertisements), and the animal advocacy movement. I chose to conduct interviews because my goal is to understand individuals’ perspectives and the reasoning behind their behaviors, motivations, and impressions.

Individual interviews have certain advantages. This method allows the researcher to learn a great depth of knowledge from participants: their thoughts, contexts, personal logics, and nuances (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Gubrium and Holstein (2001) argue that interviews “serve as democratizing agents, giving voice to individuals and, in the process, formulating ‘public’ opinion” (p. 8). Because my goal is to understand the reasoning processes, narratives, and perceptions of my participants, the most reasonable means to examine this information is to directly ask individuals for their explanations. This goal ruled out the strategy of observation, as thought processes go unexplained with this method. Furthermore, I wanted participants to respond to my specific questions, and I wanted to be present to see and hear these narratives. These goals ruled out the strategies of archival data analysis and any type of survey implementation. In a survey, depth is not the concern. Interviewing seems to be an appropriate method when a researcher wants to learn participants’ perspectives—especially concerning potentially sensitive or controversial topics.

A researcher can gain much richer insight into an individual’s perceptions, motivations, and behaviors through interviewing than he/she can from these alternative methods. If I were to have conducted a largely phenomenological analysis, it may have been limited to description—and I also aimed to explain the phenomena. Whereas phenomenologists have no interest in contexts and consequences, these factors are critical to my study. Additionally, while phenomenology solely involves the understanding of universal elements and the essence of a phenomenon, I am also interested in the individual participant’s experience. I attempt to
understand the behaviors of action by analyzing participants’ explanations of their experiences with it. Alternatively, if I had focused entirely on narrative analysis, I may have lost sight of the larger thematic picture; my project is less concerned with mechanics of speech than with the meanings within it.

Conversely, individual interviews may present particular disadvantages. For example, a participant may not open up and share his/her thoughts with the researcher. This may negate the advantage of the one-on-one, in-depth session. (Luckily, in this study, all participants appeared to be comfortable and willing to discuss the topic.) The time-consuming nature of transcription is also a downside of conducting individual interviews. Because the average length of an interview or focus group for this study was approximately one hour, the transcription phase was arduous.

**Use of the responsive interviewing model**

When conducting a study, a researcher can engage in varying levels of flexibility regarding the research design. This can involve a positivist approach or a more naturalistic one. Rubin and Rubin (2005) advocate “the responsive interviewing model, which builds on an interpretive constructionist approach and frames the way we design research, collect data, and analyze our findings” (p. 20). The authors argue that this perspective “enables [the researcher] to adapt to unexpected research problems and work out new solutions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 20). The reflexive nature of this approach can strengthen the credibility of the research.

Rubin and Rubin’s (2005) responsive interviewing model appeals to me in several ways. I am drawn to models which have some form of underlying structure, allowing for suitable guidance—but I always wonder how strict policies can allow for anomalies. The responsive interviewing model therefore provides the best of each need: the instructional framework, and a
means of adjusting the process to individual cases. In this model, unique characteristics of interviewer, interviewee, and their interaction are considered. This flexibility encourages adaptation of the research process to each study’s characteristics. The responsive interviewing model allows the qualitative interview to be “a dynamic and iterative process, not a set of tools to be applied mechanically” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 15).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue that the responsive interviewing model is based on an interpretive constructionist approach. They state that “constructionists expect people to see somewhat different things, examine them through distinct lenses, and come to somewhat different conclusions” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 27). Thus, rather than treating individual perspective as an obstacle to finding truth, this model anticipates and celebrates our unique lenses.

In research, it often seems that the individuality of the researcher and the participants are ignored. However, the responsive interviewing model recognizes the reality that all those involved, in any role, are human. The authors state that “researchers as well as conversational partners are individuals with emotions, biases, and interests” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 17). This perspective highlights the activity of both the researcher and the participant. In other perspectives, the humanity of the participant (and even of the researcher) may be largely overlooked.

Building on this concept, the responsive interviewing model acknowledges the interaction between the researcher and the participant. “Central to the responsive interviewing model,” Rubin and Rubin write, “is the understanding that the interviewer and interviewee are in a relationship in which there is mutual influence, yet in which individuality needs to be recognized” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 33). The interviewee has the power to shape the direction
of the interview—and this certainly occurred in this study. While each conversation was guided by my interview questions, I took many detours to ask participants more about issues that I found particularly interesting or unexpected. Rubin and Rubin argue that “the low-key and open-ended way in which interviewing is conducted encourages the conversational partners to suggest topics, concerns, and meanings that are important to them” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 33). Participants generally seemed comfortable enough to take the conversations in directions that were most relevant for them. This characteristic of the responsive interviewing model circles back to the active nature of all involved.

Regarding the individuality of the researcher, the responsive interviewing model has great appeal. Rubin and Rubin (2005) emphasize the importance of researcher preference concerning interview style. A researcher need not adhere to a particular style of questioning (ex: the order of events during an interview, the amount of small talk, how direct the questions are, etc.). The authors argue that there are various styles of conducting interviews, and that “none of these stylistic variations is inherently right or wrong” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 31). Rather, “what works is a style that makes the conversational partner feel comfortable, obtains needed information, and is compatible with the researcher’s personality” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 31). Therefore, while each of my interviews and the focus group contained similar elements (e.g., small talk, interview questions, unplanned probes, closing comments), the order of questions was determined by the flow of each conversation, the opening and closing small talk varied based on each individual, and so on. The style with which I conducted these sessions felt natural to me, and I hope that it also felt natural to participants—as opposed to feeling forced or formulaic.

This model also encourages focus upon context, promoting depth of understanding (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I found this emphasis to be influential for my own research. When
exploring motivations for animal advocacy involvement, impressions of the animal advocacy movement and its organizations, and reactions to outreach tactics, my goal was to attain a deep, contextualized grasp of individual factors. The authors stress the importance of maintaining flexibility in the research design in order to achieve this depth (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Thus, for each interview or focus group, I remained open to follow the natural flow of the conversation in order to delve into potentially unexpected areas.

Additionally, Rubin and Rubin stress that, “in the responsive interviewing model, analysis is not a one-time task, but an ongoing process” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 16; their italics). This speaks to the underlying reason research is conducted: to better understand something. To best comprehend the research area, the researcher must acknowledge information gaps and must consider multiple interpretations of the data. A linear model with a singular point of analysis is antithetical to the purpose of qualitative research. The responsive interviewing model allows for “analyzing and interviewing [to] alternate throughout a study,” providing the opportunity for reflexivity (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 16). The model therefore promotes the integration of hindsight into the research process. Following this model, I analyzed data at multiple points, practically continuously, throughout the analytic process—and, in hindsight, I have been able to connect the details from my analysis to a broader picture of the data. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue, “researchers need to continually examine their own understandings and reactions,” which I have done throughout the process (p. 31). This self-reflection is integral to the responsive interviewing model, and is a foundation of qualitative research.

Another aspect of research design is how active the researcher allows the participant to be. Gubrium and Holstein (2001) argue that, traditionally, interviewees have been forced into a passive role. Rubin and Rubin’s responsive interviewing model, on the other hand, emphasizes
the active nature of the interviewee. A researcher must decide the degree to which his/her participants can influence the direction of the interview. I did have particular interview questions that I needed to ask, but the order was highly flexible, and I was open to posing other, unplanned questions in each conversation, as appropriate. I wanted participants to feel that the conversations were about them, rather than being highly standardized. As stated above, Gubrium and Holstein (2001) explain that individual interviews “serve as democratizing agents, giving voice to individuals and, in the process, formulating ‘public’ opinion” (p. 8). Thus, when a researcher designs his/her interview with the activity of the participant in mind, he/she also determines the extent to which the participant’s input will be liberated.

The level of activity of the participant is rooted in the perceived value of individual contribution. As Gubrium and Holstein (2001) argue, “most of us are so familiar with the contemporary Western image of the individualized self…that we find it difficult to comprehend alternative subjectivities” (p. 6). The active nature of the individual has evolved over time, with direct implications for research design. “The now self-evident view that each of us has opinions of public significance,” Gubrium and Holstein explain, “became intelligible only within a discourse of individuality” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001, p. 6). Now that the notion of individuality is culturally accepted, considerations regarding the individuality of the researcher and the individuality of the participant are critical components of interview design. My aim was to focus on the individuality of each participant while maintaining a conscious sense of my own history and interests.

Rubin and Rubin (2005) stress that a part of the design process is for the researcher to determine whether each interview will be topical or cultural. Cultural interviews are more of a probe, allowing participants to share any interesting information. “Often,” write Rubin and
Rubin, “the interviewer has no preset agenda of issues to cover, allowing flexibility in what is discussed in any conversation” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 10). Additionally, “before initiating cultural interviews, researchers often do participant observation and then ask for explanations of what they have seen, especially behavior that is culture-laden” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 10).

Conversely, “topical studies explore what, when, how, why, or with what consequence something happened” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 11). The authors explain that “topical studies seek explanations for puzzling situations in a specific time and place” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 11). In topical interviews, then, the types of questions and the directed manner in which they are asked differ from the flexible approach of the cultural interview. Rubin and Rubin therefore conclude that “topical interviewing is considerably more focused and preplanned than cultural interviewing” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 11). Both of these approaches may occur in a single interview. In my current research, I attempted to allow the flexibility of the cultural approach, but ultimately engaged in the topical approach in order to thoroughly address my research questions.

**Procedures**

**Process of recruitment: interviews**

After receiving IRB approval, I began the recruitment process. Participant selection occurred through e-mails sent to the listserves of the campus Vegetarian Club (comprising both undergraduate and graduate students) and the campus animal advocacy club called Visualizing Animals (comprising both graduate students and faculty members), as well as to two local animal advocacy groups (SPCA and a State College, Pennsylvania animal shelter for dogs and cats called Promotion of Animal Welfare and safety [PAWS]). (See Appendix B for recruitment letter.) I indicated that I sought participants who participate in animal advocacy. I clarified what
constitutes ‘animal advocacy’ (as defined above) so that potential participants could determine whether or not they qualified. My e-mail also indicated my general research area; how long an interview would last; how long a focus group would last; noted that a gift certificate to the Penn State bookstore would be offered as compensation; and asked interested parties to indicate their preference for participating in an interview or in a focus group. I asked that anyone who is interested in participating—or anyone who knows someone who fits this description—may e-mail me back to express interest (adding an element of a snowball sample). After sending these recruitment e-mails, I contacted the presidents or webmasters from each group and asked if I could also recruit in person (at a group meeting, for instance) with an appropriate script that largely matched the content of my recruitment e-mail. Each president/webmaster told me that this wasn't necessary, and that the recruitment e-mail alone would suffice.

As it turned out, I did not garner any participants from the local SPCA or from the campus Visualizing Animals club; all participants were either from the campus Vegetarian Club, PAWS, or were friends of these members. Interested parties contacted me via e-mail. Following this e-mail recruitment, I e-mailed back and forth with each participant to determine an agreeable meeting place/time. I asked each interviewee for his/her preferred interview time and location because I wanted the research site to be convenient for the participant to engender comfort and openness. Nineteen of the 20 individual interviews were held in my graduate student office in the James Building. Only one interview was held elsewhere (at a restaurant off-campus, as requested by the participant).

**Process of recruitment: focus group**

Participant selection occurred through the same means described above for interview participant selection. Once enough individuals had responded to my recruitment for a focus
group, I tentatively suggested a meeting location for the session. However, to encourage participant involvement and to facilitate participant convenience and ease, I invited suggestions for other preferred sites. My original site suggestion was accepted, and the focus group was held in the graduate student computer lab in the James Building.

Research site

I conducted this study in the small town of State College, PA, where I lived and attended a full-time graduate program for four years. (I no longer live in this town, but I did at the time of data collection.) This town contains approximately 39,000 full-time residents: about 52% males and about 48% females, with a median age of 22. The town centers around The Pennsylvania State University: a large public university of approximately 38,000 undergraduate students, approximately 6,000 graduate students, and approximately 5,500 faculty members. I studied participants who live in or near this town and who met my criteria for an ‘animal advocate.’ Interviews and a focus group were conducted in this town (with the exception of one, which was conducted about 15 miles outside of town, for the participant’s convenience). I conducted this research here because I thought that residents may find it normal to be asked to be a research participant (as they are likely to be familiar with university research), and also because I conveniently lived in this location.

Interview questions

To address each research question, I posed a series of interview questions to my interview and focus group participants. Questions were identical for all interviews and the focus group, and were separated into guiding questions and sub-questions. Each interview question was meant to elucidate one or more of the research questions; to check that each participant self-selected into the study appropriately (by gauging his/her involvement in animal advocacy); to
illuminate individuals’ reasons for action, which may elucidate the factors that motivate and/or restrain receptive publics; and/or to assess the degree to which perceptions and/or actions may be influenced by other means discussed in the Literature Review (two-step flow and degree of self-efficacy). For each interview question, I note which research question(s) it addresses, if it addresses two-step flow, and/or if it addresses degree of self-efficacy. These links are not mutually exclusive; some interview questions address multiple research questions or areas. (See Appendix C for list of interview questions.)

**Stimulus materials**

During the interviews and focus group, I showed each participant six stimulus materials (see Appendix E). These were shown in no particular order, as the order varied based upon the flow of each conversation.

Stimulus material #1 is a television commercial by the BCSPCA (British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). (The ASPCA [American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals] is one of the largest animal advocacy organizations in the U.S.) At the time of the study, this exact commercial, and a few very similar to it, were still in broadcast. This commercial begins by featuring scenes of wounded animals. The entire commercial is set to a slow song by singer Sarah McLachlan called “Angel.” Next, the commercial shows text stating the extent of animal abuse (“Every single hour in BC, and animal is violently abused”). More scenes of wounded animals are shown. Then the text states, “3,000 animals were rescued last year,” followed by more scenes of wounded animals, with more text stating, “For hundreds of others, help came too late.” Once again, this is followed by more scenes of wounded animals. Then, singer Sarah McLachlan appears on screen and explains the necessity of animal care:
Hi. I’m Sarah McLachlan. Will you be an angel for a helpless animal? Every day, innocent animals are abused, beaten, and neglected, and they’re crying out for help. Please call the number on your screen and join the BCSPCA with a monthly gift right now. For just 18 dollars a month, only 60 cents a day, you’ll help rescue animals from their abusers, and provide medical care, food, shelter, and love. Call or join online in the next 30 minutes and you’ll receive this welcome kit with a photo of an animal in a shelter right now: one who’s been given a second chance, thanks to you.

During and after this speech, the viewer is shown more pictures of wounded animals, interspersed with scenes of animals being held by humans. McLachlan then says, “Right now, there’s an animal who needs you. Your call says, ‘I’m here to help.’ Please call right now.”

I included this ad as an example of an advertisement with a negatively valenced emotional appeal that plays on the emotions of sympathy and sadness, but that empowers the viewer by telling him/her what he/she can do to help. Based on advertising appeal literature, this would most likely qualify as an emotional appeal because it is meant to engage audiences affectively (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008). However, this ad contains elements of other types of appeals, as well. Facts are provided, and audiences are instructed regarding how to help, demonstrating characteristics of a rational appeal (Churchill & Peter, 1998; Edell & Staelin, 1983). Additionally, the presence of wounded animals may elicit concern or anxiety that may lead an individual to seek action to reduce the danger for others (in this case, animals), or even the response of avoidance (Davidson et al., 2000) (as discussed later in more detail)—all characterizing an indirect fear appeal (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994). In terms of categorizing appeal type, I find this stimulus material to be the most complex of all six due to its varied characteristics.
Stimulus material #2 is a print advertisement from PETA. The ad features actress Pamela Anderson wearing a bikini made of lettuce, and the text states, “Turn over a new leaf. Try vegetarian.” At the bottom of the ad, the text reads, “GoVeg.com PETA.”

I included this ad as an example of an advertisement with a somewhat graphic, sexual nature. This ad is a clear example of a sexual appeal due to its provocative visual cues (LaTour & Henthorne, 1993; Putrevu, 2008; Reichert, 2003).

Stimulus material #3 is a print advertisement from PETA. The ad is from the organization’s McCruelty campaign against McDonalds, criticizing them for the conditions in which their meat is obtained. The ad features a cartoon drawing of mascot Ronald McDonald, only he holds a bloody carcass in one hand, and a knife dripping with blood in the other. The text reads, “Your unhappy meal is ready. McCruelty to go.” This text is a play on the McDonalds “Happy Meal.”

I included this ad as an example of an advertisement with a graphic, violent nature. Due to its highly arousing nature, negative valence, and potential to repulse an audience with the imagery of blood and a carcass (Davidson et al., 2000), this ad most clearly characterizes the appeals of fear and disgust.

Stimulus material #4 is a print advertisement from PETA. The ad is from the organization’s Bloody Burberry campaign against the fashion company Burberry, criticizing them for using fur in their designs. The highly stylized black-and-white ad is meant to look like a fashion advertisement, with a well-dressed male model laying his head in a well-dressed female model’s lap. However, upon closer inspection, a dead, skinned animal is laying on the man’s chest.
I included this ad as an example of an advertisement with a graphic, violent nature, but that uses a (presumably) real animal, and that approaches the anti-fur subject in an artistic way. Based on the advertising appeal literature, presence of the skinned animal would most likely place this ad in the category of a disgust appeal (Haidt et al., 1994). However, due to its similarity to a fashion advertisement and subtle visual placement of the animal, it also demonstrates characteristics of an emotional appeal; it provides little information, and is meant to be subjectively interpreted (Belch & Belch, 1990).

Stimulus material #5 is a print advertisement from The HSUS. The ad features a Cocker Spaniel puppy lying down and looking directly at the camera. The text reads, “Lend a paw to your local animal shelter.” At the bottom of the ad is the logo for The Humane Society of the United States.

I included this ad as an example of an advertisement that uses an angle of animal cuteness, with a real animal, that requests a specific behavior of viewers, and has no outwardly graphic or offensive tones. I characterize this ad as a positively valenced emotional appeal because it may elicit feelings of warmth or love (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009; Taute et al., 2011).

Stimulus material #6 is a print advertisement from The HSUS. The ad shows a horse running freely with a background of grass and mountains. The text reads, “End the Slaughter of America’s Horses.” At the top of the ad is the logo for The Humane Society of the United States.

I included this ad as an example of an advertisement that shows an animal living in a natural, healthy way, showing no signs of distress, with no outwardly graphic or offensive tones. The ad identifies a specific problem (horse slaughter) but does not direct the viewer regarding
how to help. I think that this ad most closely aligns with a positively valenced emotional appeal, as the depiction of the horse in a natural setting may evoke feelings of warmth or joy (Leonidou & Leonidou, 2009; Taute et al., 2009). However, this ad may also exemplify characteristics of an indirect fear appeal; it encourages viewers to help horses who are in danger (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994) and uses the graphic word “slaughter.”

Consistent with the nature of other prosocial advertising (e.g., Bagozzi & Moore, 1994), each stimulus material can also be categorized as a moral appeal. By nature of association to animal advocacy, these ads promote action for the benefit of others (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994; Hockett & Hall, 2007; Loroz, 2007). In these ads, the direct or implied concern is for animals and general animal advocacy, rather than for the viewer (Bagozzi & Moore, 1994). (Stimulus material #2, PETA’s ad urging audiences to adopt vegetarianism, may be the only stimulus material for which one could argue that it focuses on the interest of the viewer. However, because the ad is from an animal rights organization, I interpret the assumed rationale for adopting vegetarianism to be linked to concern for animals.)

**Conducting the interviews and focus group**

As a guide for conducting the interviews and focus group, I followed the suggestions of Rubin and Rubin (2005), Spradley (1979), and Warren and Karner (2005). At the interview/focus group sites, before each interview/focus group began, I asked each participant to fill out an IRB consent form (see Appendix A). Then, I asked each participant to fill out a face sheet with basic biographical and animal advocacy involvement-related information (see Appendix D). I then gave each participant a gift card to the Penn State bookstore as compensation. Once each interview/focus group began, I eased into the session with small talk to make the interaction more comfortable and conversational—as opposed to appearing as if I
was merely trying to extract information from participants. With a semi-structured approach, I indicated that, while I did have a list of questions for which I sought responses, I wanted to keep the interaction very natural. Then, I briefly described my research project and how the participant’s responses can help. For the focus group specifically, I reassured participants of the important role of focus group participation.

To achieve a conversational nature, I began each interview with a question such as, “In the e-mail you received, I asked for participants who are active in animal advocacy. Tell me about your involvement with animals.” Similarly, I began the focus group by asking each participant to tell a bit about themselves and their involvement with animals (the goal being to spotlight shared interest in animal advocacy among participants, engendering comfort). I explained to the focus group that I had already conducted interviews, and that the focus group was intended to double-check that data. I also relayed anonymous, generalized interview data in the focus group, as necessary, in order to test validity. Concerning this last point about discussing interview data, an example of this would be an exchange between me and participant Martha:

M: And I sometimes feel that way about PETA. I think they sometimes step over the line and actually hurt their cause by being a bit too extreme with some of their views. I don’t doubt their dedication, but sometimes their approach, I think, could be better.
R: That’s interesting, because that sentiment, specifically about PETA, is something I’ve seen come up in a lot of the interviews. I’m curious, now that that’s out there, what do all of you think about PETA? Is anyone unfamiliar with PETA, or…?
For both the interviews and the focus group, I then integrated my interview questions in a relaxed manner, letting the dialogue take its natural course: seamlessly posing my interview questions within the context of the dialogue.

As discussed above in greater detail, I employed the responsive interviewing model (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) throughout the interview and focus group conversations. Though I came to each interview/focus group with a set of planned questions, I posed numerous spontaneous clarification questions or prompts that elicited rich responses, as well. I allowed myself the flexibility to use participants’ responses as segues between questions, again maintaining the conversational nature of the interview. An example of this segue is an exchange between myself and Shannon, in which she discusses her exposure to vegetarians who complain about having so few meal options in the Weight Watchers program:

S: And they would talk about what they ate every week, and I’d just be like, ‘Wow. It’s really hard to be a vegetarian. And to eat healthy.’ Like I never thought about all the cheese and bread and—

R: Especially for a lot of the young people, like you said, the teenagers—

S: They don’t cook for themselves—so they’re just eating the vegetable and the starch of every meal and not the protein.

R: Speaking of the vegetarian, there’s one other ad (shows Shannon the planned stimulus material from PETA: a pro-vegetarian ad featuring Pamela Anderson). Have you seen this?

If a participant’s response took the conversation in a relevant direction that I had not intended, I allowed myself to pursue his/her ideas. However, I was careful not to provide positive affirmations to a participant (e.g., “Good descriptions!”) because this could have driven the
participant to believe that his/her responses could be correct or incorrect. Instead, I encouraged participants with less evaluative phrases, such as “Thank you for your description.”

To elicit vivid descriptions from participants, I asked open-ended questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) that were phrased to be plural (for instance, instead of beginning a question with, “In what way…,” I asked, “In what ways…”). This plurality encouraged more thorough responses. My questions were phrased descriptively “to encourage an informant to talk about” the subject (Spradley, 1979, p. 85), and I attempted to elicit stories from participants (for instance, posing a phrase like, “Tell me the story of how you became interested in animal advocacy.”) to answer the ‘who,’ ‘what,’ ‘when,’ ‘where,’ ‘how,’ and ‘why’ questions. In conjunction with my interview questions, the use of phrases such as “Can you tell me how you…” invited rich narrative responses more so than closed-ended or yes/no questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 160). I used other probes like “Can you tell me more about that?”, “Can you give me an example of that?”, or “Is there anything else?” to achieve clarity, to attain more information, and to encourage participant elaboration.

While each of my interview questions was helpful in elucidating various facets of my research questions, some interview questions proved to elicit especially rich responses. For instance, when I asked participants to “Tell me the story of how [they] became involved in animal advocacy,” their stories teemed with personal detail and circumstance, enabling me to identify specific triggers for initial involvement. Another fruitful question was, “Are there specific advocacy messages (like demonstrations, commercials, television episodes, websites, etc.) that have inspired you to help animals?” From this question, participants were led to pinpoint specific outreach materials that were especially effective for them—thereby allowing me to begin to learn the characteristics of messages that resonate with participants who have
certain characteristics. The same was true for the interview questions asked concerning stimulus materials (outreach materials from BCSPCA, PETA, and The HSUS).

Other questions that produced particularly enlightening responses were the questions pertaining to self-efficacy ("Tell me about the impact that your actions have had on animals" and "What kind of impact do you think that you’re capable of having on animal issues?") because they indicated the level of power or helplessness participants felt; the question pertaining to challenges participants perceived from caring about animal advocacy ("Are there any challenges you face as someone who’s committed to helping animals?") because it sheds light on the concerns of animal advocates; and the questions pertaining to coping mechanisms participants use to maintain motivation to participate in this cause ("What keeps you motivated to continue to engage in helping animals?", "How do you deal with the challenges of being committed to helping animals?", and "Is there anyone you talk to, or anything you try to think of, or do, or seek out, to regain motivation?") because participants shared specific motivational strategies that fortify their commitment.

I also administered both follow-up questions and probes to fully understand participants’ responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To confirm my perceptions, I often repeated some degree of a participant’s response back to him/her to ensure that I had accurately understood his/her meaning. For instance, to ensure that I understood participant Joe’s slang, I posed a question to clarify:

J: We haven’t figured out how much, but I’ll be donating money toward PAWS when I kick off and also Trout Unlimited and the U.S. National Fly Fishing.

R: And I assume when you say ‘kick off’—

J: That means ‘die.’
R: So you’re leaving some money to those groups?

J: Yeah. I’m not sure exactly how much, but we definitely would support those nonprofit activities.

These conversational elements are true skills, honed through conscious self-reflexivity and practice (of which I am only just beginning to achieve). Rubin and Rubin (2005) provide the example of an interviewee telling the researcher that he knows a beautiful woman (p. 129). An effective interviewer will not just accept his description of the woman as ‘beautiful;’ he/she will ask questions to elicit the specific characteristics that comprise ‘beauty’ for the interviewee. The authors describe the importance of eliciting nuance and richness in these narratives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Because I did not have existing relationships with participants, I set the stage for a comfortable process by building rapport—what Spradley (1979) refers to as “a harmonious relationship” (p. 78). Warren and Karner (2005) argue that “respect (from which warmth may also follow) is the essential component of building rapport—respect for the respondents and respect for the knowledge and perspectives they have to offer” (p. 140). My goal was for each participant to feel as willing as possible to share. I hope that I was able to develop rapport in order to facilitate ease within the interview or focus group setting, and quell anxieties about what to expect from the interaction.

According to Spradley (1979), both in ethnographic research and in an interview, the rapport process “usually proceeds through the following stages: apprehension → exploration → cooperation → participation” (p. 78). To attain and maintain rapport with participants, I used participants’ own language when speaking with them. If a participant described something in a particular way, I would often repeat his/her own terminology back to him/her when probing
further. For example, in an exchange with Peggy when showing her PETA’s graphic Bloody Burberry advertisement, I repeated a word she had used in order to clarify her comment:

P: And maybe something like that could be counterproductive to some people. I could imagine somebody going in there with their kids and really freaking out because their kid is asking, “What does this really mean?”

R: So, you think counterproductive in what sense?

P: In the sense that you might annoy the people seeing it, and more than bringing them to your cause, they’re just going to think you’re these wackos on some far-left animal wing or something (laughs).

This rapport can sometimes also be built upon careful ‘matching’ of characteristics (both physical/demographic and personality-wise) between researcher and participant (Warren & Karner, 2005). In the case of my current research project, what was ‘matched’ was the shared characteristic of concern for animals.

As noted earlier, I conducted interviews until I determined that I had reached ‘theoretical saturation’ (Maxwell, 2005). This resulted in 20 individual interview sessions. Interviews lasted between 37 minutes and 89 minutes (average length approximately 60 minutes). As stated above, each interview was audiotaped with a digital voice recording device and later transcribed. I did not take notes during the interviews, as it may have served as a distraction for both me and for the participants.

Similarly, the focus group was audiotaped with a digital voice recording device and transcribed afterwards. Once again, I did not take notes during the focus group because it could have distracted both me and the participants. The focus group consisted of four participants and lasted 72 minutes.
For both the interviews and the focus group, I wrote an analytic memo following each session to record my perceptions while they were fresh in my mind. In these memos, I noted particular instances of tone, inflection, or physical gesture that could aid in interpretation of participants’ meanings (that may not be obvious on the audiotape); my commentary concerning methodological idiosyncrasies; and any other noteworthy thoughts, questions, or occurrences.

Demeanor of participants was generally quite friendly. All participants were fully willing to answer all questions that I posed, and several participants seemed quite eager to share their perspectives and stories. At the end of each interview/focus group, when I asked participants if they had any other questions or had anything else to add that we had not gotten a chance to discuss, a number of participants even took the opportunity to ask me to talk more about my research. I read this as a positive sign that the experience had been pleasant, and that participants were genuinely interested in the topic. There were no instances of strange or combative behavior to note: only open, helpful, seemingly relaxed individuals. Of course, due to the often upsetting nature of animal abuse and animal advocacy, there were particular instances in which participants were clearly moved when explaining their stories, or by the graphic nature of some of the stimulus materials. However, no participant behavior seemed inappropriate or out of the ordinary for this topic.

**Member-checking**

Once I completed all individual interviews, I conducted member-checking with one focus group. The focus group consisted of all new participants who had not been involved in the interviews. Focus group data was obtained in the same manner described above for interviews. The only difference was that I specifically examined focus group data as a means to confirm, disconfirm, or modify findings from the completed interview data.
I decided to conduct a focus group to gather multiple individuals simultaneously to member-check the data from my interviews. While individual interviews provide richness and depth, a focus group allows me to learn information from multiple individuals at once while learning collective information that emerges from the group dynamic. The use of focus groups is an apt research method because “focus groups place people in natural, real-life situations, [capturing] the dynamic nature of the group interaction” (Harper & Makatouni, 2002, p. 290). An advantage of conducting focus groups, then, is this diversity of opinion and the triggering of thoughts and memories by other participants.

With a potentially sensitive or controversial topic like animal advocacy, the benefit of conducting a focus group lies with this possibility for encouraging open, receptive dialogue about the cause. Not only can the focus group provide valuable research information, but it may also have motivational and intellectual benefits for participants. Zorn, Roper, Broadfoot, and Weaver (2006) argue that the experience of interaction in a focus group can influence participants’ beliefs about the controversial issues discussed, and can increase perception of self-efficacy. In this way, focus groups can act as learning sites in which participants develop motivation for engaging in topical dialogue that can potentially color their perspectives (Zorn et al., 2006). Additionally, a focus group allowed me to learn the perspectives of multiple people in the time it would take for one individual interview. This facilitated more efficient member-checking and amounted to much less transcription later.

However, a disadvantage of conducting a focus group may stem from the group dynamic. In this social setting, participants may resort to ‘groupthink.’ Individuals may silence their thoughts and concerns because they are uncomfortable with expressing their opinions in this group situation (for any number of reasons, including shyness, intimidation, or eagerness for
one’s views to parallel those of one’s peers. This may potentially skew data to over-represent more vocal participants.

To prevent this, I expressed to participants that I was interested in each person’s perspective, and that I therefore asked that each person share her perspectives and allow the other participants to do the same. At times during the focus group, I sensed that certain participants were particularly quiet or overshadowed by more vocal participants—so I compensated by addressing more questions toward the quieter individuals at these moments. No one participant was vocal to the point of being dominant, so there was little adjustment needed in order to equalize input of all participants.

**Methods of analysis**

In my analysis, I followed McCracken’s (1988) five steps of analysis for long interviews, utilizing supporting instruction from Baptiste (2009), Charmaz (2006), Morgan (1997), Rubin and Rubin (2005), Srivastava and Thomson (2009), and Warren and Karner (2005). When analyzing my data, I wanted to diversify my method by combining more than one researcher’s approach: examining my data from multiple angles, but ultimately following an analogous process. Therefore, during my analysis phase, I was guided foremost by McCracken’s technique, but also applied instruction from these other researchers (listed above). In this section, I discuss the goals and operations of each analytic phase that I employed.

To begin, it will be helpful to define the concept of a ‘theme.’ A theme can be described as “a recurring regularity” either within or across a set of categories (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 107). Whereas a category is descriptive in nature and is meant to answer the ‘What?’ questions in the data, a theme captures “the underlying meanings” from the data’s “latent content” and is meant to answer the ‘How?’ questions (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 107).
Graneheim and Lundman (2004) define a theme as “a thread of underlying meaning through condensed meaning units, codes or categories, on an interpretive level” (p. 107). A theme therefore represents a deeper understanding of the phenomena under study, encapsulating particular facets of experience. According to Graneheim and Lundman (2004), themes need not be mutually exclusive; “a condensed meaning unit, a code or a category can fit into more than one theme” (p. 107). Additionally, it is acceptable for a theme to “be constructed by sub-themes or divided into sub-themes” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 107). In this project, I thoroughly investigate the themes and sub-themes for each research question in order to develop a meaningful understanding of my participant’s reasons for initial advocacy, practices for sustained advocacy, and impressions of the animal advocacy movement and its outreach communication tactics.

According to McCracken (1988), the purpose of data analysis for long interviews “is to determine the categories, relationships, and assumptions that inform the respondent’s view of the world in general and the topic in particular” (p. 42). A researcher approaches this analysis with expectations from the literature, insight from one’s prior experience with the topic, and knowledge of what transpired in each interview. McCracken recommends five distinct stages for long interview analysis. In this analytic process, each stage becomes increasingly broad. This process is “a movement from the particular to the general” (p. 42). The researcher “begins deeply embedded in the finest details of the interview transcript and, with each successive stage, moves upward to more general observations” (p. 42-43). He/she should utilize his/her topical knowledge at each stage, while remaining receptive to unconsidered possibilities.

However, I must note that my analytical process was not strictly linear. Though I use McCracken’s (1988) five steps to structure my analysis and to assure that I followed general
guidelines for theme and sub-theme development, for organization, and for the goals of a qualitative project with long interviews, my path realistically involved the revisiting of data from previous stages and building my analysis along the way. This reflects McCracken’s (1988) assertion that “the exact manner in which the investigator will travel the path from data to observations, conclusions, and scholarly assertion cannot and should not be fully specified” (p. 41). While I closely adhered to these stages and engaged in each one, I recount my analytic process (below) a bit more neatly than it occurred in order to most clearly explain its trajectory.

In line with the reflexive goals of qualitative research, I engaged in analysis at every phase. From the time I heard participants’ stories in the interviews and focus group, to the time spent reflecting analytically and memoing between sessions, I moved back and forth through these phases during all stages of the analysis, analyzing my data throughout the research process (Warren & Karner, 2005). This involved writing analytical memos following each interview and focus group, continually reviewing my data, and including descriptive and interpretive notes during the memoing and transcription phases. Thus, when taking on the task to analyze numerous pages of transcribed interview data, the analysis had already begun through descriptive and interpretive note-taking. In fact, Morgan (1997) argues that, by the time a researcher begins the analysis, many analytical choices have already been made over the course of conceptualization and data collection. As repeated self-reflection is an integral foundation of qualitative research, I “continually examine[d] [my] own understandings and reactions” during analysis, as well (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 31).

Transcribing this data was my first step in immersion. This painstaking process spanned nearly two months. Once I transcribed my data, I familiarized myself with it thoroughly—understanding each case before conducting cross-case comparisons. In their framework analysis
approach, Srivastava and Thomson (2009) refer to this stage as “familiarization”: the manner by which a researcher acquires “an overview of the collected data” (p. 1). During this phase, I first became aware of recurring patterns, and wrote brief notes to indicate each instance (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). I allowed patterns to emerge through the technique of open coding, maintaining a sense of the overall picture of the data (Baptiste, 2009; Warren & Karner, 2005).

In this open coding phase, I aimed to disassemble the data to detect significant processes (Baptiste, 2009) and to create observations (McCracken, 1988). I ‘listened to the data’ by fracturing it line-by-line to adhere to it closely, not applying anything from outside of it. I examined the meanings and implications of “individual utterances,” judging each utterance only unto itself—rather than considering its relationship to other parts of the transcript (McCracken, 1988, p. 43). The object was to determine whether an utterance provided insight into the participant’s perspectives. Links were on a descriptive level.

At this stage, I separated important data from unimportant data, resisting the urge to consider how to eventually utilize the important data (McCracken, 1988). I marked the parts of the interview that captured the heart of my inquiries, but resisted following them yet (as recommended by McCracken, 1988). I avoided making inferences and postponed categorizing, sub-categorizing, etc.; instead, I wrote memos of my ideas. However, I used my own assumptions and intuitions about the data and noted relevant insights as they occurred to me. During this phase, I marked relevant material from the Literature Review (and from my own cultural review) that could frame the data.

My goal during this first phase was to code the data to capture the meanings and actions of the phenomena (participation in animal advocacy, motivations and strategies for maintaining participation, and impressions of animal advocacy organizations and their outreach materials).
(Charmaz, 2006). Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue that open coding is the preferable strategy for smaller projects and for those in which the researcher is highly knowledgeable about the related concepts. I figured that analyzing a set of individual interviews and one focus group (about a familiar topic) would qualify for using the open coding technique.

As recommended by McCracken (1988), in the next stage of data analysis, I developed my first stage observations. First, I considered the full range of beliefs, assumptions, and implications from each first-stage/open coding phase observation. Second, I examined observations in comparison to one another: exploring the transcript for potential relationships, similarities, and contradictions between individual observations. Third, I considered these relationships in light of the aforementioned Literature Review and cultural review.

Then, in the third stage, I explored the relationships and interconnections of the observations that I had developed (McCracken, 1988). The object of this stage is to develop observations “in relation to other observations” (McCracken, 1988, p. 45). Here, I used my descriptive data to cultivate analytic descriptions concerning my research questions (Warren & Karner, 2005). During this phase, I continued to make connections between the data (Baptiste, 2009)—and my perspective became ‘loud.’ I linked and integrated data on a conceptual level, focusing on the conceptual relationships of the descriptions I generated during open coding. I reassembled my categories, properties, and dimensions, with the goal of integrating structure and process. Focus was now on the observations and no longer on the transcript itself (only consulting the transcript for specific clarification) (McCracken, 1988). Rubin and Rubin (2005) stress that conceptual categories must be chosen carefully, as these decisions guide a researcher’s analytical focus. I therefore remained flexible during this process: willing to revise the coding
structure as needed, and to reread my data and rethink my interpretations throughout (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Again, this was executed with respect to the literature and cultural reviews.

This third stage involved refining the data with the goal of increasing organization: recognizing “general outlines of the interview” (McCracken, 1988, p. 46), noting the emergence of “patterns and themes” (McCracken, 1988, p. 45), clarifying the data contextually, and generally reducing data to that which was important and ignoring that which was not. I organized my data conceptually by concentrating upon these emerging themes (Baptiste, 2009). As recommended by Baptiste (2009), I then revisited my data to determine sub-themes and how they related to one another. I “allow[ed] the data to dictate the themes,” as suggested by Srivastava & Thomson (2009). I labeled each instance of these and organized my data accordingly. The goal of this theoretical coding phase was to focus on the whole as greater than the sum of its parts, and to identify relationships accordingly (Baptiste, 2009).

At this point, it was helpful for me to create a new Microsoft Word file, into which I pasted relevant utterances and observations. While some researchers utilize flow charts or visual depictions of data, I chose to develop an outline in Microsoft Word due to my familiarity with the program. Having all of my data in a Word document has allowed for quick edits, re-wordings, re-orderings, and conceptual re-structuring (facilitated by the Cut, Copy, and Paste functions). Using only this new Word file, I continued to develop and record observations. In a technique that Srivastava and Thomson (2009) refer to as “indexing,” I read through all of my transcript data and “identifie[d] portions or sections of the data that correspond[ed] to…particular theme[s]” (p. 2).

Next, in what McCracken (1988) considers the fourth stage of analysis, my goal was to determine “patterns of intertheme consistency and contradiction” by subjecting the observations
from stages one, two, and three to “collective scrutiny” (p. 42). I created a new Microsoft Word document that comprised only the highest-level, “most general” data: what McCracken calls “a tidy package of limited themes” (p. 47). By this point, I had developed ‘formations’ consisting of points, comments about those points, comments about those comments, etc. (McCracken, 1988). Themes were developed with respect to each of these formations (analyzing each formation in its own terms [as opposed to in comparison to other elements of the interview] in order to determine a theme). Once I had identified all themes this way, I determined their interrelationship. Throughout these phases, I noted deviant cases that did not fit with the rest of the data/themes, and explained them further.

McCracken (1988) advises the researcher to execute judgment when organizing this fourth-stage data. The researcher may find some themes to “be redundant,” so he/she must select the most useful themes while eliminating those which are less useful (p. 46). This was a difficult task, as there was an abundance of interesting data that I wanted to include. Then, the remaining themes were “organized hierarchically” (p. 46). McCracken instructs the researcher to select “one or two themes [that] will be the chief points under which the remainder of the themes can be subsumed” (p. 46). I applied this to each research question.

The fifth and final stage proposed by McCracken (1988) involves “a review of the stage-four conclusions from all of the interviews” in which the researcher “take[s] the themes from each interview and see[s] how these can be brought together into theses” (p. 46). I created a Microsoft Word file that comprised each interview’s stage-four analysis. At this point, I did not refer to “the particulars of individual lives but [to] the general properties of thought and action within the community or group under study” (p. 46). Here, I approached and discussed the data from my perspective, rather than from the perspective of the participant. As discussed
throughout this section, I compared my findings to the relevant literature, documenting instances of agreement and of difference.

In the final stages of analysis, I wrote an analytical outline to logically organize and cohesively represent my data (Warren & Karner, 2005). I selected and arranged my data, but was careful to clearly mark to which participant each piece of data belonged (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). Once my data was organized into this highly conceptualized outline, I pulled supporting quotes for my sub-themes from the appropriate sections of my document. Morgan (1997) argues that a researcher should maintain a careful balance regarding the use of direct quotations and researcher summarizations. I hope that these quotes act to illustrate my evaluations.

Finally, what began as observations had become conclusions that were “ready for academic presentation” (McCracken, 1988, p. 46). I reformulated my data into a meaningful narrative form that addressed my research questions in a logical manner (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), working my themes into a coherent story of the data. Having already tested alternative conceptualizations to best represent my data (as described above, and in Rubin & Rubin, 2005), I was equipped to begin molding my analysis into narrative form. At this point, I made decisions about the most logical ways to present my analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). When reporting these analytical conclusions, I aimed to present data “as a set of organized and interrelated ideas” and not “simply as a serial chain of assertions” (McCracken, 1988, p. 51).

By the end of my analysis, I had developed conclusions that help explain initial triggers for participation in animal advocacy, the strategies animal advocates use to maintain motivation to participate, and animal advocates’ impressions of animal advocacy organizations and their outreach materials. This analysis also serves to answer questions that are under-addressed by
existing research. Thus, the end-goal of this analysis phase was to develop conclusions that can contribute to existing literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Ideally, my conclusions will have the capacity to inform readers concerning practical ways to increase and maintain involvement in animal advocacy. This project is hopefully a logical, thorough narrative that communicates my findings effectively, that considers data in light of existing theory, and that proposes innovative theoretical perspectives regarding animal issues.

Validity issues

In this section, I explore potential validity issues in this study. I begin by discussing how I enhanced the trustworthiness of my research, and then explore potential issues of bias and reactivity.

Enhancing trustworthiness

1. One potential validity threat is whether my research methods could garner enough varied information. I believe that my triangulation of research methods (the combination of interviews and a focus group) helped achieve credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of methods provides a thorough evaluation of issues by ensuring “a more complete and accurate account than [individual methods] could alone” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 94). Triangulation also “reduces the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues” (Maxwell, 2006, p. 94). If I were to have only conducted interviews, I could have missed exposure to narratives that developed in a group atmosphere. Conversely, if I were to have only conducted focus groups, I could have missed the in-depth explanations from individuals.
2. In general, I aimed to reduce the risk of potential validity threats by conforming to Creswell’s (2003) six steps to enhance trustworthiness in research (as indirectly discussed in the next few numbered entries). I followed established steps in the research process, maintaining transparency throughout. Transparency increases the confirmability of my work by situating my findings as pertaining to my participants and research, rather than to my own biases or preconceived notions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3. As a single researcher on this project, I wanted to increase the credibility of my analysis and findings. Thus, I employed member-checking during the data collection phase by conducting a focus group to verify the accuracy of my work: to confirm that I had sufficiently captured participants’ perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4. I also increased the trustworthiness of my analysis by describing my research methods with rich detail, sharing a realistic account of my procedures and processes (“Assessing data quality” reading). This increases the dependability of my research because it shows “how we can be sure that our findings are consistent and reproducible” (“Assessing data quality” reading).

5. Another method to enhance validity is to keep an audit trail: detailed, organized notes that can be used to confirm that my analysis matches my documentation. This includes the nuanced recording of methodological, analytic, contextual, and personal response documentation through a consistent, logical system (Rodgers & Cowles, 1993). This serves to increase the dependability of my work as well as its confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Addressing bias and reactivity

1. A potential validity issue in this research could be the risk of researcher bias. Animal advocacy is an issue that is very important to me; I hold strong convictions about animal advocacy outreach strategies, and I have conducted previous research on this topic. I had to be
careful that the findings from my previous projects did not influence my expectations for responses and/or guide my analysis. I aimed to develop my own interpretations while upholding the uniqueness of participants’ perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2005; Warren & Karner, 2005). I took care to remain aware that I was not privileging or selecting data that matched my own preconceptions (Maxwell, 2005). To decrease this validity threat, I am remaining transparent about the beliefs, theories, and lenses that I bring to this research (Maxwell, 2005). My analysis may be guided by my existing sensitivities, but I have aimed to keep this separate from my participants’ meanings and explanations.

2. Another prospective validity threat was whether or not my data was biased by who I chose as participants. By sending probing e-mails to local animal advocacy groups as well as to the campus Vegetarian Club and to the campus Visualizing Animals group, and asking them to pass the request along to those who they think might be interested, I attempted to 1) increase the sheer number of potential participants and 2) expand my pool of potential participants to those outside of these groups. This allowed for participants of varying ages, education levels, affiliations with the university, and degrees of familiarity with qualitative research.

3. My research methods could raise the validity threat of reactivity, or demand characteristics: how I, as the researcher, may have affected the study participants (Maxwell, 2005). How can I know if participants were simply telling me what I wanted to hear—i.e., overemphasizing their concern for animal issues and overpromising future action because they thought that was the ‘correct’ response for someone studying animal advocacy? It was impossible to eliminate my influence on participants entirely. Besides, qualitative research is not about abolishing this influence, but is about maintaining awareness of it (Maxwell, 2005). I increased potential for honesty by ensuring participant anonymity, and by reminding participants
that I did not aim to judge them—that I was honestly attempting to learn their points of view. I told them that it was extremely educational for me to learn the perspectives of existing animal advocates: that it helped my research to hear realistic descriptions.

4. My research also runs the risk of self-report bias: whether participant reports are accurate. How do I know if what a participant claims will motivate him/her to act will actually motivate him/her to act? How do I know if a participant will follow through with his/her stated plans for animal advocacy participation? Some of my data is based upon hypothetical future plans; it is not within the scope of this study to follow up with participants years from now to check the status of their participation. It may be impossible to ensure the accuracy of participant responses, but I requested feedback from them concerning “data and conclusions” to eliminate or lessen “the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say…as well as…identifying [my] own biases and misunderstandings” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 111). These member checks were used to increase validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of methods also helped to thwart this potential threat because it allowed for multiple comparisons across cases.

5. Additionally, as some of my participants were drawn from local animal advocacy organizations, the focus group participants already knew one another. (All four focus group participants were volunteers at PAWS). This could have positively affected inclination to share their views, if they felt comfortable with friendly acquaintances; or, it could have negatively affected their propensity for being candid because they could have perceived possible repercussions for their stories. In this way, having a focus group consisting of strangers vs. friends could either strengthen or weaken participants’ willingness to share. The best way that I
could control for comfort level within the focus group was to facilitate a trusting atmosphere in which each person’s perspective was respected.

**Ethical issues**

I foresaw few ethical risks with this research project. However, one ethical issue that had the potential to emerge was how participants’ responses may resonate in my relationships with them post-interview or post-focus group, should we continue to engage in contact. If a participant had espoused views during this project that differed from my own, could this harm our potential future relationship? To reduce this threat and to encourage participant honesty, I requested sincere responses during data collection and detached my role as a researcher from my role as a potential future acquaintance. However, to date, I have had no contact with these participants outside of this project (besides a few follow-up e-mails about the interviews).

Another prospective ethical issue was the fact that my selection of participants was drawn mainly from the practical consideration of easy access to multiple local contacts. All interviews and the focus group took place in or near the town in which I lived at the time of data collection. However, because I selected my participants based upon participation in animal advocacy, local residence of participants and local conduct of research should have little effect.
Chapter 4

Results

Research goals

My goal in this chapter is to report my findings from the interviews and focus group. I will begin with a description of participant characteristics, including a summary/overview for all participants as well as an individual report for each participant in order to introduce my sample. Then, I will address each of my three research questions, one by one, with respect to the emerging themes and sub-themes from the data.

Participant characteristics

In this section, I will describe a range of participant characteristics in order to orient the reader to my participants. I will begin with a brief summary/overview for all participants and then report basic demographic and involvement information individually for each participant (pseudonym, age, sex, occupation, how long he/she has actively participated in animal advocacy, areas of involvement, and if he/she is in a romantic relationship another participant). I obtained this information from the Biographical Face Sheet that I distributed at the beginning of each interview and the focus group (see Appendix D), and from my interview/focus group conversations with participants. All together, this information should provide a sense of participant demographics, interests, and nature of involvement.

Participant demographics

Twenty-four people participated in this study: 20 for individual interviews, and four for the focus group. Twenty-one were female and three were male. Ages of participants ranged from 20 to 73 years, with an average participant age of 46 (and a median participant age of 46). Seven were current students (college or graduate school); seven were currently employed; two
were homemakers, and eight were retired. (When reporting participants’ current or former professions, I separate lines of work into either ‘caretaking’ professions or ‘non caretaking’ professions in order to maintain confidentiality. I define caretaking professions as those that involve nurturing or one-on-one care, especially for vulnerable others [e.g., nursing], while I define non caretaking professions as any other type of work.) Three participants were current vegetarians; one was a current vegetarian, transitioning to vegan; four were current vegans and former vegetarians; one was in the process of transitioning to vegetarianism; and one was a former vegetarian. (Therefore, eight participants were either vegan or vegetarian at the time of the study). Twenty-one have volunteered for animal advocacy (either currently or in the past), fifteen of whom have volunteered at PAWS specifically (a local animal shelter). Thirteen have adopted one or more pets from an animal shelter. Six have donated money to animal advocacy organizations. Six participants are in long-term partnerships or marriages with other participants (that is, three couples).

It must be noted, however, that this overview may not be comprehensive. Because all questions about advocacy involvement were posed during interview and focus group conversations, it is possible that a participant could have forgotten to mention every single activity that he/she has done for animals in his/her lifetime. For instance, a participant could have donated money to an animal advocacy organization in the past, but could have overlooked this when describing his/her activity to me. The above demographics represent the frequency with which participants reported these behaviors, not necessarily the frequency with which they have engaged in these behaviors; thus, the figures above comprise the minimum numbers of participants who are active in particular ways.
Anna
21, female, student, actively involved for 4-5 years. Current vegan (and former vegetarian), member of campus Vegetarian Club, involved in local food agriculture, member of SPCA and The HSUS, former volunteer at PAWS, adopted cat from PAWS, signs animal advocacy petitions.

Lily
23, female, student, actively involved for 2.5 years. Current vegan (and former vegetarian), former member of campus Vegetarian Club, volunteered with Mercy for Animals, wrote about animal issues for an internship.

Peggy
57, female, retired (non caretaking profession), actively involved for 13+ years. Volunteer at PAWS, donates to Snow Leopard Trust.

Amy
28, female, student, actively involved for 5+ years. Vegetarian, member of The HSUS; donates to The HSUS; adopted dog from shelter; purchases cruelty-free products and avoids products made from animals.

Laura
36, female, non caretaking profession, actively involved for 4 years. Former vegetarian, volunteered with cats in the past; current volunteer at PAWS.

Paula
58, female, retired (caretaking profession), actively involved for 2.5 years. Volunteers at PAWS. Married to Joe.

Shannon
42, female, homemaker (non caretaking profession), actively involved for 3 years. Volunteers at PAWS, adopted cats from PAWS.

Joe
70, male, retired (non caretaking profession), actively involved for 6 years. Volunteers with PAWS (not a formal volunteer, but fosters cats), donates to PAWS. Married to Paula.

Jackie
20, female, student, actively involved for 1.5 years. Vegetarian, member of campus Vegetarian Club.

Linda
68, female, retired (caretaking profession), actively involved for 46 years (if counting since she adopted her first shelter pet); actively involved for 3.5 years (if counting since she began volunteering). Volunteer at PAWS, adopted dogs and cats from shelters. Married to Bill.
Bill
69, male, retired (non caretaking profession), actively involved for 3.5 years (longer if counting since he adopted his first shelter pet, but didn’t indicate when that was). Volunteer at PAWS, adopted dogs from shelters. Married to Linda.

Kathy
73, female, retired (non caretaking profession), actively involved for 7-8 years. Volunteer at PAWS, adopted cats from PAWS. Partner of Joanne.

Joanne
69, female, retired (caretaking profession), actively involved for 8 years. Volunteer at PAWS, adopted cats from PAWS. Partner of Kathy.

Michelle
35, female, student, actively involved for around 15 years (on and off). Vegetarian (transitioning to veganism), member of community-based vegetarian club, participated with event at Farm Sanctuary, volunteers occasionally (ex: Dogs Deserve Better), on e-mail list for The HSUS and Farm Sanctuary, sends advocacy letters to authority figures (ex: Senators), donates, fundraises, adopted cats from shelters.

Samantha
22, female, student, actively involved for 3-4 years. Current vegan (former vegetarian), member of campus Vegetarian Club, former volunteer, member of Animal Legal Defense Fund.

Janet
36, female, homemaker (non caretaking profession), actively involved for ~15 years (if counting since becoming vegetarian) or for approximately two years (if counting since heavier involvement in advocacy). Current vegan (former vegetarian), donates, adopted dogs and cats from shelters, adopted rescue chickens, heavy involvement with Farm Sanctuary (ex: organized a trip from State College to Farm Sanctuary), hosts vegan potlucks.

Charles
61, male, retired (non caretaking profession), actively involved for 40 years. Transitioning to vegetarianism, formerly involved with local Humane Societies, donates.

Hannah
26, female, student, actively involved for ~13 years. Vegetarian, former volunteer with SPCA (and other groups).

Pamela
31, female, non caretaking profession, actively involved for 6 years. Volunteer at PAWS, volunteers with Hundred Cat Foundation, adopted cats from PAWS.
Christina
46, female, non caretaking profession, actively involved for 8 years. Founded a local nonprofit pet pantry, former volunteer at several animal shelters and rescue groups, member of several animal advocacy organizations (does not state which ones), adopted dogs from shelters.

Shelley
56, female, caretaking profession, actively involved for 25+ years. Volunteer at PAWS.

Dawn
47, female, caretaking profession, actively involved for 2.5 years. Volunteer at PAWS.

Martha
64, female, caretaking profession, actively involved “since childhood.” Volunteer at PAWS, adopted dogs and cats from PAWS.

Ilana
49, female, non caretaking profession, actively involved for 1.5 years. Volunteer at PAWS, adopted dog from PAWS.

Discussion of themes

In this section, my goal is to discuss the themes that emerged from my analysis of the interview and focus group data. This portion of the chapter will be divided into three subsections: one for each research question. I will begin each of these sections by describing my high-level observations/themes, then sub-themes, and then providing several specific examples from the interviews and focus group to support and illustrate my points. I have chosen to report my findings in this manner because organizing this chapter by research question seems to be the most logical way to ensure that each research question is fully addressed, and the most straightforward means to arrange my themes. When composing my interview questions, I purposely wrote questions that specifically pertained to each research question, thereby facilitating this reporting phase.
Research question 1: What factors or communication have worked to motivate action for existing animal advocates?

The goal of this research question is to better understand the factors that triggered initial action for participants. All participants were once people who liked animals or cared about their welfare to some degree, but who did not outwardly act to improve animal conditions. However, at some point in each of their lives, each participant became active for this cause in one manner or another (e.g., becoming vegetarian, choosing to adopt a pet from a shelter, volunteering with an animal advocacy organization, etc.). I aim to identify and explain these initial triggers for participation in animal advocacy.

For RQ1, I found that many factors affected participants’ decisions to initiate activity in animal advocacy. Participants tend to be naturally sensitive, sympathetic, or empathic to the needs of other beings; participation serves to fill emotional voids; their interest in animals parallels other caretaking types of interests/activities with which they engage; and amount of free time may dictate initial involvement. Participants also learn about involvement from other animal lovers through exposure, guidance, and support. They model the advocacy of important others, and may even become models for prospective advocates themselves.

Initial action as a function of natural sensitivities

It seems logical that individuals who care about the welfare of non-human beings would be naturally empathic. After all, a human can only have a limited relationship with an animal; a human can never truly know what an animal thinks, how an animal feels, or what an animal understands. An animal cannot explain any of this in human verbal language. However, despite these communicative and experiential barriers, many people still feel emotionally connected to animals.
This can be a challenging affection to explain. Even I, after conducting extensive research on animal advocacy and critically analyzing my own passion, have trouble fully pinpointing why this cause affects me so deeply. As I learned from the interviews and focus group, this seemingly innate, deep-seated sensitivity to animals is a common feeling among my participants, as well. For many, it seems that the initial indication for potential participation in animal advocacy is an inherent personality type: a natural inclination of sensitivity. This includes sensitivity toward the feelings and natural rights of non-human beings; feelings of sympathy and empathy toward animal suffering; and/or a desire to help the helpless.

**Naturally drawn to animals: sympathy/empathy.** In each interview or focus group, I asked participants what it was about this cause that affects them. There are an infinite number of causes with which to become involved; what appealed to participants about this one in particular? Why are they drawn to helping animals? A common response was one that seems so simple: that they have just always loved animals. In fact, this exact phrase, or ones very similar to it (e.g., “I’ve always loved animals,” “I’ve just always liked animals,” I’ve always had “a soft spot for” animals, etc.) reoccurred in my data. This explanation may seem vague at first glance, but with deeper consideration, I think that its vagueness points perfectly to this naturally sensitive characteristic.

Participants could not pinpoint a single moment or experience when they began to like animals; that sensitivity was always a part of them. Michelle has childhood memories of being concerned for animals (for example, when she saw a hunted deer, or by simply being in tune to her dog’s needs) but did not have a singular defining moment of deciding to care. She explains, “I think I was always, from a really young age, sensitive to things like that. I never liked to see an animal suffer.”
Among my participants, this sensitive nature is predictably linked to a concern for the ill-treatment of animals. Many participants share this empathic discomfort when confronted with animal suffering or animal cruelty, and cite it as a main foundation of their attraction to this cause. Michelle explains,

I guess I can just easily put myself in their situation. I mean, to me, regardless of what your physical body actually looks like, I recognize that feelings are the same kinds of fear or distress, or whatever, that I would feel. And therefore, they deserve as much protection and consideration as any human would.

Similarly, Christina reports that it hurts her—to the point of crying—to hear about the suffering of dogs. Joanne also finds the thought of animal abuse to be “heart wrenching.”

Sympathy for the helplessness of animals also draws participants in. Amy reasons, “I feel like maybe part of it is their vulnerability—their inability to understand why they’re suffering.” Bill echoes this sensitivity to animal vulnerability when he notes the “please help me” look of dogs that affects him. Several participants explain that their goal is to alleviate animal suffering. Samantha, Peggy, Kathy, and all four focus group members (Shelley, Dawn, Martha, and Ilana) feel that it is their responsibility to stand up for animals because animals cannot speak or stand up for themselves. These sensitivities and feelings of wanting to defend the defenseless seem to underlie an inclination toward animal advocacy.

Receptiveness to outreach communication about animal treatment. Fittingly, people who are sensitive to animals may be emotionally affected, or influenced to act, by outreach communication materials about animal treatment. It makes sense that a person who has this predisposition toward caring about other beings may be particularly receptive to pleas to help animals. For several participants, exposure to disturbing truths about animal treatment resonated
with them and ultimately motivated them to action. For eight of the nine vegans/vegetarians, it was exposure to gruesome materials from animal advocacy organizations or from animal advocates (for example, informative videos, pamphlets, or stories) that triggered their initial motivation to participate in this cause. When asked if anything she encountered resonated with her and motivated her to become an animal advocate, Lily recalls how reading the detailed descriptions about factory farming in a pamphlet (from a group called Vegan Outreach) stuck with her. Hannah was also affected by learning about animal treatment on factory farms, which strengthened her views about animal advocacy and led her to pursue further research about animals.

The majority of vegan/vegetarian participants credit this disturbing information or these outreach materials for their initial adoption of a vegetarian or vegan lifestyle. For Jackie, a vegetarian college student, exposure to graphic educational content influenced her to give up meat for ethical reasons. Both Jackie and her roommate (who was not interviewed for this study) became vegetarians after exposure to what Jackie calls “scare tactics”: learning the harsh realities of food production. For Jackie, this exposure came from attending a speech by a well-known animal advocate, Peter Singer (in the tradition of two-step flow); from PETA displays and distribution materials on campus; and by watching a graphic film about food production called _Food, Inc._ Although she grew up surrounded by farming with less than ideal conditions, like small spaces for chickens, Jackie says that she had never thought twice about animal advocacy—until she learned from these outside sources about how animals can be treated on farms. Learning about the realities of animal treatment influenced her to think more about animal issues, and led her to question the ethical appropriateness of human dominance over animals.
Anna, Michelle, and Amy also cite specific sources that they encountered that directly led to their veganism/vegetarianism. For instance, Anna recalls watching an insider/undercover documentary about factory farming (from PETA) that convinced her to become vegan. Michelle, a vegetarian of approximately 15 years, felt compelled to adopt vegetarianism after attending a Paul McCartney concert in high school. In the tour program, she read an article by Linda McCartney explaining how and why Linda and Paul had become vegetarians (in a nod to celebrity two-step flow). PETA was also at the event, tabling with leaflets. Michelle remembers, “So, I got all this information and just read more about it, and it just suddenly clicked with me. I pretty much became vegetarian overnight—became more interested in doing things.” Amy, a highly sensitive and self-aware graduate student, also recalls how learning more about the graphic nature of factory farming led her to become a vegetarian:

A: I actually remember hearing this really horrible story about how they make fois gras. I don’t even wanna—thinking about it (laughs) brings back a lot of emotion for me—like I remember, I was with somebody I was working with, and they were telling me about how, what they do to ducks, or animals—but it was particular footage of something he saw. And I didn’t even see it, but I can imagine it, like I remember I just went in the bathroom and cried at work. And I think that occurred not too long before I officially decided to start doing it [vegetarianism]. I think that was one of the major things for me.

R: Like sort of a trigger to…

A: Yeah. And that image, it’s this self-created image, but it’s this image that comes back to me a lot of the time when I think about eating meat.

Two other participants, Samantha and Janet, state that there was not one singular exposure or experience that led to their veganism. Rather, their commitment to animals
developed over time, and veganism logically followed. Just as it can be challenging to pinpoint an exact reason why one cares for animals in the first place, it can be difficult to identify one reason, or one exposure, that led to a vegan lifestyle. While a single exposure can incite an individual enough to spring to action (as in the case of Michelle, described above), in other cases, it can be a combination of information and experiences that leads an already-sensitive person to act. As Samantha explains, “I mean, it didn’t take one video to make me vegetarian or vegan.” Janet, who would be considered a highly active advocate according to situational theory, echoes this sentiment:

Like you hear about it on the news, maybe a case of animal cruelty, or you read a little bit or see a book, something like that. Just hearing a friend talk about it, I think that really was powerful for me, little tid bits. Then all of a sudden, something clicks, like you said. I don’t know what that is, but…

For others, activation material did not need to be graphic in order to initiate participation. Four years ago, Laura felt that she was at a point in her life when she was seeking out change. She had her eyes open to new, worthwhile activities, when she saw an advertisement in the newspaper for an adoptable kitten. Laura applied, but was turned down—so she decided to foster cats, instead. Linda, a retiree and recent volunteer, was also triggered to action by a newspaper advertisement. When I asked her to tell the story of how she became a volunteer, she explained that she first became interested in PAWS from exposure to the group’s advertisement and story in the local newspaper: “Um, I think in the CDT [Centre Daily Times], they were advertising dogs… And there was some article about PAWS and I just read about the volunteers and I thought, you know, that could be kinda neat.” Once her interest in PAWS had been sparked, she attended an open house at PAWS and provided her contact information. One
Christmas Eve, a PAWS volunteer contacted Linda (and her husband, Bill) and asked if they
could come walk the dogs on the holiday. Linda and Bill enjoyed spending time with the dogs
that Christmas Eve, so they returned to PAWS to ask if the group needed more help. They have
now been volunteering at PAWS for 3.5 years.

**Exposure to animals leads to advocacy.** For these sensitive individuals, many of whom
are influenced by targeted communications about animal treatment and/or requests for help, the
foundation of their love for animals is often rooted in personal experience with animals. The
vast majority of participants (21 individuals) cite exposure to animals—often at a young age—as
a factor that shaped their love for animals today. Many participants told me that their families
had always had pets, so they were exposed to animals in their households while growing up.

Participants report that their connection to animals often developed from having pets.
Janet, who grew up in a pet-friendly household with a mother who rescued animals, explains that
“that compassion was established early on.” Shelley’s father was a veterinarian, so she was also
exposed to helping animals from a young age. It seems consistent that Shelley is now a
Registered Nurse (a helping profession, like the one modeled for her in childhood), that she now
volunteers with PAWS, and that she has been actively involved in animal advocacy for more
than 25 years. Joe was raised with cats, and, while it is not necessarily causal, it predictably
follows that he now likes cats. Conversely, while not a participant in this study, Pamela’s father
hated cats—but once he was exposed to the family’s pet cat at home, he grew to love cats. These
examples all demonstrate the power of exposure.

Exposure to particular animals can directly lead to feelings of connection and respect.
For instance, Samantha values animals because she has been around them: “I mean, I think
being around cats and dogs, I respect them, and I don’t think there’s really a difference between
cows, cats, dogs.” Paula, who was raised in a metropolitan area where she rarely saw wild animals, explains the importance of exposure in order for her to develop a connection with a species:

I’m more familiar with the domestic animals than I am with the wild animals—only because I’m—if I were raised on a farm, or had horses, or was more of an outdoors person, in a different environment, maybe I would be an advocate for the wildlife rather than the domestic. And I can see myself, if I were in a different environment, I probably would have a different group of animals that I would be an advocate for.

However, in her youth, Paula did have some exposure to farm animals that may have contributed to her love of this cause:

When we lived in Illinois, my parents went to a farm to get eggs, vegetables. And the farmer taught me how to call the pigs. And from then on, I always wanted a farm. That was a dream. A fantasy. And I’m sure that my love for animals was part of that. Maybe it helped develop my love of animals, being exposed to farm animals at that age, and it was about—it was where I had my first memory of caring for an animal.

For Bill and Christina, it is a bond with a specific animal that motivates their action. Bill bonded with a PAWS dog and adopted him, which has inspired him to help other dogs: “So once I had him, I was totally, I mean, totally hooked on helping other dogs, and that’s the main reason. Pepper [his adopted dog] is the guy who made me want to go in there and help other dogs.” Bill did, in fact, adopt another dog after that.

Unlike nearly all of the other participants, Christina states that she had not had an interest in animals for her whole life. Her interest and participation was sparked only eight years ago. At the time, Christina had no pets—but was about to meet an animal who changed her life. She
received a call from a local SPCA about a dog who was to be euthanized if it did not get adopted. Christina accepted the plea and adopted the dog, Angus. Her relationship with Angus, who has since passed away, touched her life and inspired her action: “He’s my inspiration. He’s why I do this… I wanted to do something that he would be proud of me, something in his honor, and that’s what motivates me, is Angus.” Because of this exposure and subsequent connection, Christina has become highly active with animal advocacy, even founding her own nonprofit ‘pet pantry’ that collects donations of dog and cat food to distribute to those in the community who cannot afford to purchase pet food.

Other participants, however, told stories of sadness and trauma concerning how exposure to upsetting animal-related situations has motivated them to participate. Peggy’s earliest memory of wanting to help animals is her grade-school trip to a local Humane Society. She specifically remembers that the animals looked sad. Peggy found out shortly after her visit that many of the animals that she saw would be euthanized, which upset her even more. This led her to adopt a cat from that shelter. While the image of cats and dogs being euthanized has stuck with her since her childhood trip, Peggy does note that it did not create a burning, lifelong desire to end animal suffering; she was simply satisfied to participate eventually, once her circumstances allowed: “It’s not like I spent years thinking about this, or it’s not like I had some kind of eureka moment when I got older and had the time to do it. It’s just something that I was aware of, and when I could do something tangible, I did.”

Whether participation in animal advocacy immediately followed these upsetting exposures or took several years to come to fruition, participants certainly recall the feelings associated with these experiences. Growing up, Michelle was exposed to hunting, but was always upset by it. She shares her childhood memories of being concerned for animals,
including when she saw a hunted deer and when a cat was euthanized. Today, Michelle is a vegetarian who is transitioning to veganism, and she is actively involved in animal advocacy. Samantha, who is currently a vegan, explains that it was a disturbing animal exposure that motivated her original vegetarianism. As a child, she and her mother felt sad when they saw the trucks that take chickens to slaughterhouses. Samantha decided that she did not want to contribute to that system, so she and her mother gave up meat together. Linda also had an upsetting experience with an animal that motivated her advocacy. She had no pets growing up, but lived in a farm-like country setting and was therefore “always exposed to animals.” When asked about her earliest memory of wanting to help animals, Linda recalls the time that a lost dog showed up at her home. Unfortunately, the dog was hit by a car just before its owners came to pick it up: a memory that served to motivate her eventual advocacy:

L: It was obviously something I never forgot, and it was like, here it was this stray dog and the owners were so upset—someday I’m gonna help dogs. It was silly, but…

R: So with that experience, you thought to yourself at the time, someday I want to help dogs?

L: Yeah, I sort of did. Someday I’ll have my own.

Charles became actively involved with animal advocacy following disturbing exposures to animals, as well. He recalls approximately 30 years ago, when his work as a soil scientist brought him to a veal farm. Charles was highly disturbed by the treatment of these animals, crediting this experience as “a big wakeup about our food supply.” Since then, he has been learning more about factory farming and its animal treatment. Another turning point for Charles was when he lived in Belize. His neighbor slaughtered pigs, and Charles was upset by the sound. Before going to Belize, Charles had learned that pigs are smarter than dogs—and this fact
resonated with him. He subsequently decided to stop eating pork because he did not want to contribute to such a practice.

Anna, a vegan college student, explains the importance of exposure in forming connections with animals. As a child, she felt sad when visiting her aunt’s dairy farm because she saw that animals were often separated from their parents, and generally not treated well. This empathy/sympathy for the distress of animals fits into the third path that can motivate one to engage in prosocial behavior (Batson, 1987; as described by Lee and Holden, 1999). Caring for pets helped develop her connection to animals and her interest in animal advocacy, especially tending to her pet rat: “Actually just interacting with something that would be seen as a pest and loving him made me really, really care about animal testing.” Anna states that she felt more of a connection with the species to which she had been exposed, and a disconnection from the species with which she was less familiar:

I think that the animals I was more disconnected with was more comfortable eating—like I was fine eating chickens and I was fine eating fish but then whenever it came to eating pigs and cows, like the ones that I saw—maybe I saw them on my aunt’s farm more—it was harder for me, and it felt more wrong, kind of.

For Anna, and for many of the other participants, it can be easier to justify eating species that one has not been exposed to frequently in person, and, therefore, species with which one feels less of a connection.

Two other participants broached the topic of which species we eat and which we keep as pets. For Janet and Hannah, this philosophical question led directly to veganism and vegetarianism, respectively. Janet, a current vegan and former vegetarian who would classify as a highly active participant in situational theory of publics, illustrates this thought process well:
It was in college that I became vegetarian, and that was a result of, my father was a hunter—and I would never, even growing up, eat deer meat. But I would eat steak or hamburger or chicken or shrimp. And, this was in college, home with my parents, and my mom was like, ‘Why won’t you eat the deer meat? It’s the same as eating the cow.’ And they kind of clicked in my head—like, I never made the connection between most animals and my food. So, whereas she was trying to get me to eat the deer meat, it kind of reversed it, and was like, ‘Well, I don’t want to eat the cow, either!’

Janet cannot pinpoint why that one comment motivated her to action, but thinks that it involves “pointing out the…inconsistency between being an animal lover and then eating animals.”

**Filling emotional voids.** Among these naturally sensitive people, another drive to participate became clear during our conversations. It seems that several individuals volunteer with animal advocacy to fill various types of emotional voids. For instance, I learned from these conversations that a connection with animals can act as a substitute for having children. Paula and Joe are married, but do not have children together. Separately, in each of their interviews, both Paula and Joe make the connection between caring for children and caring for animals. Paula explains, “I’m very happy with having my pets. They’re good for my psyche and keeps [sic] me grounded, keeps me focused, because my husband and I don’t have children together.” Joe echoes this sentiment: “I think in our case, since we’re both retired and none of the kids live anywhere near, including the grandchildren, and Paula never had any children, I think that they’re her kids. She mothers them, which is more than I do.” Especially for Paula, but maybe for Joe, too, having pets (and perhaps volunteering with animals) may fill a void left by not sharing children. Ilana, a PAWS volunteer, reiterates this idea of substitution: “I don’t have children, so to me, my little dogs are my kids.”
Dawn shared a particularly heartbreaking story about how animal advocacy helps to fill an emotional void. She had been in the process of adopting a child she had been fostering, but the adoption fell through—and she was not able to adopt him. This left her with extra time, which she chose to fill with advocacy work. As Dawn tells this story, her voice shakes and her eyes well up. It is clearly a poignant topic for her. She explains that she now fosters cats and “send[s] them off to their forever homes” (a fairly clear link to the foster child that she had hoped to adopt). Dawn also notes that she spends an abundance of time alone because her husband works out of town and her children are grown. This allows a lot of free time for her to work at PAWS. I wonder if her animal advocacy work could also fulfill a need to keep busy so that she does not feel lonely.

Similarly, Pamela began fostering PAWS cats when one of her pet cats died and the remaining cat was lonely. She continued to volunteer from then on. However, while the foster cat was meant to be a companion for her pet, it fulfilled the same role for Pamela. Because Pamela lives alone, her cats fill a companion role. She appreciates the non-judgmental nature of animals and their unconditional support. I can certainly understand this and vouch for its verity. During my four years in State College, I lived alone: just myself and a cat that I adopted from a shelter. Sometimes, for days on end, the cat would be the only living contact that I would have. This notion of craving interaction with animals for companionship purposes absolutely rings true for me.

Volunteering can be a productive way to cope when feeling emotionally unfulfilled for other reasons, as well. Seven years ago, Paula and Joe moved from Hawaii to State College. Paula describes how volunteering became a way to integrate herself into a new town:
I was—I think overwhelmed with the move. We moved from Hawaii, which was my home, here to where my husband grew up… So when I moved here I was adjusting, didn’t know anybody, didn’t have any friends, didn’t know the neighbors, and then as that became more familiar, State College became more familiar with me, I ventured out to different kinds of things. I worked part time as a home health nurse, I started gardening, and just gradually fell into volunteering at PAWS.

Linda tells me about another type of emotional void that she has noticed while volunteering at PAWS: those who have lost a spouse. It follows logically that a widow or widower would be attracted to the time-filling and to the companionship that animal advocacy work provides.

**Parallel interests and caretaking careers.** Not surprisingly, several participants have careers or other interests that parallel the tenets of animal advocacy. The aspects of animal advocacy that appeal to these advocates—the nurturing, the protection, the philosophical connection to the world and its creatures—emerge in other areas of their lives. There is a clear connection between the caretaking nature of animal advocacy and the interests and professions to which participants are attracted. For some, this parallel tended to occur in their choice of caretaking careers: helping professions (e.g., nursing) that are founded in the same vein of nurturing as animal advocacy. For others, this parallel tended to signal a related interest in environmentalism.

Considering their sensitive characteristic and sympathetic/empathic nature, it is not surprising that animal advocates may gravitate toward ‘caretaking’ types of professions. Both Shelley and Paula have worked in the nursing field: a career that clearly ties to animal advocacy in the sense that it is centered on helping others in need. It makes sense that Paula’s gentle personality translates to animal advocacy, nursing, and a predilection for individual care: “I
could see that there was a particular role a nurse has, and it’s probably being at the bedside and
doing the one-on-one care, the comforting… And I think that kind of translates into the animals.’”

Her nursing background also relates to her interest in potentially becoming involved with
surgical spay/neuter clinics in the future. Linda has also thought about the link between her
professional health care background, where she interacted with patients in a caretaking role, to
now interacting with animals in the same way. In fact, Linda notes that the head of the dog wing
of PAWS is a Registered Nurse, and that many other PAWS volunteers participate in what she
calls “caring field[s].” Similarly, Martha works as a mobile therapist to help special needs
children.

Joanne, who is now retired from a caretaking job, illustrates this connection between
caretaking professions and animal advocacy well. In her career, she had helped women who had
been victims of violence. This translates logically into her involvement with animals today:

It’s heart wrenching for me to realize the extent of abuse of animals, the homelessness,
the neglect, and that it was perfectly consistent with the professional work I had done in
the sense of violence being perpetrated against people, women certainly, in our society,
the amount, assault, violence and so forth. So, I’ve always had a commitment to trying to
help primarily people, and as I retired, it’s an easy step from that focus to shift to
animals. I love animals so much.

It seems innate to Joanne to want to protect the powerless. Once again, it speaks to a personality
that seeks to help others in need, whether those in need are humans or other animals:

J: I feel coming from a background of women’s advocacy and working in issues of
violence against women, that a safe place is so important for women who’ve been
disempowered and abused and made to feel worthless. I mean, to have a place which

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they can be and then begin their own healing. So, it’s much like what I’m saying about what I see with the animals; they’re safe now [in a shelter; referring to the Sarah McLachlan commercial]. Their life is really starting.

R: That connection’s very interesting: that thread of activism you’ve had, speaking out about women’s issues and the safe place you talk about, the protection after being through something that’s horrible. It’s interesting how it links almost directly to your views about animals. They might’ve been through something bad, but there’s some comfort knowing that they can be taken care of now.

S: You have to be a person who believes in a resilience in a sense of both the human spirit and the spirit that lives in the animal can be restored. And that they can, in fact, find sweetness and beauty. And you know, for people, certainly. Safety, and all the things that make it so wonderful to be alive.

Connections to animal advocacy also emerged in several participants’ parallel concern for environmentalism, whether this environmentalism has surfaced in their career choices, volunteerism, or simply in their interests. For Amy, the connection between environmentalism and animal advocacy is clear. She studies human injustices as they relate to environmental and climate change issues, but notes that she also cares about animal-related injustices that are related to environmental issues. This is because she views environmentalism as necessarily involving humans and animals. Given this logic, it makes sense that a person who is interested in one area could be attracted to the other. Charles, a retired soil scientist, suggests that his burgeoning vegetarianism and compassion for animals is not only about the animals, but is also about having a healthy world in general, for all of its parts. (In fact, Charles utilized his soil science knowledge to help a Belize Humane Society dispose of its waste: a direct connection
between environmentalism and animal advocacy.) Jackie echoes this overlap, explaining that her interest in environmentalism and sustainability has led her to consider a future career in lobbying for the environment or for animal rights.

The notion that a concern for animal advocacy is connected to similar interests can even be taken a step further. Joe, who is involved with environmentalism, fish and streams, and conservation, has been highly active in volunteerism in general—even with non-animal causes. He is on the board of numerous volunteer organizations and has been involved for years. (In fact, he is more involved with conservation than with animal advocacy; he states that a major reason for his involvement with animals is that his wife, Paula, had wanted to participate.) Whether for environmental or animal causes, Joe believes that an important life goal is to participate in activities that help beings other than oneself or one’s family. Thus, an inclination toward volunteerism can be linked to a type of person who may consider participation in animal advocacy.

**The reality of timing: how amount of free time affects participation.** All of these factors and characteristics can be true—a sensitive personality, a love for animals, receptiveness to advocacy information and outreach communication, perceiving emotional voids, and parallel interests—but may only realistically lead to participation in animal advocacy once it is convenient in a person’s life. In fact, 15 of the 24 participants specifically mention timing as a direct reason for initiating involvement or for being less involved now than they would like to be.

Several participants cite their busy school and/or work schedules as a main reason for being less involved with animal advocacy than they wish to be. Michelle, Hannah, and Samantha are all too busy with graduate school to increase their involvement. Samantha
illustrates this notion of school as an obstacle to participation: “I would like to do a little bit more. But right now, I have to focus on law school a little bit (laughs).”

Laura and Christina lament that their full-time jobs restrict the time they have for animal advocacy. Christina would like to increase her involvement with animals, but has little free time: “I would love to be more involved in anything, but my time’s limited. It’s just a shame I have to work for a living, ‘cause I could keep busy doing this [animal advocacy] full time.” Similarly, Laura likes her job, but finds her animal advocacy volunteering to be more satisfying.

Though Laura, Christina, and Pamela would ideally increase their participation in animal advocacy, they each cite a realistic barrier: money. Each woman explains that, despite her interest in animal work, the salary for animal advocacy jobs would be too low for her to support herself. Pamela explains that she would only become more involved with animals if she could earn a reasonable salary from animal advocacy. She frames this as an issue of time, money, and motivation: “Unless I was getting paid for it, I couldn’t imagine being more involved, just because of time and also because you just burn out if you try and do too much.”

This becomes a quickly spiraling problem for participation. An animal lover wants to spend his/her time working for animal advocacy; full-time animal work tends to be low-paying (or is at least stereotypically so); consequently, the animal lover chooses to pursue a full-time job in a non-animal related field; and has little time left to participate in animal advocacy. Laura, Christina, and Pamela relegate animal advocacy to the side because of the reality of needing to earn a living. Unfortunately, the low pay of a career in animal advocacy and/or the non-pay of volunteers may deter animal lovers from their ideal levels of involvement.

Other participants felt these constraints in the past, but finally found the time to participate. When I asked what triggered participants’ involvement in animal advocacy, a
common response (for nine participants) was that they began or greatly increased involvement upon retirement or after leaving a job. Though they were too busy while working to participate to their current degree, once they had free time, involvement increased. In 1993, Peggy stopped working and found herself with free time. A few years later, she heard about PAWS:

And I guess what appealed to me is the fact that they were actually, how should I put it—walking the walk. I was talking the talk: ‘Yes, I love animals, I have pets, I have a National Wildlife sticker on my car.’ I have time, I have free time—maybe it’s about time I actually do something.

The same reasoning was true for Ilana. When she lost her job 1.5 years ago, she was left with an abundance of free time. She had been aware of PAWS for years, and she found the opportunity appealing. Charles laments the years spent without the time to contribute to animal advocacy:

“I’m just sad that I didn’t do it a long time ago. I had a lot of things—working and children, and I had a lot of other things worrying me… but now I’m retired, it’s just myself to worry about… I have the time now to really be serious about redesigning my lifestyle—starting with food…”

Now that he has the time, Charles is moving forward by beginning a vegetarian diet.

**Animal advocacy on the radar.** Looking at timing from another angle, a person has to be at a point at which information about and opportunities for animal advocacy begin to stick. Most participants report liking animals for their whole lives, but many began involvement only in recent years. I found that people may start to notice more about animal advocacy, and to think about it more, once the cause is ‘on their radar.’ For example, when discussing animal advocacy outreach communication, Janet says, “I feel like I’ve become more aware of all that stuff, kind of after I was vegan.”
Jackie was initially exposed to vegetarianism while living with her sister and her sister’s vegetarian boyfriend. After she moved out, she found herself noticing more information about factory farming. Once the cause was on her radar, the same type of content that she may have encountered before this time finally resonated. Jackie explains that she had never even considered the issue of animals living in shelters until she became a vegetarian. Then, she started to pay attention when others spoke about the topic. Though she may have heard this information before in passing, it only stuck once she was ready.

This was also the experience for Janet, as discussed earlier. At the time when Janet’s mother commented on Janet’s supposed hypocrisy for eating some types of animals but not others, animal advocacy was not a cause that was particularly “on [Janet’s] radar.” While no single comment or experience alone would have pushed Janet to her highly active level of participation, something about this experience got through to her. After her mother’s comment, Janet’s awareness was heightened, and she was receptive to learning information from various sources.

This path is echoed in Joe’s experience. Joe was unaware of PAWS until his wife, Paula, began to volunteer there. Now, Joe is more aware of animal issues because of this exposure. He explains that his wife’s participation is what put PAWS on his radar: “I didn’t know anything about PAWS until Paula was volunteering. Now I know a lot. You’re just around it, so you notice more.” He continues, “I notice when Joel Confer [a local car dealership] does an ad for PAWS, but if Paula weren’t active in PAWS, I wouldn’t notice. You tend to notice things that you are active with.”
Learning involvement from other animal lovers: exposure, guidance, and support

Based on my interview and focus group data, an extremely important factor in initiating involvement in animal advocacy is having people who are close to a participant care about animals, as well. When telling their stories of what triggered their initial involvement, the majority of participants (16 of 24) mentioned that they had either been exposed to existing animal advocates, which got them interested in the cause, or that they began participating with another person. These findings demonstrate that 1) the activity of an existing animal advocate can trickle down to influence an inactive animal lover (like the theory of two-step flow), and that 2) support or affirmation from important others can positively affect the likelihood of an animal lover to initiate participation.

Influence of existing animal advocates and animal lovers. When discussing the impact of active others on their own advocacy, participants’ stories fell into three main areas. First, four participants explain how seeing animal advocacy and compassion modeled for them by other animal lovers or advocates worked to trigger their own participation. For vegan/vegetarian participants, this modeling demonstrated that veganism/vegetarianism was feasible to do. Second, participants spoke of the importance of social support in beginning their advocacy. Having an accepting cultural climate is a factor in considering initial participation. Additionally, many participants have friends, family, or significant others who are also animal advocates—and many participants began their advocacy partly because of another person (for example, trying out veganism with a family member, or beginning to volunteer because of a request for help by an existing advocate). Third, a few participants took this full-circle and have become animal advocacy models for influencing others. I will explore each of these areas in turn.
Learning from models of animal advocacy. Exposure to other animal lovers or to existing animal advocates can help to influence an inactive animal lover to become active. Sometimes this merely involves exposure to others treating animals in a gentle manner. For instance, Charles fondly remembers that his aunts cared for their dogs well, and that his mother was kind to animals. He was impressed by the compassion modeled by his family. In other cases, the effects are more direct. Several years ago, Amy had a vegan lab-mate in school who spoke with her about animal issues. The lab-mate instructed Amy to avoid using products with lanolin because it is made from animals. Now, Amy mostly purchases products that are ‘cruelty-free.’ Amy’s initial vegetarianism was also influenced by an existing animal advocate. When I asked Amy to tell the story of how she became a vegetarian, she explains that the process was gradual, but that it was facilitated by the exposure and example of her vegetarian brother: “I think it’s been helpful to have been around people who support that mentality. So, in some ways, it kind of started with my brother doing that, and me seeing that example.”

The same was true for Jackie; exposure to an existing vegetarian helped to initiate her own advocacy. A few years ago, she had lived with her sister and her sister’s vegetarian boyfriend (as mentioned above). Because the boyfriend was vegetarian, there was very little meat available in their home. Jackie had never considered vegetarianism before living with this roommate—and had, in fact, assumed that following a vegetarian diet would be difficult—until she saw, from daily exposure, that it was possible to maintain. Once this cause was on Jackie’s radar, even after she no longer lived with the vegetarian roommate, she began to pay attention to the inhumane treatment of animals and the environmental impact of factory farms. Due in part to this initial exposure to the roommate’s vegetarianism, Jackie increased her knowledge of animal-related issues and is now a vegetarian.
It seems that modeling is especially important for vegetarianism and veganism. Laura, the only participant who reported being a former vegetarian (and who now eats meat), says that she tried vegetarianism because she had a friend who was vegetarian. Jackie, Amy, and Samantha each note that they had originally assumed that veganism/vegetarianism would be a difficult undertaking, but that, through exposure to actual vegans/vegetarians, they learned that it was achievable. As discussed above, this was certainly true for Jackie. This modeling was also critical for Amy: “My brother actually had become a vegetarian about two years or so before me, and so I think that helped for me to see, you know, it’s not as hard as I might’ve thought it would be.”

Samantha echoes this sentiment. At one time, she had the impression that vegetarianism was something outside of her realm: “I guess I always liked animals since I was a kid. And I wanted to be vegetarian but I thought it was something people did who are in, like, California or something, someone that was really rich.” However, exposure to vegetarians in college taught her that vegetarianism is not as grueling as she had assumed, and that it was a concept that could work for her lifestyle:

I thought that it [vegetarianism] was something really hard. And then when I got to college, you meet, like, new people and you see that it’s not that hard. And when you have your own choices to make in terms of food, then you can—like in high school, you couldn’t choose what you’re gonna eat for lunch, but in college, you could.

**Social support: a compassionate climate.** Social support can be instrumental to animal lovers in their early stages of veganism/vegetarianism. A few of the participants discuss the importance of surrounding themselves with people who share their mentality, or with people who are supportive of animal advocacy. When telling me the story of how she transformed from an
animal lover to a vegetarian animal advocate, Amy contrasts two cultural climates that she has experienced. Living in Kansas, Amy did not have a sense of advocacy support; she felt that vegetarianism was abnormal in that atmosphere. Now, in a very different cultural climate of graduate school in the Northeast, Amy has a sense of advocacy support, and feels that vegetarianism is considered normal here. Although most students in her academic program are not vegetarian, they discuss social issues and injustices (even if not about animals) and are supportive of her vegetarianism.

Jackie also notices that geographical location and cultural climate affect her experience with animal advocacy. She grew up in a small town, and describes the environment as one that was not supportive of vegetarianism. Jackie was not exposed to animal advocacy perspectives in her town or in her home, and is now grateful to be in a university atmosphere with others who share progressive ideas about animals:

J: It’s cool to live in State College because it’s definitely different than a lot of other small towns. It has, like, this city feel, I guess. So you have these—I don’t want to say urban ideas, but this like yippee [sic] culture idea about sustainability and animal rights. But you usually don’t find that in a small town.

R: Are you from a small town originally?

J: Yeah.

R: So you didn’t have that experience of this animal rights perspective there?

J: No. People are—like, my entire family is really turned off at being a vegetarian.

Fortunately, for Amy and Jackie, they now reside in an environment where their advocacy is supported. For Jackie specifically, as discussed earlier, this new cultural exposure directly led to her vegetarianism and animal advocacy.
Social support: initiating action together. Knowing others who are existing animal advocates can push an animal lover to participate. For a new or potential advocate, it can be helpful to know someone who is already involved and is therefore already familiar with a cause or with an organization. When I asked Christina for the story of how she began her nonprofit pet pantry, she explained that she had a friend who volunteered at a local pet pantry who provided her with helpful tips about how to start her own—and that this friend was quite instrumental in triggering her own involvement:

R: You said you had a friend already who you knew who did this in State College?
C: Right.
R: Is that how you got the idea?
C: Yes. Yes.

Sometimes, a friend, family member, or significant other who is already an animal advocate may suggest that one become involved. Laura had a friend who was already involved with fostering animals, and this ended up facilitating Laura’s involvement:

Like, a lot of times, I have thoughts of maybe doing something [with advocacy], but because I had a friend, or sort of a friend, who was already involved, she just kinda dragged me along, and then I was doing it, and I liked it (laughs).

Paula had a similar experience. Paula met her husband, Joe’s, friend who was a PAWS volunteer. This friend told Paula about the opportunities at PAWS, which led to her involvement:

I was involved with my husband’s 50th high school reunion, and one of his classmates was a volunteer at PAWS—and she told me about the types of work I could do, and fostering, and I’m always interested in adding more cats to my family. At that time we
had four. And I thought well, now that I’ve retired, I have lots more time to spend with
the animals and maybe I can add to the family. So then one day, my husband and I were
just driving around and we happened to be by the shelter location and we went in and I
filled out an application and started training and working not too long afterwards.

In other circumstances, it is a direct request for assistance from an existing animal
advocate that initiates interest or participation. Husband and wife, Linda and Bill, also became
involved due to a request from an existing advocate. Linda’s and Bill’s names were on a contact
list for PAWS, and a PAWS member called and asked for their help. They have now been
involved with PAWS for 3.5 years. Joe, who has volunteered with multiple organizations
throughout his life, reaffirms this. He states that he is most likely to become involved in a cause
if someone whom he knows or cares about asks him to participate: “So, why do people
volunteer? I know people that volunteer all the time. One if it’s that people ask. I know that’s a
factor.”

It can also be helpful to begin participation with a family member or significant other.
Whether for veganism/vegetarianism or for volunteering, it seems to facilitate involvement when
someone close to a participant is active right alongside him/her. In fact, three couples in this
study volunteer together: Paula and Joe, Linda and Bill, and Kathy and Joanne. Joe explains
that he became active with PAWS completely because his wife, Paula, wanted to be involved:
“She [Paula] became a real advocate for cats, and I support her with PAWS, financially and with
her time. And then I help out with things, but I’m not a formal volunteer.” Joe states that he was
unaware of PAWS until Paula began volunteering there; that he is unsure if he would be active in
PAWS if Paula was not already active; and that he is unsure if he would have as many cats if
Paula did not want them. By supporting Paula, Joe has increased his own knowledge of and
participation in animal advocacy. Similarly, Bill became a PAWS volunteer because his wife, Linda, was involved, so he agreed to go along: “She was very instrumental in the beginning. Because she was going in, and because I didn’t want to see her have to do it alone, I’d go in there with her.” Shannon had a comparable experience, in that she began volunteering because her daughter expressed interested in volunteering at PAWS: “So, it was really her that wanted to do it, and I was like, ‘Okay, I mean, I like cats.’”

For vegans Samantha and Janet, having someone to ‘go vegan’ with facilitated their transitions. Samantha struggled to maintain her initial vegetarianism, but ‘went vegan’ with her mother and has now managed to maintain veganism for more than a year:

When I got to college I decided to try it [vegetarianism], and I lasted for less than a year, and I kept going on and off again. And then me and my mom decided to go vegan together. It was for Lent last year, and we just stuck with it.

Along the same lines, Janet and her husband (whom I did not interview) changed their eating habits at the same time: “We definitely weren’t vegan when we met each other. I think we were both kind of looking into vegetarianism and kind of made that transition together.” Now, Janet, her husband, and her five-year-old son are vegan. She is grateful to share this experience with her husband:

R: How do you think that affected your transition, going through it with him?

J: Having someone to go through it with definitely is helpful. Just the support, like you said, my family—my parents and everything—are not vegetarian, and most people that I knew or know were not, so, that was nice. Especially now, just practicality of it: both of us eating the same meal. I know a lot of people whose husbands might not be vegetarian, or vice versa, and I definitely appreciate that that we’re all on the same page.
**Becoming a model for others.** I have discussed how the involvement of existing advocates has worked to spark participants’ action. However, now that participants are all active, they can become models to influence a new group of potential advocates. Samantha explains her impact on her father:

S: When I first became a vegetarian in college, my dad didn’t really like it that much, ‘cause when we would go out to eat, it was difficult. Now, he actually doesn’t eat meat that much, either; he doesn’t ever eat dairy products.

R: Do you think that’s your influence?

S: I think—yeah, I think me and my mom probably had a big influence on that.

Samantha also convinced her meat-loving brother to try vegetarianism, and her boyfriend to become vegan (neither of whom I interviewed):

S: I try to convince people to go vegetarian. My boyfriend’s now vegan. He was a big meat eater.

R: Did that come from you?

S: Yeah (laughs). I used to cook for him all the time, vegan stuff, and then he stopped buying meat, and he went vegan for Lent, and he’s still trying to be strong, so (laughs). I try to—like, if I’m out with friends that aren’t vegetarian, one thing you try not to do is try to make a big deal out if it, like, don’t make it seem like it’s a hard thing to do. And I try to convince people to go the way of the vegan (laughs). And my brother, who, he loves bacon and hamburgers, he went vegetarian for a little bit, but he stopped cause he’s so picky, he wouldn’t eat anything (laughs).

Anna believes that she influenced her boyfriend (whom I did not interview) to become vegetarian, as well: “I think that I try to tell as many people as I can about it, so I think that by
exposing people, I was at least instrumental in my boyfriend changing his point of views [sic]—not really even by my own point of view, but by exposing him to the books and everything.”

Christina also feels that participating with her husband (whom I did not interview) has a positive influence on both her and her husband’s involvement:

R: It sounds like he’s [her husband’s] involved, too. Do you think you’d be as involved as you are if he wasn’t? Or how do you think—

C: No, definitely not. I mean, he loves dogs as much as I do, but I got him a lot more involved, I think, over the years than he ever would be without this.

Janet is especially active in exposing non-advocates to information and experiences that initiate their advocacy. She has made it her role to teach non-advocates about animal issues:

“People ask questions, and that’s kind of a role that I feel like I could fill, like providing information, or, ‘Here, read this book about veganism or about how animals are treated,’ or something like that.” With this role in mind, Janet has worked to influence the staff at her son’s preschool, with positive results. Janet invited Gene Bauer, co-founder of the animal advocacy organization Farm Sanctuary, to read a book at her son’s school: a true story about a pig that Farm Sanctuary rescued from a dangerous situation. Janet recalls, “So, as soon as he finished the book, one of the teachers said, ‘I’m not going to eat pork anymore.’” One teacher has become vegan in the past year, and another teacher is considering veganism. When I ask Janet if she thinks this was due to her influence, she answers, “It was, partially.” Janet is also taking two teachers from her son’s school, as well as another couple that is just beginning in animal advocacy, to Farm Sanctuary for the first time. This experience will expose budding advocates to more information about the cause.
Additionally, Janet exposes non-vegetarians and non-vegans to vegan food. Each year, she hosts a vegan potluck for Thanksgiving, with approximately 50 people in attendance. Less than half of attendees are vegetarian or vegan. These people are exposed to vegan food items, which they might end up enjoying—which could potentially lead them to choose vegan options on their own in the future.

Conclusion

An animal lover can begin participating in animal advocacy for a variety of reasons. Based on the data from my interviews and focus group, there are several recurring characteristics and factors in participants’ activation stories. For the most part, participants are people who are naturally drawn to animals with feelings of sympathy and empathy. This makes them especially receptive to outreach communication materials about animal treatment (which can also work to influence their advocacy) and to philosophical questions about differences in animals that we eat and animals that we keep as pets (which can work to trigger vegetarianism or veganism). Many participants cite exposure to animals (both positive and negative experiences) as influential for their connection to and concern for animals. It is also common for a participant to initiate involvement in animal advocacy to fill an emotional void (for example, feeling lonely in a new town). I also found that several participants have other interests or careers that parallel the compassionate nature of animal advocacy (like an interest in environmentalism, or a job in nursing). However, an individual may only begin participating if the timing is convenient to his/her life. Once the seed of animal advocacy has been planted in his/her consciousness, though, an individual is more likely to notice animal-related issues; to ponder these issues; and to subsequently consider participation.
Participants are also influenced to participate through exposure to, guidance from, and support from animal lovers and existing animal advocates. Some people learn about animal advocacy through exposure to these animal advocates, which triggers their own involvement. It is important that advocates feel that they are in a supportive atmosphere when beginning participation. Sometimes, this exists in the form of social support, when a friend, family member, or significant other becomes involved alongside a participant. Then, once a participant becomes more established in animal advocacy, he/she can become a resource for non-advocates by modeling animal advocacy behaviors.

Each participant’s experience is different, and no two participants began their advocacy in exactly the same way. Some of these themes and sub-themes are relevant for some participants, and some are relevant for others. I found that it is not one particular factor, characteristic, or experience that pushes one from being an animal lover to being an animal advocate; rather, it is a realistic combination of these that converge to motivate an animal lover to action.

Research question 2: What factors or communication have worked to maintain motivation of existing animal advocates?

The goal of this research question is to explore how participants sustain their motivation to contribute to animal advocacy. I begin by examining conflicts that they encounter in this field, including feelings of hopelessness; diminishing their own participation in comparison to that of others; and how others can serve as sources of tension. Next, I investigate how participants overcome these challenges to maintain their activity.

For RQ2, I found that participants often feel discouraged, helpless, or non-efficacious when participating in animal advocacy. They typically attribute others as the cause of this
friction, citing interpersonal conflict in volunteer settings, or non-advocates who challenge their veganism/vegetarianism. To surmount these obstacles in order to sustain their involvement, participants focus on internal drive, a positive outlook, self-efficacy, the rewarding nature of participation, and social support.

**Feelings of frustration: conflicts, outsiders, and struggle for self-efficacy**

Underneath the surface, the experience of an animal advocate is often more complex than simply being an animal lover, then beginning involvement, then continuing involvement. When exploring how existing animal advocates maintain their motivation to participate, most participants noted that challenges and frustrations are part of the animal advocacy experience. These obstacles can include questioning one’s own power to improve animal conditions, dealing with interpersonal conflicts (both with other animal advocates and with non-advocates), and handling everyday challenges with volunteerism and veganism/vegetarianism. In this section, I aim to better understand the feelings of frustration and the struggles that participants feel when navigating their activity.

For vegan/vegetarian participants, challenges seem to hinge upon negotiating their advocacy with non-advocates. For instance, an animal advocate can feel isolated without others with whom to discuss their views. Lily does not have many vegetarian or vegan friends, and she feels a lack of support (and even conflict) from her family. She laments the difficulty in finding other like-minded people with whom to talk about animal issues.

Hannah feels similar frustrations concerning interactions with non-advocates. When I ask vegetarian Hannah how her experience has been as an animal advocate, she responds: “I mean, it can be hard. It can be hard trying to…relate to people that have no interest in it.” Hannah has heard non-animal advocates declare that taking care of themselves and their families
are their top priorities, and that they do not prioritize helping animals in their daily lives. She feels that non-advocates may ignore her reasoning and discount her views:

R: Are there any other challenges or frustrations that you’ve encountered with this cause or your experience with it, or is it mainly just the people who are questioning it and—

H: I think it mostly would be people that just come at it with such a closed-minded view and won’t even listen to my reasons for believing what I believe. Like I said, just having that, ‘Oh, you must be some crazy (laughs)’—

Laura, a former vegetarian, found that vegetarianism is not necessarily respected by non-advocates. As a result, she is not very vocal about how she feels about animal issues:

R: With the vegetarianism or anything you’ve done to be involved with animal advocacy, have you faced challenges? I know you said people would question you. What are some challenges that you’ve faced in caring about this cause?

L: Well, it’s just laughable to care about animals in some places. I mean like, you know, a lot of people just don’t understand vegetarianism. But then once they do sort of understand it they sometimes actually get angry that you would think it’s worth not—I don’t know. They just get mad and it’s very strange. I mean, you just get that a lot where people think you’re soft if you care about any sort of animal-related issues. They don’t necessarily take you seriously. So I’ve always been kind of quiet about—I mean people know I’m involved, but I don’t, like, constantly preach about things.

Likewise, Michelle (vegetarian transitioning to vegan) and Amy (vegetarian) tell me that a challenge they face is how to discuss animal issues without pushing non-animal advocates away. Amy would like to influence non-advocates, but is afraid that she will alienate them if she talks about advocacy too much, or pushes too hard. Typically, she will mention that she is a
vegetarian, but will keep her explanation brief. Though Amy cares a great deal about this cause, she is afraid of distancing herself from non-advocates with her views. This sense of tension between non-advocates and advocates is also echoed by Janet (vegan), who feels hesitant about increasing her involvement due to fears about social perception and physical confrontation with non-advocates:

A hindrance for me, as for becoming more involved, may be fear: fear of seeming on the fringe, fear of "big ag"… Like if we ever started a sanctuary here on our own, I would feel scared that someone would cause actual physical harm to the place or the animals, if they did not agree.

However, other participants (all volunteers) perceive their challenges to be on smaller-scale, individual or issues-based level. Peggy cites a PAWS-related challenge of dealing with people’s problems when they call or come to PAWS, like if a family is moving and cannot bring their dog with them; Dawn recalls a specific case of a woman surrendering kittens to PAWS; Bill feels challenged by PAWS dog adoption issues (for example, encountering sad stories, owners giving up dogs, and owners lying about the nature of the dog they are surrendering); Christina remembers that a few people have taken advantage of her free pet food service, and that she had a mean-spirited letter sent to her; and Joanne and Laura assert that PAWS is short-staffed. Both Joanne and Shannon are affected emotionally by their challenges at PAWS. Joanne finds it “heartbreaking” and “frustrating” to see an owner have to surrender a pet, or to see PAWS refuse to take an animal. Shannon also finds it “heartbreaking” to see people have to surrender their cats, and feels that it is “depressing” that the PAWS work never ends: “Once in a while, it’s like (sighs) there’s never an end to the number of cats that are waiting to come in.”
Linda and Laura touch on this stress, as well. Linda sometimes feels overloaded with the amount of volunteer work to do, and finds herself wanting to take time off—but feels guilty because the PAWS dogs need her 24 hours per day. She feels particular pressure to place individual dogs in appropriate homes:

L: There’s a lot of stress when you’re working with animals that you realize this might be their life—and then the stress is on you as a volunteer to help find the family that might be able to handle that dog.

R: It’s a lot of responsibility.

L: Yeah. And there’s stress when you’re trying to put a dog in a home and they return it because you didn’t quite do your interview or make the right match. You missed something in questioning these people, perhaps, or you missed something in the personality in the dog that came out when they got it home. Kind of feel like you failed.

Linda reiterates this at another point, stating, “I think the hardest thing with working with the animals is keeping your stress level down and not feeling responsible for everything that might have gone wrong.” She finds it more challenging to keep her volunteering running smoothly than she has experienced in any job that she has had, explaining that the incentive with jobs is that workers receive a paycheck, and that they have supervision and deadlines that must be met—whereas, with volunteering, she feels that volunteers may reason that they will ‘try’ to accomplish tasks, but that if something does not get finished, they know that there is no recourse.

Linda says that she did not realize the extent of stress involved when she began volunteering, and that it can be tempting to think about quitting. Still, she is glad that she became involved.

Laura also notes the stressful nature of volunteer work. Her complaints center on shouldering a lot of responsibility and simply helping to keep the organization running, even if
the tasks do not always interest her. She says that this work is time consuming; that it can be boring; and that she faces diplomacy issues when dealing with others.

**Many problems, one person: feelings of helplessness.** Listening to participants’ stories, I learned that many feel discouraged when assessing their own ability to impact animal advocacy. The magnitude of animal-related issues throughout the world can feel daunting. Consequently, some participants question how much of an impact they are capable of making. This lack of self-efficacy can lead participants to feel hopeless that their efforts can ever produce significant change. I found two main ways that this lack of self-efficacy affects participants: general feelings of helplessness, and perceiving that one’s own impact is small compared to that of other animal advocates. I will explore both of these facets in turn.

In each interview/focus group, I asked participants how much impact they think they have on animal advocacy. Despite their wide range of activity in the cause—veganism, vegetarianism, adopting animals from shelters, volunteering, donating, and other types of involvement—it is common for participants to believe that they are barely helping animal advocacy at all. Exchanges with Laura, Jackie, and Kathy illustrate this feeling. Laura, a PAWS volunteer and foster parent for cats, doubts that her actions can possibly produce significant results:

R: How much impact do you think the things you have done have had for animals?

L: Not a whole lot. I just sort of have convinced myself that—you can’t really affect—most people are not in a position to affect large change.

Jackie, a vegetarian and member of the campus Vegetarian Club, reiterates this feeling of helplessness:
R: With that that you’ve done, with you abstaining by being vegetarian, and talking to people about reducing their consumption, how much impact do you think you’ve had on animals?

J: Um… Probably very little. I mean, there’s still going to be factory farming… (pause)… But, I mean, I do struggle with that. Like, does vegetarianism even do anything? Because there’s not like more people becoming vegetarian. I mean, maybe a slight increase, but nothing significant.

When I ask PAWS volunteer Kathy how much impact she has had on animal advocacy, she echoes this lack of individual efficacy, believing that one person cannot impact much alone. However, although she doubts the amount of power she has as an individual actor, she thinks that changes can be achieved by many people acting together (collective efficacy, as discussed by Einwohner, 2002):

Well, certainly it’s [her own advocacy] been a positive impact, but in terms of what’s needed, everywhere… you know, small. I think one person can’t do that much, but you know, a collective can. I think PAWS as an organization certainly has had an impact in this community, and I’ve contributed to that by my work there, but you know, in terms of my individual influence, taken out of PAWS, you know, small, probably. Small, I’ll bet.

Shannon, a PAWS volunteer, takes this lack of self-efficacy a step further and avoids information about animal suffering. She is convinced that she cannot fix upsetting animal situations, so she does not want to be exposed to them if she feels she cannot help. Shannon tells me that she does not watch sad videos about animals that her friends post on Facebook for this reason:
I’m like, “Why would I click that and watch that?!” It’s like torturing yourself. There’s nothing you can do about it, and then you’re gonna watch it and be all sad. You know, like, I guess if you like crying (laughs), you want to make yourself cry, that’s one thing, but...

However, of all the participants, this lack of self-efficacy seems especially paralyzing for Amy. It is clear from her interview that she feels overwhelmed by the enormity of the cause.

When I ask Amy how her experience has been as an animal advocate, she responds:

For me, it’s a painful experience. I’m in enough of a routine of it where I kind of mentally block out what goes on, and I just know that I need to make choices for certain reasons, or I need to make specific choices. But like I said, I think that I am hopeless about some of it, and I don’t think that that’s a useful emotion at all. I wish that I wasn’t—but I have a hard time not being. And the more I see it, the more I read about horrible things, the worse and more hopeless I feel about it.

Amy believes that her efforts will not make much of a difference—and, despite her seemingly heavy involvement in animal advocacy (being a vegetarian, a member of The HSUS, donating, adopting a dog from a shelter, purchasing only ‘cruelty-free’ products and avoiding products made from animals), she criticizes herself for not doing more:

I mean, me personally, I don’t have that much impact. I’m one tiny speck of a person out of billions of people. But I guess it feels like at least I’m not contributing to it. And I am contributing to it some, you know—I sort of condemn people who are too lazy and comfortable in their own lives to give up things, and I feel like I should be completely vegan, but I’m not… So, in some ways, I’m the same way.
She adds that interacting with non-advocates makes her feel hopeless, too, because she does not think that she is effective in changing their opinions.

These feelings can act to impede her involvement. Because Amy doubts that she has the power to fix these problems, she does not feel motivated to participate in particular advocacy groups:

I think, often for me, even though I try to do as much as I can, I feel sort of hopeless that the world will ever change. And so I think maybe I avoid groups like that [the campus Vegetarian Club] because, I don’t know, because I just sort of can’t get behind the whole ‘eventually we’ll make a difference’—it’s hard for me to feel like that’s the case.

Amy is also emotionally affected by animal suffering to the point that she resorts to avoidance for self-protection. Although she is inspired by the action taken by animal advocacy organizations, she thinks that she may be too sensitive to pursue this as a career path:

Especially trying to make career choices, in some ways I would really like to do what they do. And in other ways, I don’t know if I can do it—like, me being in the trenches, and dealing with the real, horrible, graphic stuff that goes on, and addressing that. You know, I don’t know that I could do that... For me, it’s just too difficult and emotional. I would just be a mess all the time.

Ironically, caring so much about animals might deter Amy from a career in animal advocacy.

I ask Amy if she thinks that her hopelessness can be overcome, and she says that she is unsure:

R: I know you’ve said a couple times this sense of hopelessness. Do you see that as something that you think could be overcome, or…
A: (Sighs) I don’t know. It’s funny, ‘cause I hear myself say that. I don’t feel like it really hinders my desire to want to change things—and normally I’d think it would do that—but yeah, I don’t know. I mean, I definitely, my research is often from the perspective of people who don’t care—who don’t get involved in social issues and who don’t help others and contribute to things, and I guess I come from that cynical perspective, that people start out that way.

Amy does hope to contribute to animal advocacy through research, and is already active in pursuing lucrative outlets for her work—but she remains doubtful of the impact that academics can have. However, she does show a glimpse of hopefulness; despite her reservations, she adds, “But I’m really, really interested in figuring out how to get people to change.”

**Feelings of inferiority when comparing activity to others.** For other participants, this lack of self-efficacy simply affects the way they perceive their own knowledge and/or involvement as compared to other animal advocates. When I ask how they would compare their knowledge or level of involvement to others, only a few participants respond that they feel more knowledgeable or more involved than most. Much more frequently, participants qualify or downplay their own knowledge or involvement by comparing themselves to advocates whom they perceive to be more highly involved. By pointing out what they do not do rather than focusing on what they do, participants tend to underestimate their own contributions.

There are several examples of this from the interview/focus group data. When I ask Joe, a PAWS volunteer and donor, to compare his knowledge of animal issues to other animal advocates, he hesitates, and then answers, “I think there’s people who know a lot more about them [animal issues] than I do.” When I ask Shannon (a PAWS volunteer and adopter of shelter...
pets) the same question, she immediately compares herself to ‘extreme’ advocates and situates herself as coming up short:

R: How would you compare your level of knowledge about animal issues compared to other people who claim to be active with animals?

S: I think there are some people who are really, really active, and they go do—they like, I don’t know, they work with laws, and they’re really up on all of that. I read some of it—but I wouldn’t say that I’m—I wouldn’t even say I’m really active in it. I’m active in the organization I’m in, and will do things that they request—but as far as going to other, it’s not there (laughs). I don’t do it. I don’t find myself as—when I studied environmental science, I’d read up about wild animal advocacy programs, but I never really got involved. You can say I’m more on the low to moderate side of that. I don’t consider myself like an extreme, like, ‘I would do anything for’—I remember reading the environmental stuff, and being like, I would not be the person who’s chaining myself to a tree (laughs). The people that lived in the treetops so they wouldn’t cut them down, I kind of admire them—like, wow, to have that kind of passion for something is amazing—but I just don’t know how—I mean, good for them that they’re like that, but I just don’t understand how it happens.

Peggy only considers herself to have an average level of knowledge as compared to other animal advocates, evaluating her knowledge against highly active others:

P: Oh, I’m about average for those who are in the animal world, yeah. Believe me, there are people who live and breathe this, and know the information about the newest rabies vaccine, or the newest techniques for neutering 100 feral cats or something (laughs), so I’m about average in that group, I’d say.
R: So there are some things you know, and others you don’t?

P: Oh! Yeah, yeah, yeah. I’m not terribly well informed about medical or veterinary health or practices. Simply because my work doesn’t take me there.

I ask Linda (a PAWS volunteer and longtime shelter animal adopter) the same question, as well as asking her to compare her level of activity to others who care about animals, and she also underrates her own activity and knowledge by focusing instead on the higher levels of activity and knowledge in others:

R: How would you compare your level of activity to that of other people who care about animals?

L: Um, probably in the middle, because I know people now that are—it’s everything to them. Even if they have full time jobs, they are just constantly committed to this. Day and night, on the phone during their work hours, very, very involved in what dogs to bring in, searching them out, knowing all the other people at all the other organizations, networking on a huge level.

R: That sounds like a lot of commitment there.

L: It’a huge commitment. And a lot of them, I think, have been doing this for many more years than I have. They’ve been doing this their whole life.

R: With those people who’ve been doing it so long, at this point you’ve had some experience. How would you compare your level of knowledge of animal issues to other people that are involved?

L: Good point. I’d say after three and a half years, I’m still just learning. They’ve dealt with people and animals for so many years. Our dog coordinator’s been doin’ it for 24 years. Her dad was a vet, so she says she’s been doin’ it her whole life. They’re aware
of everything that’s going on: the transports, the people who are rescuing in every other community, nearby states. They have such a network of connections.

Responding to my question about comparing level of participation, Michelle answers in a similar way:

R: So, if you were to compare your level of action compared to either other people who like animals or other people who are active in animal causes, how would you compare your level of participation?

M: Um… It depends. I guess there’s so much variety. Maybe it’s average. I know there are certainly people who do more, people who, for a living, or not necessarily for a living, but maybe they have a spouse who makes a living and maybe they can do full time work. There are some people who are actively working for animals every day, and I’m certainly not doing that, unless you count caring for my own cats, so I guess it depends on the comparison group. But of people I know, like myself who care about the issue but it’s not something they have as an occupation, probably average.

Similarly, Lily diminishes her own level of involvement by comparing herself to people who are in leadership positions in groups (which she is not), noting that they are involved in ways that she is not (like bringing speakers to campus). She positions herself on the receiving end of these leaders’ efforts. Despite being vegan and having been involved in various ways, she views herself as less involved than other animal advocates.

Kathy and Janet compare themselves to others to the point that they wonder if they could even consider themselves to be ‘real’ animal advocates. When I ask Kathy (PAWS volunteer and adopter of shelter cats) to compare her knowledge to other advocates, she responds, “Oh, gee (laughs). Probably not that high. Hmm. Gosh, I don’t know. I probably am tuned in maybe
20%, if that, to what I would say real animal advocates are.” When I ask Janet (a highly active vegan, former vegetarian, donator, and adopter of shelter animals, who is heavily involved with Farm Sanctuary, to name just some of her activities) how she compares her activity to other animal lovers, even she spotlights the greater work of others, questioning whether she is a legitimate animal advocate:

R: How do you think you’d compare your level of activity in this cause to other people who like animals, too?

J: (Pause) I don’t know. I mean, there are so many people who do so much more than I do, and I think that’s something to aspire to, I guess, for me. Like, when I first got your e-mail and everything, you described it very well to make it obvious, who would or would not qualify for your study. Like, if you would’ve just said ‘animal activist,’ I would’ve been like, ‘I don’t know if that’s me.’

**Other people as sources of friction.** While some challenges with involvement stem from within—like perceptions of powerlessness or underestimating one’s own impact while overestimating that of others—other challenges arise from interactions with other people. A common thread among participants is that they often feel frustrated with others (both advocates and non-advocates) as it relates to this cause. Some participants struggle to legitimize their lifestyle to non-advocates, while others face interpersonal conflicts with volunteering. I will explore each of these areas in turn.

When I ask Anna how her experience as an animal advocate has been, she focuses on how difficult non-advocates have made it for her. She tells me that her most daunting challenge as an animal advocate is facing people who question, challenge, and mock her commitment:
R: Tell me about your experience as an animal advocate over time. Are there certain things about your experience that stand out for you?

A: It’s been hard. I think especially at work, like, I work at a restaurant, and... a lot of the older people who work at the restaurant... [are] really critical of it. A lot of them have started to take it seriously, so they do really respect, as far as when they make me food… But they still, the most annoying thing is, like, the mocking. I think the biggest challenge is fighting against when people say, “Well, what about plants?” It’s like, “Why do you eat plants?” It’s like making people understand that being a vegan or being a vegetarian doesn’t mean you think you’re better than other people, it just means that you’re trying, and you don’t want people to be resentful of you, and just kind of fighting against that. I think that’s like the biggest thing.

R: Would you say that this is your biggest challenge as someone who helps animals, people questioning it and trying to challenge it?

A: Yeah. And they like try to act like you are like betraying your species or something. I don’t know, I don’t think that even all the efforts to try to betray your species, like I don’t think that by showing other animals care and consideration means that you don’t show the same for human beings. There’s not like a finite amount of consideration you can have.

Amy also cites tension with other people when asked about the challenges she’s faced. She feels friction with her extended family because of their differing outlooks:

A: My family who live in Kansas—...my aunts and uncles and cousins and people—I’m sort of the black sheep of the family... I think they view me as kind of scary. I always have an ax to grind. My aunt said to me one time, “You’re always thinking about these
horrible, negative things. Don’t you just want to be happy, and think of nice and fun things?”

R: Does she mean in terms of animal issues?

A: All issues. My outlook in general. But I think it’s just the fact that I bring up issues often, I think, that most people don’t think about… I don’t know, again, I think that any time you’re telling people that what they’re doing isn’t okay, it creates this distance.

This discord speaks to the importance of social support and a supportive cultural climate, as discussed under RQ1.

Volunteerism and interpersonal conflict. For others, interpersonal challenges center on conflict with other volunteers. Joe encapsulates the frustrations of being in an organization with clashing personalities:

All organizations frustrate you. Period... And they don’t frustrate you necessarily by their objectives, but there’s a bunch of people in an organization, and over time, their personalities and yours won’t mesh 100% of the time… In that all organizations are populated with people with different objectives, sooner or later there’s a frustration.

Linda experiences the same kind of challenge:

L: And then I think as any organization, you do have personality conflicts.

R: Between?

L: All the volunteers. When you’re trying to organize over a hundred or more volunteers, ‘cause they’re all there to help the animals, they’re there for different reasons and personalities.

R: So challenges involved in interpersonal—

L: Yeah, yeah.
Pamela encounters similar conflicts in her volunteer experience:

R: Earlier you said something about frustrating people or frustrating situations. What did you mean by that?

P: …I’ve been through a lot of different things with people at PAWS... Animal rescue sounds so easy in a way, like the concept of ‘Oh, we just want to save all the animals,’ but then when you get down to the nitty gritty of how you actually do that, there can be a lot of differing opinions... It’s like the little details, and people feel very, very strongly about them. So you just have to kind of get used to the personalities.

Bill brings a slightly different perspective to the matter of interpersonal conflicts. He is a member of the PAWS board, and encounters these interpersonal conflicts between volunteers, PAWS members, and board members, even citing “animosity” between them:

If all members involved understood what all the members and volunteers and donors brought to the organization, if that was clear to everybody, we wouldn’t have some of the animosity we do have. We have members and volunteers who look at the board as a bunch of arrogant souls. And that’s one of the reasons I got on the board. I didn’t jump up and say ‘Take me, take me;’ it was, ‘We need somebody from the dog team to represent us on the board.’ So, the guy who was doing it said, “Bill, would you take it? ‘Cause I can’t stand the board anymore.” And he can’t stand the board because they are looking at the scene differently than the rank and file.

**Challenging the vegan/vegetarian lifestyle.** Vegans/vegetarians report a unique kind of interpersonal challenge. These participants have a different component to their lifestyle than non-vegans/vegetarians. They experience interpersonal conflicts concerning their identity as a vegetarian or vegan, as well as around eating, specifically.
Simply living as a vegan or vegetarian proves to incite tension for the majority of vegan/vegetarian participants. As a former vegetarian myself, I can absolutely relate my own experiences to those described below. Lily feels that she must “defend” her veganism to non-animal advocates, and that she continuously learns more about the nutritional aspect “just so [she] can better talk to people and better defend [herself] in some of the questioning why [she’s] vegan.” She finds that “people usually challenge the nutrition aspect of it” rather than the ethical aspect. Being vegan is something that feels natural to Lily, and she states that she does not think much about it—until she is with non-vegans or non-vegetarians (with groups of people or at home), when it becomes clear that she is living differently. In this sense, veganism/vegetarianism can act as an ‘othering’ mechanism.

Other vegan/vegetarian participants have felt combativeness from non-advocates, as well. Amy tells me how, living in the Midwest, she felt challenged by non-advocates because of her vegetarianism. Having lived in Kansas, where Amy feels the cultural norms and cultural mentality are different than in State College, Pennsylvania, she endured non-advocates questioning and mocking her lifestyle: “When I was living in Kansas, you can tell someone you’re a vegetarian, and they’re like, ‘[In a rude tone] Well, I like meat.’ You know, very defensive, and want to tell you all the reasons why you’re wrong.” Samantha does not mention being mocked herself, but has witnessed the mocking of other vegans/vegetarians: “I notice some of my vegetarian, vegan friends on Facebook, they’ll have fights with people. I think people try to be rude, like, if you’re talking about vegetarian stuff, they’ll say, ‘Ooh, I want a steak.’”
Michelle tells the story of a particularly negative experience when she tried to share information about animal advocacy with non-advocates. Once she became a vegetarian, she was excited to spread her views—but was quickly rebuffed by a friend, causing conflict:

I have this new knowledge and awareness of what really happens to animals, and I can’t imagine how anybody could look at this—I had material. I can’t imagine how anybody could look at this and still contribute. And so I took it to school with me, to high school, and I tried to share it with my friends at lunch, and one of them got really, really angry and they told me they didn’t want to see it, and God gave us animals to eat, which I don’t agree with. And actually, I’m still friends with the person who got the maddest, and I still, to this day, like, years later, still feel like there’s some kind of underlying tension there or something. So, that really colored my experience so early on; when I tried to, like, speak up, it was kinda like it was shot down. ‘We don’t wanna hear it.’ There was a negative response from my friends. So, to this day, I struggle with how to present information effectively without making people angry. That’s really hard to know how to do.

This has led to Michelle’s present-day apprehension with being vocal about the cause; she is now shy about sharing advocacy information because she is afraid that this rejection and tension could happen again.

Jackie also perceives that many non-advocates disapprove of and mock vegetarianism. This makes involvement in animal advocacy a trying experience for her:

It’s really hard to be an advocate for vegetarianism because people are so turned off.

Like, my roommates are really anti-vegetarian, except for the one who just switched.

Before she saw Food, Inc., they were all, like, pretty anti-vegetarian… And when [the
Vegetarian Club does demonstrations or gives handouts, there’s usually a group that, like, hands out beef jerky or something. Although this does not deter her from her conviction, Jackie does feel teased by her roommates: “They’ll just be like, ‘You’re never gonna make it,’ and ‘You have to eat meat eventually,’ or, like, they’ll make food and be like, ‘Don’t you want this? It’s so good!’” Jackie notes that they teased her roommate in the same way when she became vegetarian. Once again, these challenges confirm the importance of social and cultural support for a positive advocacy experience.

Unlike the current vegan/vegetarian participants, an unsupportive environment did lead Laura to give up vegetarianism. She explains:

I used to be vegetarian. It’s hard (laughs). Especially cause I lived in Oklahoma. You know, it’s a thing where you say you’re vegetarian, and they say, “Oh, do you eat chicken?” “No, I’m a vegetarian.” “Do you eat fish?” “No.” They don’t understand you at all—the concept…

When I ask Laura why she decided to stop being vegetarian, she cites an unaccommodating atmosphere that created challenges around eating:

L: Stopping it [vegetarianism] actually wasn’t on purpose. It was just, it became really difficult because of where I was living.

R: What was it about where you were living?

L: …I think it was one of those things where, like, I’d gone to somebody’s house for dinner or something like that, and it was either cause a huge scene, like, because sometimes just not eating something is a big deal. Like, it was something like that, and it was just so I broke the rule.
In an environment where vegetarianism was outside of the norm, Laura sensed that refusing meat in a social setting would create controversy. Rather than risk this negative attention, she chose to conform to the eating habits of the majority—and remains a non-vegetarian to this day.

Vegetarian and vegan participants also discuss the challenges they experience with eating in general. Samantha is frustrated by the lack of vegan options in school cafeterias and restaurants, and must pay careful attention to avoid cross-contamination with meat or dairy products. For Lily, it can be difficult to decide where to eat when dining with non-vegan/non-vegetarian friends. Moreover, Jackie finds that non-vegetarians will often assume that eating with a vegetarian will affect their own food choices.

A particularly interesting finding is that some of the most potent challenges that vegans/vegetarians face involve family conflict about their food choices. A common thread between stories is that one’s family had originally been unsupportive of one’s veganism/vegetarianism, had not taken it seriously, or had assumed that it was merely a phase—but that the family had eventually become more supportive over time. This has been the experience for Anna, Lily, Jackie, and Samantha.

Anna recalls that her family had made animal advocacy, and specifically vegetarianism, difficult for her: “My family sort of thought it [vegetarianism] was nice, but sort of stupid, but kind of ridiculous…and sort of impractical and idealistic and just a phase, or whatever.” When she was in high school, Anna was keenly aware that her vegetarianism was somewhat of a nuisance for her parents when they cooked dinner for her: “Basically, you have to be comfortable feeling like an inconvenience to get across your point.” However, as a college student, Anna now feels comfortable talking to her parents about these issues because she is more educated about veganism/vegetarianism, and can justify her views with particular sources.
This knowledge makes her feel that “it [her decision to be vegetarian then vegan] wasn’t just an opinion I had on something that was unfounded.” I find it notable that ‘just’ having an opinion about animal advocacy may not be enough for advocates to feel confident discussing these issues with non-advocates—and that it may not be enough to garner respect from non-advocates. Supporting her opinions with those of other animal advocates provides Anna the confidence to discuss these issues with her family, and to finally get her nutritional needs met by them.

In the past two years, Anna’s mother has begun to make a concerted effort to cook vegetarian and vegan food for her. Anna believes that she had to prove her commitment to this cause over time; when she first became vegan, her mother understood that she was serious about it because she had been vegetarian before, so this veganism was not just a phase. Anna is glad to have her mother’s recent support, but wishes it had come sooner: “I’ve kind of talked about this since I was little, and I’m 21, and she finally is seriously, really, really, doing it. So, it’s nice, finally, but…” Now, Anna’s whole family (mother, father, and sister) respect her views, and she feels more connected to her mother: “It’s kind of like a sense of relief.”

Lily tells a similar story. Her mother used to take it as a personal insult when Lily refused to eat the meat or dairy that she had cooked. Lily perceives that her mother felt she was eating this way to spite her. However, her mother has become more accepting over time. “As I stayed with it,” Lily recalls, “she realized it’s not just a phase, I guess.” Just as with Anna’s mother, Lily’s mother did not accept her veganism right away; she required evidence, over time, that her daughter’s interest in animal advocacy was legitimate.

Lily discusses animal advocacy (in general) in terms of alienation from family approval, lumping animal advocacy with other groups of people (like atheists and LGBT individuals) who are not widely accepted in society: “There tends to be a lot of correlation between people who
are animal rights advocates and people who are part of other groups that might disconnect them from their families.” An atheist herself, despite being raised in a religious household, Lily conceptualizes animal advocacy in the same polarizing, ‘fringe group’ way.

Jackie also describes her challenges concerning eating with a critical family. Her entire family is “really turned off” by the concept of vegetarianism, resulting in family tension. Like the mothers of Anna and Lily, Jackie’s mother was unsupportive of Jackie’s vegetarianism for the first year. Her mother cooks for the family, and only in the past half year has she agreed to cook vegetarian food for Jackie. Jackie’s experience eating with her mother has therefore improved—but her father still refuses to eat vegetarian food. Therefore, when her family eats together at their home, Jackie typically cooks her own food or only eats her mother’s side dishes. Her family’s unaccommodating nature has made Jackie question whether or not she should continue with vegetarianism.

Though they focus less on these issues in their interviews, Samantha and Janet cite challenges around family and eating, as well. Much like Anna, Lily, and Jackie, Samantha discusses conflict regarding eating with her family. While her mother is vegan, Samantha’s father is not—and was originally unsupportive when Samantha became a vegetarian during college. Again, like the three participants discussed above, Samantha’s father became supportive over time. Janet also notes tension with her family revolving around her not eating meat, as social events and holidays tend to be focused on food. Familial support is important for all of these participants, but their family atmospheres often stir conflict, instead.

**Overcoming obstacles: strength through positivity, drive, and social support**

Despite the abundance and range of challenges described above, all participants remain involved in animal advocacy. To counter their obstacles, they have developed a number of
coping mechanisms. Many participants maintain their motivation for involvement in animal advocacy through internal drive. This includes upholding a positive outlook about their impact on animal advocacy; perceiving a high (or high enough) degree of self-efficacy to believe that their efforts matter; focusing on the rewarding nature of participation; and being content to make small changes. Participants also maintain their motivation for involvement by finding strength in the support of others. For many, this is attained by feeling comfortable enough to ‘vent’ or share their feelings with other advocates or supporters.

Looking inward: finding strength in oneself (self/internal motivation). When I ask participants how they maintain motivation to participate, several state that their motivation comes from within. Although they may be frustrated by the challenges of animal advocacy, an internal drive pushes them forward. They trust their inner voices. Multiple participants specifically state that their motivation is internally driven and ultimately undaunted by external obstacles. Jackie maintains her activity because the reasons that led her to give up meat remain valid, and that is enough justification for her:

I think at the end of the day, you just have to look at what’s right for you, and make your own stance on things. Sometimes, to stay motivated, you have to just forget about if it’s really making this huge impact… and just say, like, ‘Well, you have to stick to what you believe in at the end of the day.’ And if I believe that factory farming is wrong, then I’m not going to eat meat.

Michelle sustains her motivation through frequent exposure to materials that keep her at a level of awareness that is at the surface. It is this consciousness of animal suffering that incites Michelle’s personal drive:
The motivation is that because I’m involved, because I’m on e-mail lists and I go to certain talks, I continually see, I’m continuously exposed to materials that expose what animals experience. And so I’m very aware of the animal suffering that’s out there. So, as long as I know it’s there, the motivation just stays there because I naturally just feel—I don’t know, it’s just kind of a feeling inside me that it’s unjust, and it’s horrible, and it’s kind of just like an internal…push, I guess.

To justify her efforts, Michelle consciously convinces herself to remain true to her values:

I don’t know, I think of inspiring quotes, like Jane Goodall talks about how every individual matters, and I try to keep telling myself that, that, you know, it’s my life and I choose to live it how I want, and it’s important to me to know what I do is in line with how I feel.

Amy is also motivated from within, explaining, “I think, for me, I don’t need a reason—because I do feel like internally I just know that’s [animal mistreatment] wrong, and I’m gonna make sure that doesn’t happen.” Likewise, Samantha feels that she can overcome obstacles because she cares more about animals than about those challenges; Janet is self-motivated to maintain participation because of knowledge about animals that she holds, and because she is convinced of her own views; Lily has developed an ethical system as a goal for herself to achieve; Charles is undeterred by others’ perceptions of him, or by any other external forces; and, at the time when Anna’s family was unsupportive, and before she met her vegetarian boyfriend, she read materials and continued to think about the cause, which fueled her internal passion to pursue her ethical beliefs.
Shannon also cites internal drive as a way to maintain motivation to participate. However, the way that Shannon describes this feeling seems fundamentally different than the others:

I mean… It’s almost more of a selfish thing. Like, I do it [participate] because I like to do it. It’s not like this burning desire, like, ‘I have to help as many cats as I can.’ It’s like, it became one of those routines where I go, and I do it two days, in the mornings…

Shannon’s involvement is for the reason of self-satisfaction, not to make an earth-shattering impact for animals (like the ‘first path’ to prosocial behavior proposed by Batson, 1987)—whereas, for the other internally-motivated participants, the drive originates from striving to uphold ethical standards and basic justice.

**Positivity and self-efficacy.** In order to maintain their motivation to participate, most participants demonstrate a positive attitude and a sense of self-efficacy to overcome challenges. These participants focus on the impact that they do or can make, no matter how small—and they believe that their efforts can produce change. These coping mechanisms of high self-efficacy and focusing on the positive help guide participants through their involvement with the justification that every bit matters.

Pamela rarely feels overwhelmed by her involvement in animal advocacy, because she chooses to focus on what she can do locally, rather than what she cannot possibly accomplish globally. Regarding self-efficacy, she feels more knowledgeable than most other advocates—even more knowledgeable or experienced, in some cases, than veterinarians. Because focusing on the negative could make her feel overwhelmed, she uses her high level of self-efficacy to focus on the small victories to make her feel that she can have an impact:
I think you feel like you make more of a difference when you’re focusing on the happy ending, rather—‘cause if you just look at the negative and the bad things that happen to animals, I mean, there’s an endless supply of them, unfortunately. There’s people who do bad things, there’s hurricanes and tornadoes and things that leave animals in bad situations, and if you only focus on that, it becomes so overwhelming. But if you can focus on, you know, the one horse that you set free, or, you know, the animal that you nurse back to health and got adopted, or whatever it is, you know, then you feel like you are making a difference incrementally. And if you’re doing it and you think about how many rescues are around the country, and there’s people like you in each one of them, then it kind of exponentially makes you feel like maybe you are making a little bit of a difference.

Pamela keeps her involvement in perspective, not expecting herself to fix every problem:

It’s just, you can’t—I mean, if I tried to go out and save everything everywhere, it would be impossible. And that’s what I see people when they burn out, that’s what they’ve been trying to do. You just find your niche and what works for you, and you go from there.

The four focus group members (Shelley, Dawn, Martha, and Ilana) all agree that they stay motivated through the challenges because the happy endings make them feel like they can help. Martha says, “You helped that one [animal], and then you move on to the next one, and that’s how you have to look at it.” Christina also remains focused on the fact that helping even one animal makes a difference. She believes that the negatives are “outweighed with people that are thankful” for her pet pantry services. Shannon stays motivated by her small victories, as well:

R: I know you said that sense of ‘It never ends, there’s always more.’ How does that make you feel? Do you feel defeated by that, or motivated—
S: Well, I get motivated by the people that come in, the cats that come in, where you’re like, “It’s gonna be hard to adopt this cat out,” but then after a month or two of living there, they change—their personality will change… We work with them, and they get used to the routine, and they become different cats… And then someone else will adopt it. It’s nice to hear the follow-ups: “It’s the best cat ever!” Oh, good. That’s like, the, “Okay, we keep doing this one cat a time, dealing with each one individually” so then you see the part where they’re all coming in, and (sighs), “There’s more, there’s more” but then you do see them get adopted out.

Participants find it important to recognize that, even though they may not be able to fix everything, it is essential to do something. Michelle explains her rationale:

The way I look at it is, there’s a lot of stuff going on in the world. There are many good causes. And no one person can address all of the causes that need to be addressed, so I think that it’s better for a person to, like, pick their favorite than to do nothing. And so my passion, I guess mine just happens to be animals, so I pursue that one.

When I ask Michelle how much impact she’s capable of having for animal advocacy, she acknowledges that she can feel overwhelmed as an individual—but that she ultimately believes that every little effort helps:

It’s easy to feel discouraged thinking, “I’m just one person. Am I really having any impact at all?” but I try to believe that it does matter, because, you know, those of us that care do add up…. And I hope that I can have a positive influence. I just, I try to tell myself that you never know; one pamphlet that you give to one person, or one thing that you say to another person, you never know what might help. So, I try to think of it as, every little thing could possibly help. And a friend of mine, a close friend, we talked
about this before, how there’s no way you can address all of it, but do what thing you *can* do… trying to be okay with that and just doing what you can do that fits with you and your life and your personality.

Charles echoes this sentiment of focusing on incremental achievements: “I think it’s important that you take it [vegetarianism] one step at a time, and I think it really does add up, especially if everybody did it.” Consistent with this efficacious perspective, Charles rates himself to be very knowledgeable about animals as compared to other advocates, and suspects that his level of advocacy is higher than that of most people. Joe finds motivation in accomplishing goals and in helping individual animals have better lives, as well. Furthermore, when Janet hosts vegan events for friends or family, she thinks of the animals she has saved on those days. Janet keeps this positive, efficacious outlook, focused on the importance of channeling what *can* be done “to be able to see that there’s hope and that things are changing, or ways that we can help to change things.”

Some participants cope with advocacy-related challenges by concentrating on how to solve the problems they encounter. Peggy says that she thinks creatively to address the issues of those who bring animals to PAWS, empathically considering the situation from the other people’s perspectives. Similarly, when Paula feels upset by an occurrence with animals, rather than feeling paralyzed or overwhelmed, she attempts to resolve the situation. In fact, these negative experiences with animals inspire her to help: “It makes me more motivated to work with the animals that we do save. It helps me care for my animals, my pets, with a little more TLC.” Anna agrees that the amount of potential animal advocacy work “could either be overwhelming and make you feel like you can’t do anything, or I just try to make it instead be,
like, inspiring. Or, like, that if it’s that widespread, that you need to do something.” Kathy feels the same drive when faced with upsetting animal images or stories:

I get the print from Humane Society and SPCA. And often times, they’ll have pictures of animals that have been mistreated, which are really pretty awful. Now, I don’t really get turned away by that. I think, “Oh my God. How awful!” and “We need to do something about this.”

Hannah feels that she must maintain a positive attitude, because “if you start thinking about all the people that are talking against you, it’s really easy to say, ‘This is a losing battle. Nothing’s ever gonna change’ (laughs).” She struggles for self-efficacy and finds it difficult to remain motivated when faced with challenges, but a positive outlook ultimately pulls her through: “I think at the end of the day, it’s [optimism’s] the only way to get through something that sometimes feels like a losing battle (laughs).” She can feel annoyed with non-advocates and want to shut them out, but in the times when she can raise awareness or understanding for them, she believes this is a “big step.” This potential for informing and influencing others is how she maintains motivation.

A few participants accept what modest amount they can fix, and are satisfied with that. For example, Laura perceives that her efforts affect very little, but, despite motivational challenges, believes that conditions would be worse without her work:

I mean, it is hard to maintain motivation. In some ways, you kinda have to ignore reality because, especially the work we’re doing, nothing every really changes (laughs), and so you just have to be satisfied with knowing that even if nothing appears to change, if you weren’t helping, it would be worse (laughs).
Laura is content to participate in her own ways: “I just sort of decided that I do what I do and I’ve just gotta leave those other things to other people. And I’m sort of okay with that. So, those things are still upsetting, but I can usually set the thoughts aside.” She states that she has “made a conscious decision” to let others handle the parts about animal advocacy that upset her—that every person has his/her place:

   I realized a long time ago that you can’t do everything, and the most logical thing to do if you want to help the world is... if there are several things you think are important, pick one or two, or whatever you can find time to do, but you’d be better off to focus on one or two instead of trying to do ten and then getting spread thin... I guess I believe different people are good at different things, so if I’m doing these things, maybe hopefully somebody else is doing these other things that need to be done.

Like Laura, Pamela maintains her motivation by reminding herself that the solution is not all up to her: that it involves a group effort (again, an example of the collective efficacy proposed by Batson, 1987). Pamela focuses on what she can fix in her local area, and hopes that others help locally, as well:

   I don’t like to look at Facebook postings of all the animals in China, or whatever. I mean, it’s important to be educated about it, but I feel like I need to do what I can do here with the animals that I—and somebody in New Jersey’s going to need to take care of the animals in New Jersey, and I have to keep reminding myself that I’m not the only one that does this kind of stuff.

Pamela used to read upsetting advocacy information on Facebook, but she stopped because she cannot directly help these animals: “Finally, I was like, ‘I don’t need to look at that because there’s nothing I can do about those animals. I’m just gonna focus my limited time and
resources on the ones that I can impact.” She sums up the usefulness of positivity and self-efficacy nicely:

You could drive yourself crazy with the vastness of the problem. But I just focus on the animals that I can impact because they are there, and we can do something about them, and the sooner that we can find them homes, the more that we can bring in… So, that’s kind of always been my focus, ‘cause I think it’s overwhelming to look at how big the problem can be. Like, statewide or nationally, or whatever.

All four focus group members, Shelley, Dawn, Martha, and Ilana, also keep an emotional distance to combat feelings of helplessness and sadness so that they feel strong enough to keep helping. Bill does what he can, as well, but accepts his realistic limits in order to maintain a life balance:

If I thought waving a flag in a mass gathering would shut down the puppy mills in Pennsylvania, I would do it… And also having the smarts to see, you know what? I care a lot, but that’s all I’m gonna give… I’m not going to give everything I have, I’m going to give this much, so that I have this much as a human being. Sometimes you get hooked into caring about the animals to the point where you give more than you should.

**Perceived impact on animal advocacy.** The vast majority of participants think that they have made, or are capable of making, an impact for animals that matters. To list just a few examples: Peggy mentions that hundreds of cats are now spayed and neutered because of the information on vouchers that she has provided. She proudly adds, “That makes a big difference”; Joanne focuses on the impact she has made by placing PAWS cats in homes; as a law student, Samantha’s future plans include changing laws to protect animals; Janet believes that, by raising her son as a vegan, he can influence his peers; and Christina thinks that she
contributes a great deal to animal advocacy through her pet pantry. Paula is motivated by the one-on-one care and rehabilitation she has performed with animals, and I think that her perspective illustrates the power of self-efficacy well:

R: When you talk about these things you’ve already done to help animals—the impact you’ve already had—looking into the future, what kind of impact do you think you’re capable of having in your lifetime?

P: Um, gosh. I guess it’s, to me, even though it’s a small number, it’s a big impact to me. It’s one here, one there, a group here, a group there. If we can rescue a litter of five kittens and they’re adopted—to people that would really be good adopters. It can go on forever and ever (laughs)… It may not be a huge number, you know. I may not be in Washington, DC lobbying for animal rights, but like I said, on the level that I like to be involved in, I can see the huge gains.

**Participation as rewarding.** What sustains motivation for several of these advocates is the rewarding nature of their volunteer work with animals. For instance, what keeps Peggy motivated is “this extreme satisfaction, this fulfillment… It’s part of who I am now. And I would feel very bad if I had to give that up.” Her experience as an animal advocate has been more meaningful than she had expected. Linda is motivated in the same way:

R: What do you think it is about this cause that affects you? About dogs or about animals?

L: Why do we do it? I’ve started to ask myself that every day. There’s a lot of stress involved with it that I didn’t realize. A lot of things that go on behind the scenes. But the reward at the end of the day, when I put a dog in someone’s car and tell it to be good and have a good life, it’s like I always walk away going, “This is what it’s all about.”
Linda’s concentration on the “emotionally rewarding” parts of advocacy help to inspire her through the frustrations: “Even if we have a dog with issues, if you’ve spent a day calming that dog down, seeing it relax, you go home feeling great. And that kinda gets you through the e-mails with the committee problems, and board of director problems. That kind of thing.”

**Reaching outward: finding strength in others.** As I touched on earlier, social support reinforces participants’ motivation for initial and continued involvement. These animal advocates enjoy being surrounded by people who are like-minded or simply supportive. Some participants particularly appreciate camaraderie that legitimizes the normalcy of their participation. For instance, when telling me about her involvement with the campus Vegetarian Club, Anna says, “Being around the people in that is really nice, just because they already kind of, like, believe the base things that I do, so it’s, like, reaffirming and comforting.” Anna finds strength in conceptualizing the cause as a group effort rather than an individual one:

A: I think that I’ve been able to maintain my overall feeling about it [self-motivation for the cause], but being able to actually interact with people makes me feel more confident in it, and makes me feel more comfortable talking about it, and makes me feel, like, less isolated, and that I’m actually promoting a cause, not just a personal belief.

R: Maybe that camaraderie?

A: Yeah, like strength in numbers or something.

Volunteering participants tend to discuss the significance of camaraderie in terms of enjoying social relationships with other PAWS volunteers. Rather than these friendships being critical to cementing one’s own place in animal advocacy and in life, these friendships seem to simply be another pleasant outcome of participation. Joe, Shelley, Dawn, Martha, and Ilana each express fondness for the social aspect of volunteer work. After one focus group member
mentions that she appreciates the social relationships with the other PAWS volunteers, I ask the group (all four females listed above) if there is a social element to their involvement. All four respond affirmatively by saying “Mmm-hmm” and “I think so.”

**Venting with other advocates or supporters.** A particular aspect of social support on which many participants rely is the ability to talk with others to let out their feelings and frustrations. When faced with challenges, many participants maintain motivation by ‘venting’ with other advocates or supporters. For example, when Shannon feels irritated or depressed, she talks about it with other volunteers, especially those who have been volunteering longer, because “they sometimes bring a different perspective.” Linda’s strategy for maintaining motivation is to vent with other volunteers to encourage each other to continue. Joanne tells me that “volunteers all commiserate together” when they encounter an upsetting case regarding the PAWS cats. Laura copes with advocacy-related challenges by venting with other PAWS volunteers, with an animal advocate friend, and with her mother, who is supportive of animal advocacy. Joe and Bill both vent to their wives, Paula and Linda (who also participate), when frustrated with the cause. Anna appreciates that her boyfriend has finally become someone with whom she can fully express her frustrations:

> Now that my boyfriend is vegetarian, I can definitely talk to him about it, because he never really understood before how difficult it was to eat out or something like that, or he never really experienced any sort of discriminatory thing—like, he never really experienced someone making fun of him because he didn’t want to eat meat… But now I can talk to him about it and that really helps.
Most participants report this ‘venting’ with supportive others as a source of validation and morale when coping with challenges. This support helps participants to sustain their motivation to be active in animal advocacy.

**Conclusion**

Animal advocates face an array of problems when participating in this cause. They may feel helpless to fight for animals, hopeless that their efforts can effect change. This struggle for self-efficacy can weigh them down emotionally, or even hinder their motivation to act. Feelings of frustration also stem from interpersonal interaction. Several volunteers report personality clashes with other volunteers. Vegans/vegetarians experience a unique set of interpersonal challenges revolving around general conflict with non-advocates (including family members) and the social experience of eating.

Despite these challenges, all 24 participants continue their involvement. They overcome these obstacles through internal motivation, keeping a positive outlook, and maintaining an adequate or high level of self-efficacy. Many participants believe that their impact on animal advocacy is significant. Some find their participation to feel rewarding. Participants also deal with challenges by leaning on other advocates or supporters. A particular coping mechanism for irritation is to ‘vent’ their frustrations to friends, significant others, or other volunteers. All of these strategies—whether internally or externally driven—bolster the motivation of animal advocates to rise above challenges and continue their involvement.

**Research question 3: What are participants’ impressions of animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communication tactics, and the animal advocacy movement?**

The goal of this research question is to explore participants’ perspectives regarding the reputation of animal advocacy organizations, the outreach communication strategies that they
use, and the animal advocacy movement in general. I aim to better understand how participants interpret the communication aimed at them by animal advocacy organizations; why certain participants find particular strategies or organizations to be effective or motivating, while others do not; and how participants conceptualize the notions of the groups “animal advocates” and “activists” of which some may argue they belong.

I show participants six stimulus materials. The purpose of these prompts is to gauge the participants’ assessments of each advertising strategy. Based on advertising appeal literature, I have categorized each stimulus material into one or more appeal types. While I do not empirically test the effectiveness of these appeals, I utilize these stimulus materials to gain a better understanding of participants’ reactions to various animal advocacy advertising strategies. Thus, in this section, I discuss participants’ responses to these advertisements and their evaluations of the animal advocacy organizations themselves. These impressions tie in to participants’ reasons for activity or inactivity, as well as to their motivations to support particular advocacy groups over others, or to engage in particular types of advocacy over others.

In RQ3, I found that positive outreach communication material motivates and empowers participants. Many feel inspired by the “Sarah McLachlan” stimulus material and The HSUS stimulus materials, and tend to be drawn to organizations that espouse hopefulness. Graphic or upsetting content can also affect the motivation of participants, but in varying ways. For instance, I found that graphic content (like the PETA stimulus materials and other such communication materials) can motivate some participants to act. Conversely, many other participants purposely avoid graphic/upsetting content, often because they reason that they are already aware of these issues and do not wish to torture themselves with disturbing reminders. For some, this includes evaluating the “Sarah McLachlan” stimulus material as emotional and
de-motivating. Lastly, I found that participants often criticize animal advocacy organizations and their outreach tactics (including the three stimulus materials from PETA and The HSUS’s “Horse Slaughter” stimulus material), and that they are highly aware of particular animal advocacy stigmas. Participants interpret the terms “animal advocate” and “animal activist” differently, attributing more public and negative attributes to activists. I finish by investigating participants’ mistrust of national animal advocacy groups and their preference for local involvement.

**Effectiveness of positive outreach communication: a focus on hope**

The experience of an animal advocate can feel hopeless and overwhelming. However, many feel inspired and motivated by focusing on the positive. Animal advocacy organizations, public figures, and outreach communication materials (like advertisements) that present hope and possibility are particularly motivating for participants. To maintain motivation to participate, advocates must feel that their efforts and actions make a difference. Entities that confirm this self-efficacy can feel particularly stimulating for advocates.

Whereas in RQ2, I explore the importance of a positive outlook in general, this portion of RQ3 centers on the importance of positivity as it specifically pertains to participants’ reception of hopeful external sources (again, the impressions they form about animal advocacy organizations, the way the cause is presented by public figures, and how animal advocacy is framed by outreach communication materials.) Positive outreach communication proves to inspire the majority of participants.

**The resonance of empowering outreach communication.** As I discussed in RQ2, advocates must feel that they have some level of self-efficacy to maintain their participation in the cause. It logically follows that advocates will feel empowered by external sources that
espouse a sense of positivity. This focus on hope can inspire motivation by leading the advocate to feel that his/her participation does matter.

Sometimes, this empowerment can stem from a public figure’s focus on positivity. Hannah illustrates this importance clearly when she explains why she admires Gene Bauer, the head of Farm Sanctuary:

He’s someone that, when he speaks, he just gets you really pumped up. He’s really optimistic. I think he is, he’s a good inspiration for the cause because he’s the kind of person that isn’t discouraged in the face of opposition, and he’s out there fighting the fight, and he’s all over the place (laughs), has his hand in so many different issues, and I think the most inspiring part of him is just his optimism.

Charles has also felt inspired by a public figure. When I ask him to describe animal advocacy outreach communication that has resonated with him, he explains that he once heard the Dalai Lama speak. The Dalai Lama’s specific point of wanting children to treat insects well has stuck with Charles as an inspirational message.

It can be important for participants to sense this positivity from animal advocacy groups, as well. An individual’s perception of organizations’ optimism or pessimism may influence his/her likelihood to participate with, donate to, or adopt an animal from one group over another. Anna tells me that she has had negative experiences with the local SPCA and positive experiences with PAWS: “I still get that feeling of sadness when I see stuff for them [SPCA], whereas PAWS just feels hopeful… I feel like it [SPCA] feels more hopeless than hopeful, whereas PAWS feels more hopeful than hopeless.” Though Anna is a member of SPCA and has volunteered at PAWS, she adopted her cat from PAWS. She does not say that this difference in
feeling was a factor in her decision to adopt from PAWS over SPCA, but the fact remains that she did not adopt from SPCA.

Other participants explain the importance of hopeful outreach communication in general. When I show PETA’s McCruelty advertisement to Joanne, she expresses her dislike of its approach and her preference for positive communication tactics: “See, I don’t respond to negativity. I am a hopeful, optimistic person by nature, and I would rather have seen something that emphasizes where we could be, rather than where we are, I guess.” Joanne notes that the McCruelty ad shows the problem, but does not suggest a solution. Advertising is most effective for her if she is told how she can contribute.

Pamela agrees that she prefers positive communication tactics over negative or non-efficacious communication tactics. Telling about advertising that has resonated with her, Pamela recalls the cheerful strategies used by a pit bull image restoration group that focus on positivity and adoptability rather than the dogs’ original injuries. She appreciates the light, happy nature of this campaign, which ties to her discussion in RQ2 of being motivated by happy ending stories:

I think that [outreach communication that focuses on the negative] can kind of make you feel hopeless—like, if you never see the happy endings, then what are you working towards? If all you ever see—asking you to donate money, say, and all you see is these animals that are starving, or beaten, or whatever the situation is, but you never see the one that gets adopted or the one that’s happy and playing with a person, it’s like, ‘I’m going to keep giving you money and all you’re showing me is—‘… I’d rather see a happy ending and how they got there and then a plea that, ‘Donate so that we can do this for the next’—not, ‘Oh my god, you have to do this right now for this animal or it’s gonna die.’… I don’t mind having the pictures of a skinny animal or an injured animal if
it’s coupled with the end result. I think I always like the story better than just the shock value pictures.”

As Pamela explains here, and as Joanne notes above, some participants can find upsetting content to be motivating if the group, person, or outreach material also demonstrates how to help.

Amy, the highly sensitive participant who is prone to feelings of helplessness, purposely tries to expose herself to external sources that are hopeful. Rather than being told about upsetting animal stories, which can make her feel hopeless, Amy prefers to hear useful, pragmatic information about how the situation can improve: “It feels a little bit more hopeful to me than just hearing about the bad things that go on.” However, I must note that mere exposure to or craving for positive outreach communication will not motivate every advocate every time. For instance, while Amy yearns for hopeful information, she still may be skeptical when she hears it:

I went to Jane Goodall when she came [to campus]. I was in a funk that night, though, and she kept talking about, ‘We have to be really hopeful and know that the world can get better.’ And I kept thinking, ‘No, it’s not.’ (laughs)

I report this example to illustrate how deeply feelings of helplessness can run—that, regardless of a sensitive person’s desire for and exposure to uplifting information, this positivity is not automatically contagious for every individual. However, the fact that a skeptical advocate like Amy (arguably the most discouraged of the participants) is drawn to the hope of positive outreach communication speaks to its potential for motivation.

**Sarah McLachlan ad: inspiring hope.** For some participants, The BCSPCA commercial with Sarah McLachlan acted as a positively valenced emotional appeal. This ad (that I showed as stimulus material #1 [hereafter referred to as the “Sarah McLachlan” ad])
incited hopefulness for about half of participants. These participants find this advertisement to be motivating because, although it portrays animals who are hurt, it also depicts how they are eventually helped. For these participants, this commercial is an example of an advertisement that is upsetting enough to activate their feelings of sympathy and empathy, and hopeful enough that they feel efficacious that their efforts can make a difference (characterizing a positively valenced emotional appeal). It is important for organizations to create messages that show these participants what they can do, and that they have the power to fix problems. As discussed previously, tapping into emotions can heighten response to a message (Homer & Yoon, 1992; Moore & Harris, 1996) or increase the persuasiveness of a message (Kelsmark et al., 2011).

Several participants explain why they feel motivated by this advertisement. Peggy thinks that the commercial demonstrates an appropriate balance in which cruelty is acknowledged (as in an indirect fear appeal), but not forced upon the viewer: “then you’re told how you can fix it” (signaling characteristics of a rational advertising appeal). She appreciates that the problem is presented as being fixable and not overwhelmingly large—and that she can participate without making a major life change:

I like the approach, because they’re not asking you to change the world, in a sense. They’re bringing this down to the individual level, saying, ‘You can do something for this cat or dog,’ or ‘Do something. Help us.’ It’s on more of a human level. You’re not asked to give up meat for the rest of your life (laughs).

Peggy also likes the commercial’s focus on informing viewers of how they can help:

P: I would think that one is more likely to contribute if you feel your contribution matters on a small scale like that.

R: Is that how you’ve felt? Because I know you do a lot of the smaller scale, local—
P: Yeah, yeah. Mmm-hmm. Very immediate kind of thing.

She also appreciates the use of celebrity in this appeal: “In a sense, these are people we know. I guess in the ad world, we believe them—or, we’ll at least give them a hearing.” This supports the credibility of and ‘identification’ with celebrity spokespeople proposed by Austin et al. (2008).

When Anna watches this commercial, she says that she looks into the animals’ eyes and feels their sadness (demonstrating the third path to prosocial behavior proposed by Batson, 1987). The ad upsets her, but it follows up the sad images with images of animals who have been helped. This motivates her and provides hope: “You don’t feel completely depressed, like you have no chance of actually helping these animals.”

When I began to play the commercial for the four focus group members (Shelley, Dawn, Martha, and Ilana), a few of these participants shrieked, anticipating the content that they were about to see—and initially stating that they did not want to watch it (as is consistent with an indirect fear appeal). (However, they did decide to watch.) All four focus group members agree that, even though this commercial depicts animals who are hurt, it is still motivating because it shows the happy ending:

R: ...When we looked at the Humane Society print ads, you said it was appealing because it’s cute, it makes you think of pets, companion animals. Something like this, it’s seeing those animals hurt, or abused. What is it about that that’s still—

S: But they’ve been rescued. They’ve been helped.

R: Is that it?

D: Yeah. Yeah. They’re able to help them with the money that was donated to their organization. Those people were able to help those animals. And they will find a home.
R: So, you think there’s that element of not just showing some animal suffering, with no way to help—do you think it’s partially showing an animal that’s been through something, but showing that it is possible to fix this?

D: Yeah, ‘cause with the money that you donate, we can help another animal in the same situation or a similar situation.

R: I see a couple other nods. Is that sort of the feeling, too? (Ilana says “Yeah.”)

In my interview with Joanne, she echoes these perspectives, explaining:

Well for me, it’s a slow pitch over home plate... That’s why I’m trying to do that, to stop the abuse, homelessness. I find it highly motivating. I mean, I think of animals that I know have a better life because they have been a part of the PAWS system and experience and I don’t find anything off-putting about that... I mean—this speaks to my heart, you know, really.

Joanne also may feel a special connection to the animals in this commercial because one of the cats depicted reminds her of one whom she knows. This only adds to her motivation:

J: I think that, even though, you know, the cat has obviously lost an eye, which, we have a cat right now who looks like that... I feel like it’s over for them once they’ve gotten to a safe place.

R: That sounds like an important element for you. (Joanne says “Mmm-hmm.”)

Because you’re talking about, in some instances, seeing an animal in distress is very disturbing and you don’t like it—In others, you see that but, knowing that they can be taken care of, that almost seems like that’s what makes it okay—

J: I just assume that once they’re in a shelter, they have been. That dog is not needing any further attention and it has gotten the attention it needs, and it probably never will be
able to walk on all fours without the disjointed gait, but it’s okay now. It’s not going to
be hard anymore.

As discussed in RQ2, Joanne’s background in women’s advocacy also ties in to these feelings. She wants to keep living beings safe so that they can heal, whether they are humans or animals.

Despite the fact that this ad promotes a British Columbia organization, Dawn feels motivated by this ad to participate locally:

D: Makes you want to donate to your local shelter so they can help your animals locally (laughs).

R: That’s interesting, because it’s an international organization. So you say when you see something for that international organization, it makes you want to donate not to them specifically, but to your local animal groups? (A few participants say “Mmm-hmm.”)

This could connect to a comment that Pamela made about focusing on the tangible and the local. Pamela speaks to the importance of framing a plea for help as being possible to accomplish, rather than being overwhelming. She thinks that it is easier to connect to just a few animal stories than to connect to larger-scale issues:

I think they [the BCSPCA with the “Sarah McLachlan” ad] give people like a couple concrete things to focus on… Whenever we do like any kind of ad campaign or anything at PAWS, we always found that if you give people just a couple concrete examples, it’s much more successful than saying that we have 100 cats that we need to help.

Perhaps, for these participants, being informed of a problem—no matter how large—motivates them to help the individual animals that they encounter locally.

The HSUS ads: inspiring hope. Several participants found the tame nature of The HSUS’s advertisements (stimulus materials #5 and #6: #5 being the plea to help one’s local
animal shelter [hereafter referred to as the “Lend a Paw” ad; #6 being the ad seeking to end horse slaughter [hereafter referred to as the “Horse Slaughter” ad]) to be motivating, as well.

Participants were generally attracted to the ‘cuteness’ of these animals. Multiple focus group members felt sympathy for and a connection to the animals depicted. Participants appreciated that the ads inform the viewer that a problem exists, but in a positive way, with no shock value (characterizing a positively valenced emotional appeal). Bill describes these ads as “clean,” “wholesome,” and “non-confrontational”: characteristics that seem to attract many participants.

These ads motivated a few participants to directly consider increasing their advocacy. Focus group participants expressed that they would be more willing to donate to an organization that has a gentle approach, like The HSUS. When I show these ads to Charles, they trigger him to consider what he can do to help:

R: When you see an ad like this, or like this one (the “Lend a Paw” ad), how effective do you think these are? What do you like or don’t like about them?

C: I like them. I mean, I don’t have a problem with anything about them, I guess; I feel guilty because I can’t give more to them (laughs). That’s what I—I mean, maybe I should just volunteer. Maybe that’s the thing I should do.

However, Hannah’s reaction to The HSUS’s ads demonstrates a realistic complexity when analyzing the effectiveness of advertising strategies. Hannah has a positive reaction to these ads, yet is also motivated by more graphic ads. At first glance, this may seem contradictory—but Hannah explains why a gentle approach can affect her in some ways, while a graphic approach reaches her in others:
R: With these different strategies, like you said, sometimes it works for someone or not; even within the same person, there could be different reasons why sometimes a more tame ad or a more racy ad would resonate or not.

H: Yeah. I think like these kind of ads [The HSUS ads], I guess more resonate with my general… helping animal welfare. And the other, the more graphic ones, are closer to my reasons for not eating meat and being against big farming and stuff like that.

Later in the interview, Hannah discusses the notion of not having to be as convinced to help an animal that she feels a bond with, like a domestic cat—but that she might need a more graphic appeal to draw her to an animal with which she does not share a bond, like a farm animal:

R: I know you said the ones that tend to really affect you are the graphic ones, and these [HSUS ads] aren’t graphic at all. Do you still think these are effective for you?

J: I think so. (Pause) I guess in the sense that, you know, these more deal with domestic animals, and it’s, you know, there’s sort of that gap between if I thought about harm coming to my cat, I would kill before I let (laughs) something happen to her. But when you think about a cow or a pig, or something that’s not traditionally, like, an animal we have a bond with, I guess that’s where the graphicness is more effective for me.

This ties in to my RQ1 discussion about how exposure to animals can lead to feelings of connection with them. The above dialogue demonstrates how these feelings of connection (or feelings of disconnection) with domestic vs. farm/wild animals can determine which ad strategies can be more motivating for helping different species.

The “Lend a Paw” ad was particularly motivating for some. Upon seeing the ad, Pamela immediately says, “And that’s much more my kind of thing.” She appreciates its mainstream, positive nature in contrast to more graphic approaches. Just as the focus group participants felt a
connection when watching the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial because a cat reminded them of one that they know, Bill finds this ad effective because the featured Cocker Spaniel reminds him of his dog. This speaks to the importance of connection, as explored in RQ1.

Another strength of this “Lend a Paw” ad is its clarity. Lily likes ads that clearly tell her how to help. She explains, “The ‘lend a paw to local animal shelters’ is pretty clear. The call to action is to volunteer at the local animal shelter or to donate. That’s a pretty clear advertisement.” Shannon and Joe also like that the ad tells the viewer how he/she can help. Adding to this sentiment, Linda feels that this ad resonates as something that is “doable.” Perhaps some advocates feel that a problem seems more manageable if they are informed of potential solutions.

A few participants are motivated by the “Horse Slaughter” ad (but many more criticize it, as I will discuss in a later section). Of those who find it effective, the main attraction to the ad is the appealing nature of a happy, healthy animal in ideal conditions. As Joanne explains, “I think you respond to the health of the horse, the freedom, the beauty of the animal and its motion; at least, I do. So it becomes unthinkable to just slaughter a creation that is so amazing.” Furthermore, Michelle thinks that the ad strikes an appropriate balance of introducing the viewer to a problem without being offensive, and showing an ideal end state: “It’s saying there’s slaughter, which is a bad thing, and it’s got a positive image of something we wanna create, or maintain, at the same time.”

**Graphic/upsetting content: resonance vs. avoidance**

In a cause like animal advocacy, much of the outreach content that an individual encounters inevitably involves content of a graphic or upsetting nature (e.g., pictures, footage, or stories of animal abuse). ‘Graphic’ content can also be considered in an alternative way: the
sexualized content of particular advertising strategies (e.g., those often utilized by PETA, like stimulus material #2 that depicts a scantily clad actress). Some advocates feel motivated by graphic content (sexual appeals, indirect fear appeals, and disgust appeals), while others choose to avoid it. I will address each reaction in turn, using the stimulus materials to illustrate these themes.

**Graphic/upsetting content rousing conviction.** While participants tend to find graphic content to be upsetting, its disturbing nature can resonate and motivate some to participate (suggesting the potential of indirect fear appeals). This is supported by literature that focuses on the persuasive potential of fear appeals (e.g., Mongeau, 1998) and the utility of disgust-eliciting content (Leshner et al., 2010). As I discussed in RQ1, Anna, Lily, Amy, Jackie, and Hannah have all felt that graphic content has resonated and has been a factor in their decisions to become vegan/vegetarian. Once again, a graphic documentary about factory farming convinced Anna to adopt veganism. She explains that this graphic tactic is “self torturous, but it’s definitely effective, and really powerful and really disturbing to see.” Exposure to a graphic film about food production led Jackie to become vegetarian, as well. Samantha also recalls that a graphic source impacted her: a book called *Skinny Bitch* that features written passages that she finds even more disturbing than some pictures. Furthermore, linking to the inherent sensitivity of animal advocates that I explored in RQ1, Janet explains that it is in her nature as a caring person to be affected by graphic material: “I’m a super sensitive person, so seeing the graphic pictures definitely had an impact.”

Based on the experience of these participants, it seems that initial exposure to shocking or graphic material can trigger interest, compassion, and involvement. Although Amy immensely
dislikes sad or graphic content, when she does encounter this strategy, it resonates with her, and
the memories of these images continue to motivate her:

I had to have that sort of initial shock thing, like I had to be exposed to some of these
horrific things—I feel like that’s often what drives me: thinking, caring about it, is these
images that come back to me after so many years I saw, or heard about.

Hannah also credits graphic content as motivating her to action. Videos about factory farming
and slaughterhouses have felt especially “jarring,” but Hannah feels that exposure to these
materials is necessary in order to fully grasp the issues:

It’s not something you want to see. I think it’s good to see...because you can hear about
cruelty and not understand it until maybe you actually, at least for me, it’s—visualizing
something like that is a lot more impactful than just hearing people talk about it.

Like other vegan/vegetarian participants, Hannah directly links her decision to become
vegetarian to this graphic content:

R: Do you think there’s something for you about that graphic nature of it, whether it’s
the sad animals in the “Sarah McLachlan” commercials, or the videos of the behind-the-
scenes at the farms, or this—for you, do you think there has to be that graphic nature for
you for it to resonate?

H: I think a lot of my reasons for going vegetarian and stuff are sort of wrapped up in
some sort of graphic image. I remember when I stopped, well, right before I stopped
eating meat, I started thinking every time I bit into a piece of meat, about—this is kind of
weird (laughs)—about, like, tissues, and veins, and all the inner workings of an animal.

So it is sort of a more graphic, like, scientific thing almost.
Non-vegan/vegetarian participants have also found graphic content to be motivating. Peggy recalls seeing an outdoor billboard by a local Humane Society that featured a trashcan full of kittens that were to be euthanized. The text was something to the effect of, “This is what happens when you don’t spay.” Peggy notes that the billboard sparked controversy, but she defends its approach: “No, that’s what we need. We need to know the reality. Maybe we can do something about it; maybe we can’t. But until you know what the reality is, you can’t do anything about it at all.” She remembers that she may have sent a donation because of this billboard.

Bill was affected by outdoor advertising, as well. He remembers billboards that he has seen about shutting down puppy mills. For Bill, the most impactful billboards were ones that were mostly visual, with one or two pointed lines of text. (Tying into the importance of the cause being on one’s ‘radar’ as discussed in RQ1, it was after exposure to and education about puppy mills that Bill began to remember these billboards. He had seen them before this, but their message had not sunken in until he was involved.) Bill feels especially motivated by visual imagery: “If I see an image that hits me just right (sighs), yeah, I’ll write a check.” Graphic outreach communication that shows realistic abuses is most resonant for Bill:

If you want to use shock value, I would think to show a picture of the cattle having their brains bashed out with the ram, or having them strung up on the hooks and slitting their throats. That’s shock. Do you really want to eat this? Do you want these animals to go through this? To me, that’s the kind of shock that would work.

At a different point in the interview, Bill adds, “I need to see what actually happens. They don’t strip down and put them [dead animal carcasses] on models like that [in stimulus material #4, the
“Bloody Burberry” ad. Doesn’t work.” This exposure to outreach communication about factory farm treatment has disturbed him:

Cattle have their brains bashed in so that I can have a steak. If I saw that more often, I’d probably say, in fact I’ve seen it once, and it had an impact. Do I still eat steak? Yeah. Because I won’t look at it again. Vivid memory of it.

(This reference to avoidance of graphic material will be discussed in greater detail in a later section.) Bill’s wife, Linda, notes that the film Food, Inc. influenced both her and Bill to purchase organic, free range, local meat so that the animals “led a happier life.” She tells me that, after exposure to this graphic film, she and her husband are easing away from meat a bit.

Exposure to graphic advertising has motivated Christina, as well. PETA’s campaigns exposing poor conditions for chickens used for Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds have led Christina to avoid purchasing chicken at these restaurants. Although Christina does eat meat, she says that only graphic communication involving inhumane killing of animals could motivate her to adopt vegetarianism:

R: Is there any kind of ad you think you could see that might motivate vegetarianism that might actually work?

C: It would have to be cruelty. And like the factory farms. Again, some of the stuff I was seeing, I can’t believe I still even eat meat, because of some of the videos. I think people need to be more aware of where it comes from, what happens, that kind of thing.

**Graphic PETA ads: inspiring hope.** Several participants felt motivated by the graphic nature of stimulus materials #2, 3, and 4 (all PETA ads: #2 being the “Try Vegetarian” ad featuring actress Pamela Anderson [hereafter referred to as the “Pamela Anderson” ad]; #3 being the violent cartoon image for Ronald McDonald for the McCruelty campaign [hereafter
referred to as the “McCruelty” ad]; and #4 being the stylized mock fashion anti-fur ad featuring a
dead, skinned animal for the Bloody Burberry campaign [hereafter referred to as the “Bloody
Burberry” ad]). A main feature that participants enjoyed about all three PETA ads is that they
grab the viewer’s attention.

Positive feedback about the “McCruelty” ad is centered on its accuracy and potential to
lead viewers to investigate the cause further. Jackie, Samantha, and Christina agree that the ad
appropriately conveys McDonalds’ cruelty to animals, and Samantha and Charles believe that
the “McCruelty” ad encourages viewers to think more about the issue and reconsider the
McDonalds brand. Hannah thinks that this ad’s graphic, satirical nature would have been
effective for her if she had viewed it as a child. (Many participants assume that children are the
target audience for this ad because the image is a cartoon.)

Few participants felt motivated by the “Pamela Anderson” ad. Of those who evaluate it
positively, two find it “cute,” but not necessarily effective. Paula is not a vegetarian, so she
would be part of PETA’s target audience for this ad—but Paula states that she would “try a
vegetarian diet for my health rather than the cruelty to animals.” Therefore, although she likes
this ad, it is not effective or motivating for her because she expresses no interest in adopting a
vegetarian diet.

Samantha believes that anything animal advocates can do to grab attention is positive,
and she approves of PETA’s use of celebrity in this ad: “I think it’s good that they bring the
celebrities in because it’s someone that you might look up to, or you know about and think,
‘Well, they’re vegetarian. That’s cool. They’re pretty. They’re rich, maybe.’” Again, this
sentiment ties to Batson’s (1987) assertions about celebrity ‘identification.’ (Although, when I
ask Samantha how effective this ad would have been for her when she was considering
vegetarianism, she answers that she probably would have been more receptive to the ad if the celebrity had been holding an animal.) Charles thinks that this ad would lead him (and others) to wonder why the celebrity would promote this cause, and to be interested in learning more. As one who is in the early stages of adopting vegetarianism, Charles finds this ad particularly motivating: “It’s kind of like a cheerleading team saying, ‘Go for it. Keep on the trail. You’re on the right track.’”

Regarding the “Bloody Burberry” ad, approving participants find the message to be clear, artistic, and disturbing enough to make an anti-fur point. Most of the participants who positively evaluate this ad are vegans/vegetarian. However, while these participants find it effective for themselves, Janet, Hannah, and Samantha wonder how convincing it would be for non-advocate audiences.

**Avoiding graphic/upsetting content: already aware.** For other participants—or, for some of the same participants but in different circumstances—graphic or upsetting content is so disturbing for them that they purposely avoid it. As discussed previously, animal advocates tend to be sensitive, sympathetic, and empathic, and exposure to outreach material of a disturbing nature can affect them greatly. It is common for participants to evade this content to protect themselves emotionally. This is consistent with literature that asserts that avoidance can be a response to emotions of fear and disgust (e.g., Davidson et al., 2000).

Nearly all participants who report avoidance of graphic/upsetting communication materials justify this behavior by explaining that they have no reason to expose themselves to upsetting content because they are already aware that animal abuse exists. For example, Amy is sensitive to animal suffering, so she chooses to avoid content about it because she knows about the problem already: “I think I’m aware of it, and it impacts me already. I feel like if I watch
more of it, I get into this really kind of depressed, ‘The world is horrible. Nobody wants to really do anything. Why do all these people not care?’ kind of state.” Amy finds graphic content “debilitating” as opposed to motivating. She is already convinced to care about this cause, so she does not feel that she needs exposure to any more persuasive advertising.

Several other participants react to graphic/upsetting content in the same way. Laura tells me that she avoids animal work that involves potentially upsetting circumstances, and that she avoids disturbing outreach communication: “I mean, I’m a member of the SPCA, but I realized I can’t even read their newsletters because they tell horrible stories that upset me, so I just (laughs) don’t read it.” Shannon also avoids upsetting content because she already knows the issues, she already contributes to animal advocacy, and she feels annoyed by graphic reminders:

We already know the horrible things that people do to animals. Like, when they show those on TV, you can’t undo what you see. Like, I can imagine what they’re going to show, and I don’t want that visual in my head anymore, like—I’m doing what I can to help cats. I don’t need it shoved in my face, ‘These are the sad little kittens.’ It does me no good—it makes me more irritated with the group.

At a separate point in the interview, Shannon elaborates on this issue: “I’m just like, “Ugh. Please. I know there’s [sic] problems.”

Several participants support this view. Bill dislikes extensive “sob stories” with a lot of text, and does not read these appeals. He reasons, “I think those of us that do volunteer don’t need to hear it. We know it.” Referring to the “Bloody Burberry” ad, Peggy insists that she does not need a graphic reminder to resist purchasing fur; she is already convinced. When Joanne discusses graphic imagery (e.g., photographs of abused animals) that animal advocacy organizations send to her in the mail, she simply says, “I can’t do that.” Janet explains that this
avoidance is how she deals with sensitivity to animal issues: “That’s kind of my coping mechanism for being overwhelmed with that.” She also avoids graphic content with the reasoning that she is already involved:

At this point, and for years, once I learned about some of the horrific things, like, I will skip over pages in books, just cause I can’t—It’s like, I know that, I’m doing what I can, you know, to make that change or to not continue that suffering, so I’m not going to read the specific details of what’s happening to these animals.

Graphic content is upsetting for Kathy, as well, so she largely ignores this content and continues to focus on her own contributions: “I mean, I know there is animal cruelty. In a sense, I guess, you just sort of tune that out to a point and you go ahead and do as much as you can, you know?”

**Sarah McLachlan ad: emotional and de-motivating.** This logic transfers to some participants’ reactions to the “Sarah McLachlan” ad. For instance, six participants tell me that they change the channel when they see this commercial on television. As discussed above, the common sentiment is that they avoid the ad because the content is emotionally uncomfortable, and because they are already aware of the issue (suggesting that it may be perceived to be a negatively valenced emotional appeal or indirect fear appeal for some). Because the commercial’s focus on abused animals seems to incite a feeling of sadness for participants (even though some participants find this sadness to be motivating), I categorize this ad as a negatively valenced emotional appeal.

Regarding the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial specifically, Michelle explains her avoidance: “I feel like I already know, and so I don’t need to watch it. I do what I can. But I’m glad it’s there because I want other people to see it and respond… I just personally can’t watch it
because I feel like I’m already aware of it and it just makes me feel depressed, so…” An exchange with Samantha echoes this perspective:

R: You say you turn it [the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial] off. What is it about this?
S: Cause I already—I know that this happens to dogs and cats, and it makes me cry when this commercial’s on… I already know that, like—I already want to help the animals, so I don’t need to be convinced, I guess (laughs).

Laura feels annoyed by this emotionally-charged commercial, like she is being hounded to help when she is already helping:

I think with stuff like this, if I have gotten involved, and I am doing what they want me to do, I sort of resent having to go through (laughs) the advertising… It’s like, I’m already doing something. I shouldn’t have to watch (laughs) these kinds of things. I don’t need to learn about it. I already know.

*Casting a critical eye on animal advocacy: stigmas and criticism*

Despite their involvement in the cause, participants are keenly aware of stigmas and public criticisms of animal advocacy. Most participants even criticize aspects of animal advocacy themselves, including the “activist” stereotype, the outreach approaches of particular animal advocacy organizations, and the advertising strategies illustrated in this study’s stimulus materials. These impressions can color participants’ judgments of their own place in animal advocacy; can deter participants from involvement with specific stigmatized national organizations; and can push some to contribute locally, instead. For example, if Shannon perceives a group to be particularly radical, she immediately decides not to participate:

I guess, in my head, I try to determine whether they’re on that extreme of either environmentalist or just out there—I don’t even know what to call them in the animal
rights world—but any of the radical organizations I’m usually like, ‘Okay, stay away from that’ (laughs).

A common recognition among participants is the negative public reputation of PETA. Though some participants like the organization and others do not, there is a definite consensus that the group has a well-known stigma of being radical. Laura is an example of an animal advocate who does not support PETA. She describes PETA as “weird” and “not legitimate.” Laura believes that they are “attention whores” with unclear goals, who rely almost entirely on emotionally manipulative “propaganda” to promote their messages. She admits that she knows little about PETA, but she does not support them because of their graphic advertising tactics: “I don’t really actually know what they do, but I don’t like them because they use naked people… It’s just sexist and stupid.” PETA’s frequent use of sexuality in its advertising pushes Laura away: “I just know that I could never support an organization that uses naked women (laughs), so that’s just enough for me (laughs).” Laura perceives that PETA has a negative public reputation, as well, explaining: “I don’t think they’re doing that well because nobody likes them.” She later adds, “I think people just think they’re a joke.”

Joe is an example of a participant who has a mixed impression of PETA. He likes their pro-animal work, but thinks that “they get overly carried away.” When I ask Joe if there are any people who help animals or animal advocacy organizations that he particularly admires, he contrasts PAWS (as a group he volunteers with and admires) with PETA (his example to represent a radical group), and expresses uncertainty about the nature of PETA’s approach. During the interview, Joe describes a radical stance that he encountered, and assumes that it is the work of PETA due to its forceful nature. Joe and I had been discussing PETA a few minutes prior, and then we had this exchange:
R: Are there any of those types of ads or messages that these groups have done that you don’t like? That you’ve noticed and you’ve thought you don’t like how they’re doing that?

J: …The only one that you can think of, and I don’t think it’s their advertising but their position on Michael Vick. I mean he did his time and he’s doing work for animals now, and you know, it’s like, I think, ‘Okay, that’s enough. He’s paid his dues.’ And so when they’re pushin’ that and saying we’re going to boycott the Eagles—

R: Is that PETA, or is that different—

J: Well, I thought it was PETA.

R: I’m not sure.

J: I’m not sure either.

Whether or not the communication was from PETA, Joe attributes it to the group, which is in line with his impression that PETA goes overboard. Interestingly, PETA has carved out enough of a public reputation that some advocates assume that an extreme tactic is most likely its work.

Even fans of PETA acknowledge its public stigma. Samantha supports PETA, but she realizes that others may not:

I really like PETA. I know a lot of people don’t, but I think because the situation is so grave with animals, that they kind of do need to be over-the-top in terms of their activism. And I really admire them. They bring in celebrities to try to attract people, they do billboards and campaigns, and I think they really do a good job with that.

Janet lauds PETA for its campaign strategies, as well. She refers to PETA as “awesome”—but also notes that PETA members have a negative stereotype of being “crazy.” Amy respects the organization, but also concedes its infamy: “I feel like PETA, for example, has such a negative
reputation among people who aren’t vegetarians or animal advocates. You know, it’s made fun of, like you’ll see on stickers with the pictures of a little boy peeing on it, you know?” Though these participants are fans of PETA, its negative public reputation is inevitably mentioned in most discussions of the organization.

**Criticizing PETA’s Pamela Anderson ad.** Participants are particularly critical of the stimulus materials that I showed from PETA. The concern with this distaste is that advocates may be deterred from involvement with a particular group, or with a particular form of involvement (like vegetarianism or veganism) if their reactions to these advertising materials are so negative. I will discuss each of PETA’s three stimulus materials in turn.

PETA’s “Pamela Anderson” ad drew significant criticism from participants; the majority of participants find fault with its tactics. A major point of contention is the ad’s sexuality. The sexually graphic nature strikes Joe as “silly” and “stupid.” He says that it “just looks like any other sex ad,” and that he would turn the page. Joe notes that he might be more motivated by a “sophisticated,” legitimate, nicely dressed spokesperson (per his examples, someone like Kate or Pippa Middleton). Amy thinks that this ad objectifies women and presents animal advocacy in a negative way:

A: For me, it kind of ruins the whole thing…

R: Ruins it in terms of what?

A: In terms of like being a positive message for vegetarianism and social advocacy. I feel like it just kind of taints the whole thing.

Other participants not only condemn the ad’s sexuality, but wonder what sexiness has to do with animal advocacy or vegetarianism. For example, Kathy is immediately turned off when I show her the ad:
R: (Explaining PETA’s vegetarian campaign and showing Kathy the “Pamela Anderson” ad.) Sometimes they’ll use sexuality as a way—

K: Not good.

R: What do you think about—

K: Not good.

R: What don’t you like about it?

K: I consider myself a feminist, so no. I think it’s the wrong message. I don’t think there’s a connection between sexuality and animal welfare (laughs). So, I think folks who use sexuality in advertising, you know, have a motive that’s really sort of disconnected from sometimes what it is they’re advertising or trying to sell or… you know. So no, I don’t like that.

Kathy’s partner, Joanne, corroborates this view upon seeing the material:

J: Sleaze. I mean, to me, that’s sleaze.

R: I’m curious, what are your thoughts on that kind of strategy for promoting vegetarianism?

J: Well, that’s objectifying of women, number one, and just message and image to me don’t—they’re in conflict. I mean, what’s—that’s not about vegetarianism (laughs), I’m sorry…

Sexuality aside, a common criticism of this ad is its unclear message about, or connection to, animals. Lily illustrates this point well: “I think, in a lot of these advertisements, the message is unclear. They’re not giving any reason to try vegetarianism. It’s just a picture of a celebrity in an outfit.” Bill also finds this ad irrelevant to animals and ultimately ineffective for him:
R: This is a PETA ad for promoting vegetarianism.

B: That’s not what came to my mind (laughs)!

R: When you see an appeal like this, how effective do you think an ad like this would be for promoting animal welfare, vegetarianism? What do you think is good about this? What do you think is bad about this kind of strategy?

B: She’s easy to look at, but I do not think of the animals... No, that does absolutely nothing for me.

R: So you don’t think this would be convincing for animals?

B: For one thing, at least I’m guessing for the average male, that’s attractive. Why would I relate that to ‘don’t kill animals, don’t get meat?’ The two are too far apart.

A particular concern with non-vegan/non-vegetarian participants rejecting this ad is that they may be turned off from considering veganism/vegetarianism. If the ad is meant to promote vegetarianism, and non-vegetarian animal lovers dislike the ad, they may form negative impressions of vegetarianism or vegetarians, and decide that this type of involvement is not for them. People who are animal lovers but non-vegetarians would be PETA’s target audience for this ad, but the vast majority of non-vegetarian participants find this ad unappealing and unconvincing. Linda thinks that the “Pamela Anderson” ad is “tacky,” and asks, “Why are you trying to make something like this sexy? I don’t get the connection… That doesn’t have a thing to do with being vegetarian to me.” Consequently, she does not believe that the ad will be effective for her or for people with similar demographics:

R: When you see this kind of tactic used—


R: You think tacky?
L: I’m goin’, ‘that’s not gonna grab people my age or my generation to try vegetarian.’ Christina’s reaction to the “Pamela Anderson” ad speaks bluntly to its ineffectiveness for her.

Interestingly, Christina is a member of PETA, and is considering vegetarianism—but this ad is still unconvincing:

R: You said that you’re considering becoming vegetarian. And this ad would be geared toward somebody who might be thinking about it, but isn’t yet. So, I guess this would be geared towards someone like you who would be thinking about it. You don’t think it would be very effective for you?

C: No.

As discussed earlier, Christina says that only graphic outreach communication about animal cruelty could motivate her to become vegetarian.

Two current vegetarians think that this ad would have been ineffective for them if they had encountered it when they were originally considering vegetarianism. Michelle (who is actually transitioning to veganism) is confused by the disconnection between the ad’s visual imagery and animals, as well as its lack of information. She cites these reasons for the ad’s ineffectiveness:

R: As someone who is a vegetarian, how influential do you think an ad like this would have been if you had seen it around that time when you were 17 where you were in that receptive—

M: Oh, I don’t think that would’ve—that wouldn’t have—I don’t think that would’ve influenced—cause I wouldn’t get it. I would be like ‘why’—“Turn over a new leaf”—It’s eye-catching, but that would need to be presented with some other information, like
‘Here’s what happens to animals,’ and ‘Here’s evidence you don’t need meat,’ cause that alone wouldn’t have much impact on me (laughs), I don’t think.

Hannah reacts the same way:

R: If you had seen this ad when you were like 11, maybe on the brink, hadn’t become a vegetarian yet, maybe considering it—How effective do you think this would have been in persuading you?

H: (Laughs) (Pause) Um… I don’t know that, for me, it would’ve really been a persuasive way to go about things (laughs). But I can definitely see, you know, sex sells, and for some people, that might be more persuasive.

For my participants, this “Pamela Anderson” ad proved to be largely ineffective for motivating vegetarianism, and, even worse, put off participants (including non-vegetarians) in the process.

Criticizing PETA’s McCruelty ad. PETA’s “McCruelty” ad garnered immense criticism from participants, as well. Some evaluated the “McCruelty” ad as highly ineffective.

The violent depiction of the Ronald McDonald character turns Laura off. She finds the imagery inappropriate, and would rather see a rational appeal than what she considers to be an emotional appeal (though I categorize this ad as an appeal of fear and disgust). All four focus groups members critique the ad, as well. Three members describe the ad as “overdone,” “over the line,” “a turn-off,” and “scary.” They express interest in factual information about factory farming instead, and think that the shock value is a deterrent. Bill strongly dislikes the ad, as well as the fact that it is not animal-focused. His reaction is potent: “I dislike it immensely. There’s nothing about it I like about it. I don’t relate it to the animals. No. No. It’s too far away.”

Because the ad depicts the popular children’s mascot Ronald McDonald, several participants express concern about how this ad may affect children. Linda opposes advertising to
children in general, and finds it especially inappropriate to target children in a violent way. Peggy agrees, explaining that McDonalds is a family restaurant, and that this imagery could bother families with children. This concern for protecting helpless children seems to coincide with the concern for protecting helpless animals.

Other participants worry that a graphic ad of this nature could portray animal advocates in a negative light. Lily describes the ad as “silly and juvenile,” and fears that these attributes could contribute to a negative stereotype of animal advocates as being “really overly emotional.” Peggy concurs: “You might annoy the people seeing it, and more than bringing them to your cause, they’re just going to think you’re these wackos on some far-left animal wing or something (laughs).” Pamela finds this ad “ridiculous” and she states that it “makes them look kind of silly”: ‘them’ referring to PETA, not just to McDonalds, or to the ad. Interestingly, the “McCruelty” ad leads Pamela to think that the group who made the ad is “silly,” rather than leading her to criticize McDonalds.

Criticizing PETA’s Bloody Burberry ad. Participants expressed the same reputational fears about PETA’s “Bloody Burberry” ad. Bill feels repulsed by both this ad and by PETA (indicating support for its categorization as a disgust appeal): “I think it’s disgusting. It does absolutely nothing for me except, frankly, it makes me dislike PETA. And I don’t know that much about them. I just don’t like that at all… I don’t like the shock value at all.” Shannon is also bothered by the shock value method, and this ad simply contributes to her existing negative impression of PETA. As I show the ad to Shannon and explain it to her, she sighs, sounding annoyed: “PETA ones with the skinned animals and stuff, it’s usually why I’d be like, ‘Ugh, there goes PETA again—Like, they’re doin’ that again.’” Not only is this ad ineffective for motivating Bill and Shannon, it develops Joe’s disdain for and PETA and further cements
Shannon’s disapproval of the group. Linda worries that such violent imagery will lead non-advocates to judge advocates:

L: I know enough hunters and such. I can hear it now. It’s gonna be rough conversation (laughs) and rough language.

R: What do you think they would say if they saw—

L: ‘These people are crazy, they’re’—you know, in stronger language than that, Rachel, but… Oh yeah. They would just dismiss that completely.

For some participants, “Bloody Burberry’s” depiction of a dead, skinned animal is too extreme (as in a disgust appeal), and therefore ineffective for motivation. Upon seeing the ad, Joanne has the same reaction:


R: (Continues to explain the ad.) What do you think of that kind of strategy, or how effective you think that might be as an anti-fur tactic?

J: It doesn’t move me. I mean… it’s too extreme. It’s on the grotesque side. Too harsh for my taste.

Kathy also describes the ad as “gross” and “repulsive.” Before I even show the ad to Amy, I explain its content—and, after hearing the nature of the ad, she decides not to look at it. With imagery that some consider revolting (and for Amy, to the point where she chooses to avoid the content), PETA may be deterring a significant segment of its audience.

Furthermore, participants critique the “Bloody Burberry” ad for being unclear. Laura argues that the ad does not present an obvious message. Joe’s reaction to the ad encapsulates this problem. When I explain PETA’s Bloody Burberry campaign and show him the ad, Joe still finds the “Bloody Burberry” ad to be vague:
R: They have another campaign that’s on these same lines. They call this campaign “Bloody Burberry.” (I explain the campaign to Joe.)

J: Do they have any words that go with it [the ad]?

R: Not for some of them. You can find them on their Bloody Burberry website (continues to explain). In other ads, it might just say “Bloody Burberry” or something like that. What do you think is the effectiveness of something like this?

J: Zero. I think it’s ineffect—to me, you had to explain it. I mean, I have no idea—I would prefer if people didn’t use fur, so I’m actually on the side of PETA on this. But that wouldn’t communicate that to me, so I wouldn’t get it, and I wouldn’t spend the mental effort to figure it out… I had no idea. If I saw that a hundred times, I would never remember that I’d see it, I don’t think. And I certainly wouldn’t figure out what it’s for.

The fact that I had to explain the ad to Joe is significant, because there is not always someone there to interpret an ad for another person. The ad should speak for itself, but this does not. As a result, if Laura or Joe were to encounter an ad like “Bloody Burberry” in everyday life, it would most likely be ineffective because they would not understand the message.

Criticizing The HSUS’s Horse Slaughter ad. However, while the vast majority of criticism was directed at the PETA ads and the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial, a few participants expressed a specific critique about The HSUS “Horse Slaughter” ad: that the ad presents the problem of horse slaughter, but does not propose a solution. This left four participants with low self-efficacy about what they can do to help. Lily asks, “The horse slaughter one, what am I supposed to do to end horse slaughter? I don’t know… It doesn’t seem to be telling people how to.” Shannon agrees, and deduces that the only solution is to donate: “Now, that one [the “Horse Slaughter” ad] I look at and I’m like, ‘So, what exactly is the point of
that besides awareness? (Laughs) What do they want me to do?’ There’s no… I guess send money (laughs) is the—there’s nothing else to do.”

Joe had been unaware of the problem of horse slaughter. Upon seeing the ad, he asks: “(Pause) What do they do with—why do they slaughter horses?” This ad made him aware that horse slaughter occurs, but he still has questions about it. Ideally, for Joe, this ad would provide more information: “Maybe if there was an article or something, I’d read it. It wouldn’t motivate me to—I guess I could Google it—but unless I was sitting here and you showed it to me, I wouldn’t Google it.” Bill once knew about horse slaughter, but says that because the topic is not very public, he has not heard about it in “ages”: “In fact, ‘til I saw that [ad], I’d forgotten about the fact that they’re probably still doing it.” For these participants, exposure to an ad that instructs them to end a practice with which they are unfamiliar, with no further information or explanation about how to help, may be ineffective.

Because it can be challenging (or unrealistic) to expect people to seek information on their own, it may be best for individuals like Lily, Shannon, Joe, and Bill if an organization were to provide more information on an ad, or include an accompanying article (in the vein of a rational advertising appeal). Rather than relying on an individual to research the topic, The HSUS could make it easier for audiences by informing them of specific solutions. These direct suggestions can increase self-efficacy and may lead to increased involvement.

The role of new media. My data have demonstrated that advertising (with advertisements like these stimulus materials) can be a lucrative way to initiate contact and spur involvement. However, as stated in the Literature Review chapter, organizations increasingly utilize online media to reach audiences (e.g., Kenix, 2007; Lester & Hutchins, 2009; Rohlinger, 2002; Seo et al., 2009). Fittingly, when I ask participants how they learn new information about
animal advocacy, nine cite some type of online source or component. Four participants garner animal advocacy information by visiting organizations’ websites; two from e-mails sent by organizations; two from online links sent to them by others; two from social media (specifically Facebook); and one from e-mails sent by other advocates. (Note that some participants cited multiple online sources of information).

Kenix (2007) contends that SMOs can benefit from “an effective Internet presence” (p. 72). Because nearly half of participants use new technology to increase their knowledge of this cause, organizations may be wise to focus on online media to teach and motivate animal lovers/advocates. I will revisit this topic in the Discussion chapter.

**Negotiating the stereotype of the ‘animal advocate.’** When I ask participants how they think animal advocates are perceived by non-animal advocates, I hear a host of largely negative stereotypes. The majority of participants identify stigmatizing stereotypes of the ‘animal advocate.’ At first glance, the reputation of the ‘animal advocate’ may seem like one that is merely *perceived* by participants (in their attempt to guess stereotypes from an outside perspective). However, many participants have experienced negative comments about animal advocates first-hand.

Participants perceive a particularly negative set of characteristics attached to the public stereotype of the prototypical ‘animal advocate.’ Laura believes that non-advocates think that advocates are “weird,” and that they do not take vegetarians seriously. As a consequence, Laura limited her discussions about animal advocacy with non-advocates during the time when she was a vegetarian. Hannah also perceives a vegetarian stigma: “Even though there’s [sic] so many vegetarians, it’s still sort of viewed as this slightly off group (laughs) of people.” Lily adds that “a lot of people tend to think that animal advocates are trying to force other people to change.”
These depictions of animal advocates are not only unflattering, but othering; they set animal advocates apart from the mainstream.

The most common stereotype of animal advocates that I encountered in the interviews/focus group is that non-advocates perceive advocates to be fanatical. Multiple participants described the stereotype of animal advocates with terms like “crazy” or “nuts.” For example, Pamela explains: “Oh yeah, I mean, my friends all call me the crazy cat lady and I’m pretty much used to that, you know?” She continues: “I think that sometimes people…think, ‘Oh, those crazy animal rights people’ no matter what you do. Absolutely.” Christina has also experienced this criticism, and perceives a low level of respect for advocates: “I’ve been called anywhere from a ‘granola-eatin’, kind of ‘tree-huggin’ freak.’” Hannah perceives “a big disconnect” between advocates and non-advocates: “In my experience, people that aren’t animal advocates view animal advocates as sort of this group of crazy, like, tree-huggers (laughs).” She has faced the challenge of non-advocates ignoring her logic and simply discounting her as someone who is “crazy.” Though she wishes to inform others of her views, she refrains from lecturing or preaching about the cause in order to avoid her perceived stigma that animal advocates are “just a group of crazy people”. Michelle believes that some non-advocates assume that advocates are “nuts” if they are too outspoken, which consequently hinders her from speaking her mind with non-advocates, as well.

More specifically, participants also recognize that PETA has a negative public persona. Michelle perceives some of PETA’s tactics to be “offensive” and “too extreme,” epitomizing the stereotype of the animal advocate: like “throw[ing] red paint on people wearing fur. That’s, like, the classic image of the animal rights activist. And I think that may turn people off. In fact, I think it has turned people off.” Illustrating this point, Hannah reports that she has experienced
non-advocates telling her that PETA is a “crazy terrorist organization.” Joanne corroborates this. When critiquing PETA’s use of shock tactics, she asks, “And do you really do more to hurt than to move forward? Harm the advocacy movement. And people think, ‘Oh, they’re just extremists. Yeah.’” Dawn also believes that the group’s “extreme” nature leads to this stigma of the animal advocate.

**Rethinking “activism.”** In this study, I purposely avoided the terms “activist” and “activism” and instead used the terms “advocate” and “advocacy.” I made this choice because I have sensed negative connotations with the terms “activist” and “activism” both in my own experience and in these interviews and in the focus group. I asked each participant for his/her perception of what it means to be an ‘animal activist,’ if he/she perceives differences between an animal activist and one who is simply committed to animals, and to assess his/her own place within these terms.

Participants’ responses surprised me. Each participant had to define him/herself as an ‘animal advocate’ (as determined by the criteria I listed in the recruitment e-mail) in order to participate in this study. Despite initially categorizing themselves as ‘animal advocates,’ only a few participants of the 24 classify themselves as ‘animal activists’ during the interviews/focus group. This split demonstrates a distinct difference in conceptualization of what constitutes ‘advocacy’ and what constitutes ‘activism.’

A common thread in participants’ descriptions of ‘activism’ is that an activist espouses his/her views publicly. Examples of behaviors or goals that participants attribute to activists include capturing public consciousness; participating in public relations; furthering the cause politically; being visible in the community; conducting educational activities; actively working to recruit new participants; influencing lawmakers and changing laws; donating large sums of
money; engaging in advocacy writing (like letter-writing and internet writing); chanting; petitioning; and generally acting on a large scale (like on a national or lobbyist level) as opposed to on a small scale (like volunteering at an animal shelter).

Although each participant must adhere to specific active/advocacy criteria to be eligible for this study, the vast majority of participants do not consider their activities to constitute activism. For instance, the way that Peggy conceptualizes animal activists automatically excludes her from this category: “As I tell people, I don’t believe in liberating lab rats. My issue, my cause, is animal welfare.” Peggy explains that she considers herself to be “committed” to animals, focusing her efforts on the individual level: “What I consider being a committed animal advocate, I’m more of a grunt: the foot soldiers doing these things, doing specific things for specific animals or people.” Bill’s view of an animal activist is one of protest: “I don’t consider myself an activist. I don’t know that I would get into a rally. I don’t like to go out and wave flags and that sort of stuff.” Amy also distances herself from the activist label:

A: I don’t know, I have trouble labeling myself as an activist.

R: Why is that?

A: I guess cause I don’t actively go out and—I don’t know, I guess I’m not out there lobbying, or doing something sort of physically real. I mean, I am, but I’m not, you know?

R: What would count for you as physically real?

A: You know, like, going into puppy mills and rescuing them, or going to Congress and lobbying for something. That’s not to say that I don’t feel like what I do is unimportant. I mean, I try hard—I think about stuff I can do often. Just the activist label doesn’t feel
like it quite applies to me… I think of an activist as somebody who’s out there sort of publicly doing something.

To Amy, personal abstinence (like refraining from purchasing products made from animals), food choices (like vegetarianism), or donations must not constitute activist behaviors; she does all of these, but still resists labeling herself as an activist.

Participants tend to conceptualize their relationship to activism this way: by classifying activist behaviors as ones that are beyond their own involvement. Jackie’s comments demonstrate this well:

Well, I guess an activist is going to be involved in PETA, which is pretty much the only large organization that people recognize that are fighting for animals. The activists are probably going to be vegan. PETA takes on, like, really extreme tactics, so they’re probably going to support PETA no matter what they do.

Jackie is not a PETA member, and she associates PETA membership as an indicator of activism. She also believes that activists are vegan. Jackie is not a vegan, but she is a vegetarian—but she does not perceive that this level of activity qualifies as activism. She equates activism with forcing ideas on people, which she only does to an extent: “I guess that’s why I’m not really an activist, ‘cause I wouldn’t be pushing anyone else to be vegetarian. But I do try to push them to reduce their consumption.” Once again, this is an example of a participant who perceives her involvement as always being a step below that of an activist.

Not only do participants largely resist the activist label, two do not even consider themselves to be animal ‘advocates.’ They both responded to my e-mail recruitment for “animal advocates,” but it sounds like they had never labeled their involvement as such before. Shannon explains,
When you sent it [the recruitment e-mail] out, I really didn’t consider myself an animal advocate. It’s not how I view it. Like, I go take care of cats (laughs). To me, it’s an easy thing… It’s not really—I guess I don’t think of it that way, like it’s some huge advocacy. It’s something that needs to be done, and I go do it.”

Laura does not classify herself as an animal activist or advocate either, because she performs “passive” activities:

L: I actually probably feel like I’m more not such an activist.
R: Why is that?
L: Just because I feel like I don’t go out there—I sort of passively do stuff that needs to be done around me. Like to me, I think when I think of actual activists… Those of us who come in and clean aren’t really advocates, or even fosters, not really—like those of us who do, like, educational activities, go out into the community, or actively try to bring people in, or things like that—that to me is what activism actually is. I think a lot of stuff is passive and it’s much easier to do the passive stuff, to me.

It seems that both women perceive that “activism” or “advocacy” must involve challenging work. Shannon and Laura both view their involvement as being easy to do, and therefore do not equate it with these terms.

However, while most participants resist the activist title, four participants do classify themselves as animal activists. Christina describes an activist as “someone who’s willing to take that extra step,” and she believes that she does this. Joanne sees herself as “an activist by nature,” taking on animal related responsibilities that others shrug off. Charles envisions himself as a possible activist because he directly helps animals in need if he encounters them (like stopping to save a turtle in the road so that it does not get hit by a car). Samantha’s
conceptualization of activism is interesting, because while she does consider herself to be an activist, she diminishes her own contributions by proposing the radical activities that ‘real’ activists do:

I mean, there are some that are really activists, like that’s their entire life, and they’ll go to jail for it. I mean, I love animals a lot, but I wouldn’t want to like bomb something like some of the terrorists (laughs). Yeah, I would consider myself an activist.

This is the same reasoning that Jackie has (as described above); most participants define activist activities as those outside of, or above, their realm. For example, if a participant is vegetarian, he/she might assume that an activist would be a vegan (a stricter diet than vegetarianism).

Participants also perceive negative connotations with the term ‘activist.’ For instance, Janet uses descriptors like “outspoken” and “aggressive.” She tells me that she does not possess these personality traits, so she would only classify herself as one who likes animals. (This is especially interesting, because Janet is highly involved. Others who are less active might consider her an activist, based on the nature of her activity.) Joe thinks that animal activists tend to lack empathy and be intolerant of other perspectives. Dawn also recognizes a stigma with the term, and associates activism with PETA specifically:

I think they [PETA] can take some of their stands too much of an extreme, and I do think that’s where the stigma of ‘activist’ comes in, some of the more—You think about the ‘save the whales’ kind of thing, and PETA, when you think of extreme activists. That’s what comes to my mind.

If even animal advocates look critically upon the term “animal activism,” it is clear that this terminology carries an off-putting stigma.
Mistrust of national groups/preference for local involvement. Finally, an unexpected finding is that several participants lack knowledge about national animal advocacy organizations, and instead are more knowledgeable about local ones. Many participants choose to participate only locally, and, when I ask if there are any animal advocacy organizations that they chiefly respect, they name local groups.

What is particularly intriguing is the common reason for this local preference: mistrust of national organizations. Seven participants report suspicion of large national groups. Perhaps not coincidentally, the majority of these participants’ involvement is at PAWS (a local organization).

When discussing their impressions of national animal advocacy organizations, participants express hesitance to contribute nationally. They are skeptical about where their money will go, and concerned that their donations could end up funding administration, advertising, or an organization employee’s salary. Shannon doubts the need for national advocacy organizations at all:

I know the SPCAs in local communities do what they do, but when it gets to the national organization, I’m like, ‘Why? Why do you need a national organization?’ Anything that you’re trying to put out there, like spay and neuter, the local ones could do it just the same, so it’s more they’re just using funding for advertising.

Shannon would rather see an organization help animals directly, on a small scale, than to assist in its effort to raise awareness:

This goes for not just animal groups, but all groups that raise funds—I do know that the bigger they get, the less their funding and work is going toward individual animals and the more it’s going to advertising… And I know there’s the thought of, ‘Well, they’re bringing awareness.’ I… am more the ‘Just do something real, tangible, rather than
awareness.’ We get it. We know there’s [sic] these problems, but it’s actually doing something rather than just…

Whether accurate or not, participants may also perceive involvement with national organizations as a greater time commitment, as Shannon explains:

I don’t really have an interest in getting involved in that huge aspect of it. It’s [volunteering at PAWS] something I do during the school day because I have two kids, and it’s what can fit into my schedule, and I feel like I’m doing something to help, and I like the organization.

Participants stress the importance of having a close connection to local donations, because they directly see the results of their aid. Local presence and knowing others who are involved in a group also build a sense of trust. For example, Laura tells me that she is more trusting of her friends for animal-related information than she is of large advocacy organizations. Additionally, Joe is less likely to donate to national groups because of this mistrust—but he is more likely to trust the legitimacy of an organization if he knows people who are involved, or if the group has a local branch:

R: What do you think they [national animal advocacy organizations] could do, like if the money really does go where they say, if that is the case, what do you think a group like that could do to put you at ease that the money is gonna go towards where they say it will go?

J: I guess the answer is that you’ve got to somehow build the—The Red Cross does it because you know that they’re there when it happens. Salvation Army, you see them. They have a local presence, both of them. If PAWS was a national organization, and that ad was for PAWS, I would trust it ‘cause I know what they do locally. And so the
answer to that is build the trust by having some kind of—you have an experience with
them in some way.

R: So, some kind of local, direct—

J: Yeah. I don’t do anything with Red Cross and never have, but I trust them. I knew
the president of Red Cross in Hawaii, and all the board members. So you knew what they
were doing. You know that they’re all pretty much volunteers.

Because Joe and other participants do not feel that large, national organizations are transparent
about their donated funds, they can be deterred from donating to these groups. Joe illustrates this
well as he watches the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial:

R: How do you feel when you see this type of commercial [“Sarah McLachlan”]?

J: I feel—in this case, I felt, like, really sad. And it would—it’s never motivated me to
do anything, but it definitely is a well-done ad that could influence me.

R: What is it about it—you say it could, but it doesn’t. What do you think is the
disconnect there?

J: Me (laughs). I just don’t—I don’t react to it. I’ve got other stuff to do. I don’t tend to
respond to any of those things that I see on TV. But when you play it, it does stir me.
But not enough to reach into my pocket and—I don’t trust any of ‘em [national or
international groups like BCSPCA].

**Conclusion**

This data indicates that participants’ impressions of animal advocacy organizations, their
outreach communication tactics, and stigmas surrounding the animal advocacy movement can
motivate or deter involvement in many ways. Positive outreach communication that focuses on
hopefulness and self-efficacy motivates many advocates to participate, and to believe that their
contributions matter. It is important for participants to have clear direction for how they can help. Graphic content (whether of a sexual, violent, or otherwise upsetting nature) motivates some advocates to participate, whereas other advocates purposely avoid upsetting content because they are already aware of the issues. Participants especially demonstrate a complex array of criticism for radical animal advocacy organizations and outreach tactics.

Despite being animal advocates themselves, participants freely criticize the animal advocacy movement, its organizations (especially PETA), and its communication strategies. Many dislike the graphic nature of PETA’s ads (stimulus materials #2, #3, and #4). A few critique an ad from The HSUS (stimulus material #6) for presenting a problem without proposing a solution. Participants attribute negative public stereotypes associated with the ‘animal advocate,’ as well as with the ‘animal activist.’ They tend to perceive that ‘activism’ involves public persuasion (and the vast majority of participants do not place themselves in this ‘activist’ category). Some participants are also skeptical of national animal advocacy organizations and prefer local involvement.

These criticisms, stigmas, and perspectives can affect the nature of participant involvement. This is of particular concern when negative impressions deter actions. For example, if an advocate is repulsed by a graphic ad, he/she may develop a negative connotation with that particular organization, and may even be less likely to act. Or, if an advocate believes that national animal advocacy organizations are not transparent with their funds, he/she may be less likely to donate to a national group. My conversations with participants illustrate the realistic consequences of misguided public communication.
Chapter 5

Discussion

Chapter goals

The goal of this chapter is to interpret my themes with respect to the big picture (as opposed to separating my interpretations into three distinct research questions/entities), focusing on generalizations that I can derive from participants’ responses to my three research questions. I will introduce two audience segments that emerged from my data; discuss the overarching themes of my findings with respect to the literature that I covered in the Literature Review chapter; propose a more direct application of situational theory of publics for animal advocacy based upon my findings; apply my findings to the realities and potentials for the field of animal advocacy, including how this data can inform animal advocacy organizations about the effectiveness of outreach strategies; and explore possibilities for future research.

In addition to the data and themes discussed in the Results chapter, I found that three high-level themes span participants’ reasons for initial motivation, continued motivation, and impressions of animal advocacy organizations, their outreach communication tactics, and the animal advocacy movement itself: the importance of hope/positivity, social influence/social support, and the influence of communications. In this chapter, I discuss the aforementioned sections with regards to these overarching areas. I conclude that animal advocacy organizations can increase interest and membership by designing outreach communications that adhere to the nature of these themes.
Two different ways of conceptualizing the animal advocacy experience

Defining the two groups: Large-Scale Philosophical and Small-Scale Focused

During data collection and analysis, I noticed an unanticipated yet glaring dichotomy among my participants. It became obvious that there were two different ways that participants conceptualized, thought about, and explained animal advocacy and their experiences with it: two different approaches/outlooks/perspectives/philosophies. This resulted in my delineation of two fairly distinct groups of participants.

When responding to my interview questions, one set of people (nine participants) described their experiences using terminology that indicated a broad, large-scale philosophy about the world and its beings, animal advocacy, and their place within it. A defining feature of this group is that their conceptualization of animals seems to be founded in strong conviction of ethics and morality. These participants often critiqued cultural norms and practices concerning animal treatment and the role of animals in society. I have chosen to label this group of participants Large-Scale Philosophical (hereafter referred to as LSP).

Conversely, another set of people (15 participants) described experiences and used terminology indicating a more local, small-scale, micro-focused view of animal advocacy and their place within it: a focus on individual organizations, encounters with specific animals, or particular animal issues (like the importance of spaying/neutering cats). The scope of this group’s interest and concern with animal advocacy seems to be founded mainly in the volunteer work that they have experienced. I have chosen to label this group of participants Small-Scale Focused (hereafter referred to as SSF).

However, it must be noted that these groups are not mutually exclusive. An individual can exhibit characteristics from both groups. In fact, it was difficult to classify a few of the
participants as belonging concretely to one group or the other, given the nature of their dialogue fitting into the LSP group at some points, and into the SSF group at others. These different conceptualizations of animal advocacy may realistically fall on a continuum rather than in two distinct groups, and a participant may realistically exist somewhere between the two—but, for most participants, it was clear to which group he/she belonged. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, I separate participants clearly into these two groups.

To illustrate the differences between LSPs and SSFs, I will contrast how members of each group respond to the same interview question. For instance, when I ask Hannah (LSP) to evaluate her experience as an animal advocate, we have this exchange:

H: I mean, it can be hard. It can be hard trying to… relate to people that have no interest in it. (Pause) I mean, I think on some level, almost everyone likes animals (laughs). They don’t want to see bad things happen up close and personal. I think a lot of people, ignorance is bliss. They try to distance themselves from things that actually happen. A lot of people also, you hear the response a lot, ‘Oh, I’m gonna worry about myself and my family before, you know, animals aren’t my number one issue’ (laughs). ‘When I have all these other things on my plate, that’s the last thing I’m thinking about.’

R: How do you respond when someone says something like that?

H: For me, that’s just a really closed-minded view of the world. It’s sort of, ‘Oh, we’re humans, we’re so much better than everything else that exists.’ I mean, it’s the same view people take when they’re totally destroying the environment, or something else. Like, ‘Oh, I do what I want’ (laughs). And I think that’s not really a good way for the world to work, because obviously we’re sharing the planet with all these other creatures, and in a lot of senses, they’re really helpless and the structure we’ve built up in their
environment. We need to sort of watch out for them because we’ve made it really hard for them to live (laughs).

This LSP has a macro-view of the world: about sharing the world with all beings, and the overarching philosophical reasons for doing so. When I ask Laura (SSF) the same question, she focuses on a more micro-view of animal advocacy and her personal experience with volunteering:

I guess it’s kind of fun because fostering, you know, I love getting new cats in all the time. It’s like I get bored with the kittens I’ve got, then I’ll just wait a little bit, and I’ll get some new ones (laughs). And I really like that it’s just sort of fun, and—of course I’ve also had cats who’ve been sick, and one of them attacked my cat and it cost me a hundred bucks to get him fixed—not fixed, but (laughs). (Describes the cat’s injury and how it happened, etc.) So I have had problems and I’ve had to medicate animals which can be a big pain—some are easier than others—and then an outbreak of ringworm once that was horrible (explains). There’s stuff like that, but overall, it’s been fun to see cats come and go. Who doesn’t love kittens (laughs)? Although, I’m also glad when they move on because they’re so messy (laughs). That part of it is what I’ve done the most of, so…

These responses clearly exemplify the different ways that LSPs and SSFs tend to conceptualize their experiences with the animal advocacy movement.

In the following sections, I will discuss the differences and commonalities between LSPs and SSFs. Defining the characteristics of each group is useful in three main ways. First, by understanding the nature and activity of each, I can more clearly delineate the two sub-categories of the active segment that I propose for application of situational theory to animal advocacy.
audiences who are characteristically similar to participants in this study (described in more detail later in the chapter). Second, this comprehension will allow me to more effectively advise animal advocacy organizations regarding the targeting of audiences (explored in greater detail later in this chapter, as well). Third, by assembling information about LSPs and SSFs from throughout the Results chapter, I can provide a straightforward general profile for each group regarding initial motivations, challenges, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of the animal advocacy movement and its outreach material.

Profile of LSPs

Demographics

Nine participants classify as LSPs. While the average age of participants in this study is 46, the average age of LSPs is 30 (with a median age of 26). The majority of LSPs are current students (seven of nine participants), while one is a homemaker and one is a retiree. All nine engage in some level of veganism/vegetarianism: one is currently transitioning to vegetarianism, three are current vegetarians, one is a current vegetarian transitioning to veganism, and four are current vegans (and former vegetarians).

Seven LSPs report volunteering with animal advocacy organizations or animal shelters (that only one specifically mentioned to be PAWS). Of these seven, five reported being ‘former’ volunteers. Thus, there are only two current volunteers (for any animal advocacy organization or animal shelter) among LSPs. Perhaps this is due to time constraints of being students.

Motivating initial participation for LSPs

LSPs are particularly motivated to act by exposure to graphic/upsetting content or experiences concerning animal mistreatment. Though LSPs find these encounters to be emotionally disturbing, they are also pointed enough to resonate and to spark involvement.
Almost all LSPs (eight of nine) report that exposure to graphic/upsetting outreach materials from animal advocacy or from animal advocates (for example, informative videos, pamphlets, or stories that may characterize fear or disgust appeals) motivated their initial participation in this cause. Specifically, the majority of LSPs credit this disturbing information or advertising for their initial adoption of a vegan/vegetarian lifestyle. Exposure to this content prompted them to reconsider their ethical values, which ultimately spurred their veganism/vegetarianism.

Furthermore, the majority of LSPs (five of nine) report that exposure to a disturbing real-life circumstance with animals led to their interest or action in animal advocacy. While both LSPs and SSFs are clearly motivated by a love and a concern for animals, LSPs are somewhat more likely to be motivated by graphic or upsetting experiences than SSFs. However, two LSPs state that there was not one singular exposure or experience that led to their veganism; rather, their commitment to animals developed over time, and veganism logically followed. These findings indicate that graphic/upsetting content or experiences have the potential to motivate LSPs to act.

Participants also cited their parallel interests to animal advocacy. When I identified this link for LSPs, it manifested in interest or involvement in environmentalism (although one SSF does have an environmental science background). As I discuss below, for SSFs, this parallel manifested in their selection of ‘caretaking’ careers. This difference in groups could simply be due to the age differences between LSPs and SSFs: that most of the LSPs are students and have not yet chosen career paths.

For nearly half of LSPs (four of nine), exposure to existing animal lovers or advocates triggered their own involvement. Seeing animal care or advocacy modeled was especially effective in leading them to consider veganism/vegetarianism. Contact with existing
vegans/vegetarians demonstrated to participants that this lifestyle was achievable. (However, for LSPs, this influential modeling centers more on ethical decisions than social decisions.) Once LSPs were active, they became more likely than SSFs to become models of influence to initiate participation of non-advocates. Thinking about two-step flow, what could be happening is that, once a person is involved and has knowledge and experience, he/she may become an inspiration or information center for another animal lover.

**Sustaining motivation of LSPs**

When I asked participants to describe any challenges that they encounter as animal advocates, each participant told of his/her unique frustrations. There were a wide range of complaints, but it quickly became clear that, for the most part, LSPs and SSFs perceive different kinds of challenges with animal advocacy. LSPs demonstrate a specific type of constraint recognition. Their most daunting perceived challenges with participation in animal advocacy center on negotiating their beliefs with non-advocates. When LSPs explained the challenges they face, their stories often involved difficulties with relating to others (for example, challenges to their veganism/vegetarianism), and with feelings of social isolation and alienation (for example, trouble relating to non-advocates). They tend to express the importance of camaraderie in terms of validating their own perspectives and perceiving social normalcy. Logistical and social issues also arise concerning maintenance of a vegan/vegetarian diet (often involving conflict with family or friends). LSPs seem acutely aware that veganism and vegetarianism are not fully accepted by the mainstream.

Internal drive bolsters LSPs to overcome these obstacles. Almost all LSPs (eight of nine) report that they are self-motivated to participate. They justify their advocacy on their philosophical and ethical beliefs, which develop through critical, individual-level thought
processes. Nearly half of LSPs (four of nine) maintain a positive outlook and high self-efficacy to sustain their involvement. They also feel better able to surmount these negative feelings in atmospheres of social support: feeling acceptance from their social circles, which validates the normalcy of their participation.

Notably, in contrast to SSFs, not a single LSP described his/her advocacy experience as rewarding. I think that this speaks to their large-scale perception of animal advocacy. Because LSPs conceptualize animals philosophically and ethically on a worldwide level, they may never quite feel that their work is finished.

**Impressions of organizational outreach**

As discussed above, the majority of LSPs report feelings of motivation from exposure to graphic images, videos, or stories (fear or disgust appeals). (Less than half of SSFs report the same.) When I showed the stimulus materials to participants, the vast majority of those who approved of PETA’s graphic ads (‘McCruelty’ and ‘Bloody Burberry’) were LSPs. (This does not include the ‘Pamela Anderson’ ad, from which only two LSPs drew inspiration.) For example, regarding the ‘Bloody Burberry’ ad, seven of nine LSPs find this approach appealing (whereas only two of 15 SSFs approve). This data is consistent with the general resonance of graphic/disturbing content with LSPs. It can therefore be reasoned that LSPs may be more receptive to graphic, upsetting, disturbing, or sexual outreach materials than other audience segments may be.

**Profile of SSFs**

**Demographics**

Fifteen participants classify as SSFs. The average age of SSFs is 55 (with a median age of 57). Seven of the 15 are retirees. Nearly half (six of 15) currently engage in or have engaged...
in helping professions. None of the SSFs are students, and none of the SSFs are vegan/vegetarian or transitioning to become one (although one is a former vegetarian). All SSFs are current volunteers, nearly all of whom (14 of 15) volunteer at PAWS. (The remaining participant runs her own animal-related nonprofit.) According to research, individuals aged 65 and above have demonstrated more volunteerism than younger age groups (based on demographic proportions), which is certainly true for my participants (Mathur, 1996; referencing Bartos, 1980).

**Motivating initial participation for SSFs**

When asked about animal advocacy outreach communication that led them to action, SSFs answered the question differently than LSPs. Whereas the LSPs described how exposure to upsetting content helped to form their conviction to become vegan, vegetarian, or to rethink their ethical values, the two SSFs who cited outreach communication as a reason for becoming involved referred to a much different type of activation content. The communication that motivated SSFs to action was newspaper advertisements or stories placed by local animal shelters (possible examples of rational appeals). The content was not particularly upsetting, as the motivating communication was for the LSPs; rather, these SSFs were open to beginning a new activity, and they happened to come across an opportunity (like the aware audience segment of situational theory). Because the timing was right, these ads resonated. Additionally, only two of 15 credit an upsetting experience with animals as leading to their interest or participation in this cause. It is therefore generally unlikely that an upsetting animal-related exposure will trigger SSFs to engage in initial action.

Another factor that instigates participation for SSFs is the influence of another animal advocate. Many report that they began their volunteerism because of another person. This
includes being specifically asked to volunteer, or simply choosing to begin volunteering with a friend, family member, or spouse. (Similarly, the SSF who is a former vegetarian began her vegetarianism because she saw it modeled by a friend.)

Several SSFs also chose nurturing types of careers (six of 15: three who are currently employed, and three who are retired). The caretaking nature of these professions (e.g., nursing or working with children with disabilities) ties to their underlying desire to help other beings. This existing inclination logically ties to their interest in animal advocacy.

Furthermore, some SSFs volunteer with animal advocacy to fill emotional voids. One-on-one contact with animals can act as a substitute for interaction with a spouse or children, and can combat loneliness. Interestingly, the six participants in this study who indicated this motivation are all SSFs. Perhaps this is because the motivation of the LSPs is more ethically and philosophically driven, and less dependent upon one’s own circumstances, than the motivations of the SSFs.

**Sustaining motivation of SSFs**

Regarding constraint recognition, when SSFs describe the challenges that they face as animal advocates, their stories typically center on small-scale, localized problems (for example, the sadness they feel when a person comes to PAWS to surrender a pet). The challenges described by SSFs are mostly of an individual nature. For instance, when SSFs tell of their obstacles with others, they typically cite personality clashes with other PAWS volunteers. SSFs are focused on their micro-level personal experiences with volunteering and on specific animal issues (e.g., the importance of spaying/neutering cats). To SSFs, the frustrations involved in animal advocacy are mostly at the immediate level and in tangible terms (e.g., issues at PAWS) as opposed to being on a larger-scale, ethical or cultural level or in philosophical terms (like the
LSPs). SSFs may touch on broad philosophical ways that people view animals and animal advocates, but they mostly conceptualize obstacles in terms of specific situations that they have encountered in their volunteer work.

In contrast to LSPs, only one out of fifteen SSFs mentions internal drive as a means to sustain motivation. Perhaps this is because the participation of SSFs stems more from helping particular sets of animals than from philosophical/ethical justifications for action. To maintain motivation, nearly all SSFs (13 of 15) remain positive and efficacious about their impact for animals. Furthermore, a few SSFs report contentment with instituting any change, no matter how small. This combination of high self-efficacy, a positive attitude, and a local-level perspective may lead SSFs to feel satisfied with what they can accomplish.

Nearly half of SSFs describe their advocacy as rewarding. Conversely, not a single LSP explained his/her experience this way. Perhaps LSPs are emotionally, philosophically, and ethically invested in this cause to such a degree that they always perceive that there is more work to be done—and therefore never quite feel a full sense of satisfaction. When LSPs discuss animal advocacy, they tend to conceptualize animals on the worldwide level. SSFs seem to concentrate more on animals on the individual level, as well as on their own volunteer experience. Comparing the two groups in this manner, it makes sense that it could be easier for SSFs to feel that their involvement is more manageable, and therefore more rewarding.

SSFs also sustain motivation through social support. However, while the type of support craved by LSPs centers on feelings of social acceptance, SSFs are more interested in the social relationships that they develop with other volunteers. For SSFs, this camaraderie is often an important way to garner the strength to overcome the challenges of participation (e.g., through
‘venting’). These friendships and relationships also serve to make their advocacy more enjoyable.

**Impressions of organizational outreach**

When I showed SSFs the graphic/upsetting stimulus materials (the “Sarah McLachlan” ad and the PETA ads: those exhibiting characteristics of emotional, sexual, fear, and disgust appeals), less than half felt motivated to act. For instance, the vast majority of SSFs disliked the “McCruelty” ad (as well as a few LSPs). Perhaps a greater percentage of SSFs were turned off by this ad because all LSPs are in some stage of veganism/vegetarianism, and this ad hints at the cruelty of factory farming. Of participants who find the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial to be motivating, the majority are SSFs. Perhaps this is because my data show that it is more likely for SSFs to be satisfied with individual-level changes than it would be for LSPs, who conceptualize their challenges as spanning worldwide.

Most of the SSFs (12 of 15) specifically criticize the “Pamela Anderson” ad for being unconvincing or unappealing (e.g., tasteless in its sexuality). Because SSFs are animal advocates who are not vegetarians, they would most likely be PETA’s target audience for this advertisement for vegetarianism. However, the majority of SSFs find this sexual appeal to be ineffective.

One of my most notable findings is that nearly half of SSFs (seven of 15) are suspicious of large, national animal advocacy groups. (Not a single LSP mentions this mistrust.) Instead, these SSFs trust local organizations. Thus, while participants from both groups report donating money to animal advocacy groups, SSFs are more likely to donate locally. As demonstrated by their heavy involvement in PAWS, they are more likely to participate locally, as well.
Commonalities between LSPs and SSFs

Though each group has its distinct characteristics, LSPs and SSFs exhibit commonalities, as well. For instance, a sensitive nature of sympathy/empathy spanned both groups with no significant difference. Both LSPs and SSFs also report that their connection to animals developed from having pets. Perception of high self-efficacy is about equal across the two groups, as well. Regarding constraint recognition, both groups report psychological constraints (lack of self-efficacy: feelings of hopelessness and questioning their level of impact) and physical constraints (financial and time limitations). Additionally, timing is critical for both groups; participants equally state that they only became involved once their schedules allowed, or that they plan to increase their involvement once their schedules allow. Both also took more notice of animal advocacy once it was ‘on their radar.’ (This was the case for LSPs more often than for SSFs, but was true for both groups.) This finding is supported by Grunig (1989), who argues that issues may remain dormant for individuals until specifically aroused (e.g., through a campaign, or, as my data indicates, through personal experience and/or social interaction).

Both LSPs and SSFs also indicate the importance of social influence and social support. Participants from both groups recall that their own activity was triggered by seeing animal advocacy modeled, or by mere exposure to an existing animal advocate. Perceptions of social support and and/or a supportive climate are influential for the participation of LSPs and SSFs, and both ‘vent’ with others to relieve frustration. However, as I explained in the LSP/SSF profiles, the type of desired social support often differs between groups (an atmosphere of social support and perceived normalcy for LSPs, and friendships through involvement for SSFs).

LSPs and SSFs react to particular types of outreach communication in indistinguishable ways, as well. Both groups derive motivation and inspiration from positive, hopeful outreach
messages. Conversely, both also avoid graphic/upsetting content to shield themselves emotionally. For instance, six participants tell me that they change the channel when they encounter the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial on television (outside of this study), both groups reporting this equally. Both LSPs and SSFs also react negatively to PETA’s “Pamela Anderson” ad, as well. Later, I will explore how an animal advocacy organization can take these tendencies into account when designing outreach messages.

Concerning impressions of the animal advocacy movement, perceptions of animal advocacy stereotypes do not differ significantly between LSPs and SSFs. Further, the vast majority of participants—both LSPs and SSFs—do not consider themselves to be ‘animal activists.’ (Of the four participants who do consider themselves to be ‘activists,’ two are LSPs and two are SSFs. [Selection or rejection of the ‘activist’ label does not seem to correspond with participants’ reported levels of activity.]) The related terms of ‘activist’ and ‘activism’ represent particular stereotypes and actions that most participants feel are beyond the scope of their involvement. Both groups perceive negative connotations with this terminology, as well.

Though LSPs and SSFs largely differ regarding certain types of participation, they participate similarly in other ways. For instance, LSPs and SSFs are equally likely to adopt pets from shelters. Additionally, participants from both groups report donating money to animal advocacy organizations. However, as I discussed in the SSF profile, the types of organizations to which each group tends to donate may differ (both national and local for LSPs, and local for SSFs).

**Main findings: discussion of overarching themes**

In this section, I aim to explore how my data from the Results chapter can be conceptualized more broadly. I will look across themes, sub-themes, research questions, and
interview questions to investigate how my findings relate to one another. Additionally, I will support my discussion with research covered in the Literature Review chapter.

In the Results chapter, I examine themes and sub-themes for my research questions one-by-one. However, as I take a step back from my findings, it becomes clear that particular sentiments, motivations, opinions, and stories cut across research questions. These higher-level themes encompass participants’ motivations for initial participation, how participants sustain motivation, and participants’ impressions of the animal advocacy movement, its organizations, its terminology, and its outreach communication tactics. Through discussion of these higher-level themes and their relation to literature, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of my participants’ perceptions and experiences.

When examining participants’ responses to RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3, I notice that there are three overarching areas of significance that continually permeate their stories. The first higher-level theme that spans my findings is the importance of focusing on hope and positivity in multiple domains. This includes the utility of high self-efficacy, reasons for initial motivation and continued motivation that center on positivity, and the necessity of feeling a sense of hopefulness from animal advocacy organizations and their outreach communication. The second higher-level theme that spans my findings is the importance of social influence and support. This camaraderie facilitates initial action, helps to maintain motivation for continued participation, and even ties into the effectiveness of advertising tactics. The third higher-level theme that spans my findings is the influential nature of communications for motivating initial action, continued participation, and for shaping impressions of animal advocacy organizations (and, consequently, potential likelihood to participate in one organization over another). I will discuss each of these areas in more detail below.
**Focusing on hope and positivity**

For participants, an outlook of hope and positivity serves to initiate and maintain their involvement—and they tend to more positively evaluate animal advocacy organizations and outreach materials that exhibit these characteristics. Thus, regarding both their own motivations and the effectiveness of organizational outreach, it is crucial for participants to maintain a sense of what they *can* achieve. This positivity fuels the confidence to begin involvement and to sustain it.

Self-efficacy inherently involves the positive perception that one is capable of effecting change. My data clearly show that a high or adequate level of self-efficacy or collective efficacy helps to trigger participants’ initial involvement in animal advocacy. This is related to the concept of outcome expectancy, or perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), which indicates one’s confidence that his/her behaviors can make a difference (Lee et al., 2010). Both self-efficacy and PCE have been demonstrated to lead to prosocial behaviors (Austin et al., 2008, Einwohner, 2002 for self-efficacy; Lee et al., 2010 for PCE). Consistent with this literature, my study indicates that participant self-efficacy can spur initial action in animal advocacy.

Participants describe particular motivations for their initial participation in these prosocial behaviors. I identified instances of all three paths that motivate this behavior, as proposed by Batson (1987). One participant acts for the reason of self-satisfaction, which exemplifies Batson’s (1987) first path to prosocial behavior (and parallels Sherry’s [1983] agonistic path to prosocial action, in which an individual’s motivation stems from his/her own satisfaction from action). Several other participants’ motivations align with the second path, in which an individual recognizes the need of others (i.e., animals), which leads the individual to feel distress, which leads him/her to act to reduce this negative feeling in him/herself (Batson, 1987;
This distress reduction path can result in the behavioral response of escaping the distressing situation (like avoiding graphic/upsetting content). Participants’ motivations also align with the third path, which involves feelings of sympathy or empathy for animal suffering. (This is similar to Sherry’s [1983] altruistic path to prosocial action, in which an individual’s motivation stems from consideration of the recipient’s benefits.) According to Lee and Holden (1999), feelings of empathic distress can motivate action. Most participants are upset by the notion of animal suffering, and therefore desire to relieve animals of this pain and fear. This logic illustrates Batson’s (1987) altruistic third path of motivation to engage in prosocial behavior.

However, my data indicate that Batson’s (1987) three paths to prosocial behavior are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For instance, a participant who follows the third, altruistic path to prosocial behavior in one circumstance may follow the second, distress reduction/avoidance path in another. Several participants indicate that their sympathy/empathy is what draws them to help animals (third path), but that this same sensitivity leads them to avoid distressing content in other contexts (second path).

The tendency of some participants to initiate involvement to fill emotional voids can also point to the importance of hope. These participants aim to re-focus their pain, loneliness, or emptiness in a positive way by engaging in the worthwhile, prosocial activity of animal advocacy. In other words, they are hopeful enough to transform feelings of negativity to feelings of positivity. Mathur (1996) addresses this issue, arguing that older adults may volunteer or donate money as a substitute for lack of social contact (including the death of a spouse, not having their children nearby, etc.). According to Mathur (1996), these individuals may derive a sense of personal control, self-esteem, or psychological feelings of well-being from participation,
as well as the added benefit of social interaction. While Mathur (1996) specifically refers to older adults, I certainly found these motivations and subsequent rewards to be true for participants of varying ages.

As discussed in the Results chapter, participants perceive a range of challenges with participation in animal advocacy which can, at times, reduce their motivation to continue (Einwohner, 2002). However, a positive attitude and enduring focus on self-efficacy help them to overcome challenges (Einwohner, 2002). Einwohner (2002) argues that animal advocates employ efficacy maintenance mechanisms to maintain positivity in the face of opposition. In my study, participants maintain focus on how their actions, no matter how minute, can make a difference (what Einwohner, 2002 calls ‘celebrating victories’) — and most are convinced that they have made, or have the ability to make, a significant impact for animals (demonstrating a combination of “fortifying strategies” proposed by Einwohner, 2002, including ‘seeing the positive,’ ‘thinking cumulatively,’ and ‘claiming credit.’ [p. 516]). This is consistent with Einwohner’s (2002) proposition that an individual must not only begin participation with a high level of self-efficacy, but must also sustain this self-efficacy to justify continued involvement. Even if an individual is unable to reach specific goals, a high level of self-efficacy will most likely continue to motivate his/her participation (Bandura, 1986.)

Participants are also motivated by positivity with respect to animal advocacy organizations and their outreach communication. Because advocates must believe that their participation matters, they find organizations, public figures, and communications that portray a hopeful, positive outlook to be especially inspiring. These optimistic communications reassure participants of their efficacy.
Rummel et al. (1990) propose that exposure to advertising can increase an individual’s self-efficacy and PCE. This communication will be most resonant if it provides a clear direction for how advocates can contribute. If an individual believes that his/her behaviors can solve the presented problem, it can affect his/her evaluation of that communication content (Haley, 1996). Thus, outreach communication content will be most effective if an individual feels empowered by it. It is especially critical for an advocate to maintain a sense of hopefulness from an organization because this positivity may influence him/her to donate to, adopt an animal from, or otherwise participate with this group over another.

However, in the Results chapter, I identify an area of contradiction concerning the type of outreach communication that is most effective for participants. While positive content motivates some, others are also inspired by communication of a graphic nature (e.g., material that is violent, sexual, or depicts animal cruelty: sexual, fear, and disgust appeals). This is especially motivating for vegans/vegetarians (LSPs).

Although the shocking or disturbing nature of graphic communication tactics can justify action, some participants purposely avoid this content (as discussed by Davidson et al., 2000). (Interestingly, some of the participants who tell me that graphic content resonates with them, or even that it sparked their veganism/vegetarianism, may still avoid graphic or emotionally-charged material in certain contexts.) As noted above, this avoidance can be explained by the second path of motivation to prosocial behavior (Batson, 1987; Lee & Holden, 1999). To achieve emotional relief, Lee and Holden (1999) argue that an individual may attempt to escape the distressing situation to avoid feelings of negativity. The section in the Results chapter concerning avoidance of graphic/upsetting content (including the “Sarah McLachlan” commercial) illustrates this literature clearly.
Social influence and support: how others can facilitate an advocate’s action through exposure, example, and camaraderie

Though the decision to engage in advocacy is individual, other people greatly shape the experience of the animal advocate. My data show that social influence and social support play a significant role in participants’ initial involvement, continued participation, and, to a lesser extent, to the effectiveness of animal advocacy advertising. Both the positive and negative social aspects of animal advocacy affect participants’ perceptions of their experiences, as well.

People realistically exist in influential interpersonal networks (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). It is common to obtain information through personal experiences and social interactions, like discussions with others (Weaver, Zhu, & Willnat, 1992). My findings indicate that having friends, family, or significant others who care about animals positively affects participants’ likelihood to participate themselves.

In the tradition of two-step flow (first proposed by Lazarsfeld et al., 1968), those who are already active in animal advocacy may act as opinion leaders for non-active animal lovers in their social networks, inciting participation. According to Yang and Stone (2003), this interpersonal communication can influence people’s views regarding which topics are important enough to think about. When telling their stories of initial involvement, many participants cite that exposure to existing animal advocates sparked their interest in animal advocacy. For participants, seeing animal advocacy and compassion modeled by others was influential for their own initial involvement—especially for vegans/vegetarians. This is in line with Mazzarol, Sweeney, and Soutar’s (2007) argument for the influence of word of mouth communication. Perhaps this modeling is persuasive for participants partly because the information comes from a credible, meaningful other (Hogan, Lemon, & Libai, 2004).
For many, having others close to them who are also involved in animal advocacy creates feelings of support and normalcy. Several participants even initiated their advocacy partly because of a friend, family member, or significant other (e.g., beginning volunteer work with a spouse). Vegan/vegetarian participants particularly expressed the importance of feeling socially accepted when beginning or sustaining participation in this cause. A few participants have even engaged in two-step flow by becoming opinion leaders for others, sharing information about animal advocacy with non-advocates (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968).

When describing how they maintain motivation for involvement, the majority of participants report that they cope with obstacles through social support. For LSPs, this support is in the form of others legitimizing and accepting their perspectives; for SSFs, this support takes the form of camaraderie with other volunteers. For both groups, ‘venting’ with other supporters or advocates helps them to overcome frustrations and maintain the desire to participate.

Research has also shown that modeling can influence action, even if the model is not in one’s personal network (e.g., Austin et al., 2008; Silvera & Austad, 2004; Till & Shimp, 1998). An opinion leader does not necessarily have to be one with whom an individual is actually acquainted; sometimes, these role models can be celebrities (Brown et al., 2003). Celebrity spokespeople have been shown to motivate involvement in a cause (e.g., Austin et al., 2008). For instance, a few participants expressed the positive influence of Pamela Anderson in her PETA ad, and one recalls the positive influence of Paul and Linda McCartney. Austin et al. (2008) suggest that, if an admired celebrity assures an individual that he/she can help a cause, this increases the individual’s level of self-efficacy—which can ultimately help to sustain their participation over time. Thus, celebrity-based appeals have the potential to provide social influence and social support for both budding and existing animal advocates.
However, my data can be just as useful for informing the types of celebrities to avoid when attempting to influence non-advocates. Utilizing celebrity appeal is not always successful; an organization must be conscious of which celebrity is shown, how he/she is portrayed, and how he/she presents the message. Participants heavily criticize PETA’s choice to depict Pamela Anderson in its pro-vegetarian ad, as well as the sexualized manner in which she is shown. Conversely, not a single participant criticizes BCSPCA’s choice of spokesperson in Sarah McLachlan, and not one condemns her personal presentation.

**The influence of communications: how advertising and interpersonal communication can motivate initial action, continued participation, and shape impressions of animal advocacy organizations**

My findings indicate that both interpersonal and mass communications are important factors in participants’ initial involvement, continued involvement, and impressions of animal advocacy organizations and their advertising. As described above in greater detail, the types of communications that are most effective for LSPs and for SSFs tend to differ in nature. Because I explored the specifics of both groups above, this section will provide an overview of influential communications as they relate to this study as a whole, incorporating support from the advertising appeal literature.

When explaining the factors that motivated their initial action in animal advocacy, participants often cited influential communications. Regarding organizational outreach communication, nearly all LSPs (eight of nine) state that exposure to messages of a graphic or upsetting nature (fear or disgust appeals) led them to reconsider their philosophical stances about animals, thereby sparking their participation in this cause (including their veganism/vegetarianism). This is consistent with literature that highlights the persuasive
potential of fear appeals (e.g., Mongeau, 1998) and the benefits of utilizing disgust-eliciting imagery (Leshner et al., 2010).

However, the type of organizational outreach communication that influenced SSFs to act was of a different nature. For the two SSFs who initiated participation due to exposure to outreach communication, the messages more closely align with a rational type of appeal (newspaper advertisements or stories placed by local animal shelters). Rational advertising appeals have been shown to stimulate positive evaluations about the advertised product (or action) (Holbrook, 1978), which was most likely the case for these participants.

Both LSPs and SSFs cite interpersonal communication—exposure to existing animal lovers or animal advocates—as a factor in their initial participation, as well. For LSPs, exposure to existing vegans/vegetarians helped lead to their own adoption of veganism/vegetarianism. For SSFs, many began volunteering with, or at the request of, other animal lovers or advocates. LSPs even became models of influence to persuade non-advocates to action, as in the theory of two-step flow (Lazarsfeld et al., 1968).

Communication is also critical to how participants sustain their motivation to participate in animal advocacy. Both LSPs and SSFs report that social influence and social support factor into their reasons for continued involvement (as explained in greater detail in the previous section). Social acceptance (for LSPs), social relationships (for SSFs), and ‘venting’ (for both groups) characterize the interpersonal factors that help participants to overcome obstacles and continue their participation.

Additionally, my study shows that advertising helps to shape participants’ impressions of animal advocacy organizations (as supported by Shimp, 2003). If these impressions are positive, a participant may be more likely to participate with a particular group or cause (Mobley, 2007);
but, if these impressions are negative, a participant may be more likely to avoid participation with a particular group or cause (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Mika, 2006). Both LSPs and SSFs feel inspired by stimulus materials that exhibit characteristics of positively valenced emotional appeals; however, conversely, both groups may also avoid stimulus materials that exhibit characteristics of fear or disgust appeals, potentially decreasing the effectiveness of the ads (supported in terms of fear appeals by Albarracin & Kumkale, 2003) and souring participants’ evaluations of particular organizations.

Notably, the majority of both LSPs and SSFs respond negatively to the “Pamela Anderson” ad (a sexual appeal). This finding is supported by literature that spotlights the potential for sexual appeals to be poorly received (LaTour & Henthorne, 1994; Tai, 1999). Putrevu (2008) argues that, for individuals with high levels of involvement, a sexual appeal could ultimately reduce the effectiveness of an advertisement. All participants in this study exhibit high involvement, and most evaluate this stimulus material negatively—and, for some, this negative evaluation helps to shape or to reconfirm a negative impression of PETA. Consequently, my findings suggest the potential downfalls of utilizing a sexual appeal for animal advocacy.

However, as I mention in the Literature Review chapter, I did not empirically categorize or test types of advertising appeals. Therefore, I cannot—and do not attempt to—draw conclusions about the effectiveness of particular appeals for animal advocacy advertising. I preliminarily label these stimulus materials to gain a slightly deeper and more contextualized understanding of how characteristics of advertising appeals may factor into participants’ reasons for involvement in animal advocacy. I only intend to make observations about the potential for
stimulus materials to align with certain types of appeals, and only propose potential categories for these stimulus materials based on characteristics described in the literature.

**Relating findings to literature**

Based on the literature covered in my Literature Review chapter, I had expected my data to illustrate various theoretical concepts. As demonstrated in the section above, my findings are, in fact, supported by multiple areas within the literature. The concepts of self-efficacy (and PCE) proved to be central to participants’ initial and sustained motivations for participation. My data is also supported by literature that proposes motivations for prosocial behavior, the influential nature of interpersonal networks (including the potential of two-step flow and celebrity influence), efficacy maintenance strategies that help advocates sustain activity, and persuasive potential of particular types of advertising appeals. These are just a few examples of how my data is supported by existing research.

A significant area of concentration in my Literature Review pertains to situational theory of publics. Situational theory is used to segment activist (or advocate) audiences based on “the nature and extent of their communication about problems or issues that result” when advocacy organizations interact with publics (Grunig, 1989, p. 4). I considered dimensions of its concepts in my interviews/focus group, and further evaluated its utility in my data analysis phase. I found that this theory largely applies to my data.

However, some of my findings raise questions about the applicability of situational theory for animal advocate audiences. My findings can therefore act to expand this literature, contributing alternative considerations for how to segment animal advocate audiences with characteristics similar to the participants in this study. In the tradition of other researchers who have expanded upon situational theory of publics (e.g., Dunlap & McCright, 2008; Hallahan,
2000a; Rawlins, 2006), I aim to contribute to the applicability of this theory in three ways. First, I propose the consideration of a behavioral dimension (when applying the theory to participation in animal advocacy). Second, I suggest that this behavioral dimension of the dependent variable could be divided into sub-categories that more deeply capture differences among active animal advocacy audience members. Third, I discuss how participants’ levels of constraint recognition did not always coincide with their levels of information seeking in the ways that would be expected based on situational theory.

**Reviewing situational theory of publics**

In the Literature Review chapter, I discuss the tenets of situational theory of publics in great detail. In this section, I will provide a brief overview of its dimensions, including its application to my study. I aim to demonstrate the utility of this theory for conceptualizing my participants’ motivations and experiences. However, the characteristics of my sample (e.g., living in a small town, volunteering at a specific animal shelter) may constrain the ways that I explore and apply situational theory. Therefore, my utilization of this theory may only be applicable to a study of this nature, with a characteristically similar sample.

Situational theory of publics was developed to explain why some publics communicate actively in response to organizational communication, while other publics communicate passively, and while others do not react at all (Rawlins, 2006). This theory proposes that the degree to which one experiences the independent variables of problem recognition (the extent to which the individual recognizes an issue as a problem), level of involvement (relevance of the problem/issue to the individual), and constraint recognition (degree of self-efficacy about solving the problem) predicts whether one will engage in the dependent variable of information seeking (active communication behavior) or the dependent variable of information processing (passive
communication behavior) (Rawlins, 2006). It is this dependent variable that segments individuals into active, aware, latent, or non-public audience segments. An individual is most likely to engage in active information seeking if problem recognition is high, level of involvement is high, and constraint recognition is low (Grunig, 1989; Grunig, 1997; Pavlik, 1988). I will address how my participants relate to each of these concepts in turn.

Although the nature of problem recognition varies among my participants, they all acknowledge mistreatment of animals to be a significant problem. My data show that participants share a sensitive characteristic that manifests in feelings of sympathy/empathy for the plight of animals. Therefore, all of my participants can be considered to exhibit a high level of problem recognition.

The concept of involvement can reflect one’s altruism regarding others’ well-being (Heath & Douglas, 1991a). Again, although the nature of this emotional and personal relevance varies among participants, all participants like animals, demonstrate sensitivity to their needs, and voluntarily participate in the cause. Furthermore, emotional involvement is high for all. Thus, all participants can be determined to exhibit a high level of involvement.

Constraint recognition may either be psychological (like perception of low self-efficacy) or physical (for instance, the number of hours spent at one’s job restricting the time one can spend volunteering) (Grunig, 1997). The concept of constraint recognition differs greatly among participants, with a multitude of given constraints. Some participants perceive debilitating constraints; others perceive constraints that can be overcome; and others perceive few major constraints to their motivation. Participants’ levels of constraint recognition therefore vary widely. However, as I discuss later, recognition of constraint does not necessarily inhibit action.
According to situational theory, information seeking leads to aware or active publics. In the way that information seeking is defined by situational theory, my participants vary in terms of how much they actively seek informational content—especially if the content is graphic or upsetting. Later, I will explore this concept further with regards to my data.

Individuals who engage in information processing consider information if they happen to encounter it. While some participants exhibit characteristics of information processing, I later explain why I still consider all participants to be active (despite their information processing potentially indicating passivity).

Grunig (1989) notes that situational theory tends to be supported by studies that demonstrate “that issues and people’s differing perceptions of them (problem recognition, constraint recognition, and level of involvement) are necessary conditions for the presence of publics and for membership and participation in activist groups” (p. 13). My current study centers on the dimensions of problem recognition, level of involvement, and constraint recognition as partial determinants of advocacy participation. This justifies my application of situational theory.

**Expanding the applicability of situational theory of publics**

While the core of my study heavily applies to the concepts of problem recognition, involvement, and constraint recognition in situational theory, I conceptualize the concepts of information seeking and information processing differently by considering an additional behavioral element. There are three main ways in which I hope to expand the application of situational theory for similar studies of animal advocacy. I will explain each of these suggestions below.
A focus on behavior

The first extension of situational theory that I propose concerns the nature of information seeking and information processing. In situational theory, the three independent variables are meant to predict the dependent variables of information seeking or information processing: whether an individual’s degree of information seeking is active or passive. However, for my study, I conceptualize these two concepts differently. Rather than considering how problem recognition, level of involvement, and constraint recognition can lead to active or passive information seeking, I explore how these concepts can lead to active behaviors. Though I do ask participants about their experiences with seeking information, the focus of my study is more on their action.

Other researchers have also expanded situational theory by considering a behavioral component. This behavioral dimension is especially relevant for studying social movements (e.g., Werder, 2006). Some extend the dependent variables concerning degree of information seeking to consider the likelihood of consequent action for each segment (e.g., Grunig, 1989; Grunig, 1997). For instance, in reference to the variable of problem recognition, Grunig and Hunt (1984) state that individuals will engage in active communication behavior if “they perceive that something needs to be done to improve the situation” (p. 149). Grunig (1989) also argues that members of the active category “more often engage in a behavior to do something about the situation” (p. 5-6) and “are most likely to join an activist group and to participate actively in that group” (p. 22). That is, after seeking information actively, ‘active’ individuals may then continue on to engage in related behaviors.

All of my participants believe that they must act to reduce the suffering of animals, but I conceive of this drive differently than Grunig (1997) or Grunig (1989). Whereas Grunig (1997)
argues that this drive to improve conditions will lead to active communication behavior, I suggest that it can also simply lead to active behavior. For instance, some participants tell me that they specifically avoid information about animal suffering—but, regardless of possible information seeking or information avoiding, all participants still engage in participatory behavior. An individual can therefore experience a high level of problem recognition, a high level of involvement, and a low level of constraint recognition, and move to a behavioral endpoint without the extra information-seeking step.

Thus, my findings are more in line with that of research focuses on the concepts of active participation and non-participation (e.g., Dunlap & McCright, 2008; McCright & Dunlap, 2008). For example, McCright & Dunlap (2008) propose four categories that designate degree of social movement identity: ‘active participants,’ ‘sympathetics,’ ‘neutrals,’ and ‘unsympathetics,’ where ‘active participants’ are those who personally participate to achieve a movement’s goals. Similarly, Rawlins (2006) defines active publics as those who take action regarding an issue or problem (p. 9). All of my participants engage in participatory action. This defines my participants as ‘active’ in the ways that McCright and Dunlap (2008) and Rawlins (2006) explicate the term. With this support from the literature, I propose the potential utility of utilizing these behavioral concepts for similar animal advocacy studies.

**Subdividing the ‘active’ segment**

Though all of my participants are classified as ‘active’ in situational theory, my data has led me to consider the active segment as not just one all-encompassing category, but as one with gradations and nuances: motivated by diverse perspectives, and manifesting in behavioral differences (for example, in volunteering vs. veganism/vegetarianism). In an animal advocacy study of this kind, with participants with these characteristics, this active segment realistically
encompasses many different people, with varying motivations for, and conceptualizations of, their advocacy.

Therefore, the second expansion of situational theory that I propose for similar studies of animal advocacy is further segmentation within this active segment. Two groups (LSPs and SSFs) emerged from my research, suggesting that the active segment can be subdivided into additional segments. In this study, I learned that the characteristics of LSPs and SSFs are markedly different. Both groups are active behaviorally, but each group thinks about, acts in, and experiences animal advocacy in distinct ways. Although individuals may realistically exist on a continuum and not always fall into two discrete categories, my participants typify these two groups well. While these two groups may not be applicable to all studies of animal advocacy, their presence indicates the existence of segments within the active category. Advocacy groups can thus consider the possibility of additional sub-segments when studying audiences.

**Investigating the reliability of ‘constraint recognition’**

Based on my data, I found that there did not seem to be a relationship between a participant’s degree of constraint recognition and his/her degree of information seeking. (For this point, I conceptualize ‘information seeking’ as originally intended by situational theory.) According to situational theory, high problem recognition, high involvement, and low constraint recognition should lead to active information seeking. High constraint recognition is typically associated with aware publics (Rawlins, 2006). Aware publics also exhibit either high or low problem recognition, but low involvement (Grunig, 1989; Rawlins, 2006). My participants would not be classified as aware due to their high level of problem recognition and high level of involvement.
However, participants vary greatly concerning level of constraint recognition. In situational theory, high constraint recognition would relegate one to the aware category, with an assumed passive tendency toward information processing—but I found that some participants with high constraint recognition still seek information actively. Situational theory does not account for the capability of an individual’s motivation to supersede his/her constraint.

In the interviews and focus group, I ask participants about the sources of their animal advocacy information, providing a sense of to what degree they actively seek it out. Although participants’ levels of constraint recognition vary from high to low, I learned that this does not seem to have a consistent relationship with their levels of information seeking. Several LSPs exhibit high constraint recognition, but still seek out animal advocacy information. Additionally, at some times and with particularly graphic or upsetting content, both LSPs and SSFs actually avoid information and therefore only engage in passive information processing. Furthermore, some participants with high constraint recognition seek information in some circumstances, but avoid it in others. These findings seem to contradict the logic of situational theory with regards to the utility of constraint recognition.

To understand why an individual with high constraint recognition still actively seeks information, I look to my data concerning motivation. LSPs almost unanimously explain that self-generated, internal motivation helps them to overcome obstacles. Therefore, while an LSP may have high constraint recognition—that he/she recognizes his/her constraints and feels them in a real way—this internal drive ultimately surmounts these constraints and allows him/her to engage in active information seeking. The avoidance of graphic/upsetting information (sometimes by the same participants who actively seek information in other circumstances) can be partially explained by the sensitive, sympathetic/empathic nature of participants: their high
level of involvement. (Later in this chapter, I propose the potential for future research on the topic of avoidance.)

**Implications for organizational outreach: applying my findings to the needs of animal advocacy organizations**

Based on my findings, I have learned specific approaches that may motivate all animal advocates as well as distinct audience segments. In this section, I will advise animal advocacy organizations regarding the most effective methods to motivate initial and/or continued participation of all animal advocates; of LSPs; and of SSFs (and, within these segments, of vegans/vegetarians, volunteers, and prospective advocates). I will also offer helpful information for organizations to consider when targeting publics (for example, the importance of focusing on hope/positivity and social support in their outreach). In the tradition of Werder (2006), who studied how message strategies may influence the three independent variables of situational theory, I will consider the types of outreach tactics that will be most likely to result in high involvement, high problem recognition, and low constraint recognition.

Organizations can utilize my findings and recommendations to better understand the paths that have been travelled by existing animal advocates. This information can then inform them about the methods that can spark inactive animal lovers to action; how to develop outreach strategies that are directed toward publics with particular characteristics, experiences, and perspectives; and which approaches may be ineffective or deterrent. This ‘applied’ section will therefore provide useful instruction for how animal advocacy organizations can most effectively target active (or inactive but interested) publics.
Clear messaging and self-efficacy

My findings suggest that the most effective outreach communication messages for animal advocates are those that are clear and direct. It requires effort for an individual to research participation opportunities—or solutions to problems—on his/her own. Rather than assuming that a person can research an issue or solution, I recommend that an organization makes this process as simple for audiences as possible (to reduce constraint recognition).

A crucial indicator of future behavior is an individual’s level of self-efficacy. When an individual is faced with complex elements of a task, he/she may perceive low self-efficacy (Cervone, 1985). If an individual lacks assurance that his/her actions can make a difference, he/she may not choose to act. For instance, when participants encountered stimulus materials that presented a problem without suggesting a solution, they felt confused or agitated because they did not know how to help. In fact, some told me that they avoid particular media content that introduces a problem but not a solution—especially when this material is graphic or upsetting.

However, if an individual feels hopeful that his/her efforts can effect change, he/she may be more likely to act. According to research, when an individual is faced with a task that seems feasible, he/she is likely to perceive high self-efficacy (Cervone, 1985). Perceived achievability of a behavior can even lead to behavioral intention (Lee et al., 2010). An organization should therefore minimize task complexity when designing outreach content. This relates to the importance of relaying hope/positivity in all public interactions.

It would also benefit an organization to advertise various options for involvement. Some animal lovers may be receptive to participating, but are simply unaware of available opportunities. This sentiment is illustrated by a quote from participant Christina:
Do people even know you can go and take your kids and walk dogs? I used to do it with my step son all the time. We used to go down and walk dogs for eight hours a day, pouring down rain, but we’d have a blast. Do families know that that option’s out there?

Organizations should be proactive by providing direct instruction, informing audiences of specific ways to contribute. Positive, hopeful outreach communication that makes audiences feel efficacious can increase the likelihood of initial action or sustained participation.

My findings indicate that several participants learn information about animal advocacy through new media (for example, through e-mails sent by organizations or other advocates, by visiting organizations’ websites, by others sending them online links, and on Facebook). Thus, organizations can focus upon these media to easily deliver positive, hopeful content to audiences. For instance, an organization can send e-mails to its members with clear, simple instructions for how to contribute, or can provide sets of links and suggest that members share them with other animal lovers or advocates through e-mail or social media websites. This latter suggestion relies on the social nature of animal advocacy expressed by participants. Animal lovers or advocates may be influenced to act when it is suggested to them by a friend, family member, or significant other, and simply knowing that this other is involved can provide a sense of social support or normalcy.

**Positive/negative reputation motivates/deters involvement**

In order to position itself for the greatest involvement potential, an animal advocacy organization must profoundly consider how to present itself to the public (or targeted publics). Audiences form opinions about organizations—and, by extension, about the entire animal advocacy movement and the nature of involvement—through the groups’ public personae (derived from a combination of media and interpersonal exposure). Schultz & Barnes (1999)
argue that individuals accrue brand awareness over time, coming to associate particular attributes with certain brands (like animal advocacy organizations). This leads individuals to form favorable or unfavorable associations with these brands (Schultz & Barnes, 1999).

My findings indicate that advocates’ opinions about the animal advocacy movement, its groups, its communication tactics, and its reputation can act to either motivate or deter involvement in the cause. The concern is that, if one develops a negative impression of animal advocacy or its organizations, he/she may be less likely to participate. To name just a few potential lost opportunities, this negative evaluation could sour animal lovers from participating with a particular organization; from volunteering; from donating money; from adopting a pet from a shelter; or from adopting veganism/vegetarianism.

**Designing messages: considering reputation**

Many people learn about advocacy and its issues through media (Slawter, 2008). Further, audiences typically “either support or oppose policies and programs based on their media-driven perceptions of reality” (Martin, 2008, p. 181). This research is consistent with my findings.

An animal advocacy organization should not underestimate the power of a single outreach message to affect its reputation. According to Shimp (2003), “when exposed to an advertisement, the consumer is not merely drawing information from the ad but is actively involved in assigning meaning to the advertised brand” (p. 86). An impression of a single message can drive one’s perspective about an animal advocacy organization, the entire animal advocacy movement, or the stereotype of an ‘animal advocate.’

My findings show that even animal advocates perceive stigmas with animal advocacy. Because public reputation can affect participation so directly, an animal advocacy organization must carefully monitor its character in all public interactions—and avoid perpetuating these
negative impressions in its outreach communication. If my study has demonstrated that particular communication tactics deter already-active animal lovers, an organization must consider how detrimental these impressions could be for animal lovers who are still inactive. The animal advocacy movement struggles to help animals worldwide; it needs as many supporters as possible.

An organization must therefore design its outreach communication with these effects in mind. As discussed in the Literature Review chapter, environmentalism has faced a similar struggle for mainstream legitimacy (Slawter, 2008). Environmental advocates have consequently made a concerted effort to reposition the stereotype of the ‘environmental advocate’ away from extremism and more toward the mainstream by producing content that projects their intended image (Slawter, 2008). Animal advocates can follow this example and create content that purposefully shapes the reputation of the cause as respectable rather than radical.

As discussed above, participants prefer hopeful/positive outreach communication and organizations that provide a sense of self-efficacy. They also tend to feel more motivated to act when messages and reputations are positive. Thus, to combat negative stereotypes of animal advocacy and to attract and sustain motivation to participate, an organization can focus on creating only efficacious outreach materials and maintaining only positive relations with audiences.

**Designing messages: appropriate targeting**

No single message will appeal to everyone. If persuasion were that simple, everyone would be an animal advocate. My findings suggest that an organization should therefore create outreach messages that are specifically targeted to particular audience segments. As Schultz and
Barnes (1999) argue, advocates must aim for effectiveness (persuading target audiences) rather than for efficiency (intending the message for “the greatest number of people for the least amount of money”) (p. 312). By segmenting audiences based on their characteristics, an organization can more effectively target its communication and maximize its effectiveness.

Perloff (2008) argues that a message will be most persuasive if it demonstrates “how the advocated position satisfies needs important to the individual” (p. 116). Thus, to increase the likelihood of recruitment and support, an organization must deeply understand the perspectives, motivations, and obstacles of target groups (to achieve high involvement and high problem recognition). This includes a focus on hope/positivity in organizational outreach and a sense of the importance of social influence and support. Below, I discuss these characteristics of all animal advocates, LSPs, and SSFs.

**Designing messages: attracting all animal advocates**

My findings indicate that there are several specific outreach angles that tend to either motivate or deter animal advocates. For these tendencies, there is no significant difference between LSPs and SSFs; these characteristics apply to all. An animal advocacy organization can consider these inclinations when developing outreach materials intended for a general audience of animal lovers or animal advocates.

Because my data show that animal advocates feel particular types of psychological and physical constraints, an organization should anticipate these perceived obstacles when creating outreach materials and design messages in a way that preemptively addresses advocates’ concerns. Psychologically, advocates report a lack of self-efficacy: feeling hopeless and/or wondering if their efforts make a difference. An organization can therefore create messages that assure potential advocates that their contributions will have an impact. These messages should
be positive, hopeful, and inspiring in order to combat feelings of helplessness. Physically, advocates may perceive financial and time constraints that limit their involvement. Outreach materials can therefore stress that any donation or volunteering helps, no matter how minimal or infrequent. For instance, an ad could acknowledge common time constraints and inform potential advocates of involvement opportunities with low time commitment (e.g., visiting an animal shelter to walk a dog one time, signing an online petition, or sending a small donation). Outreach material should focus on what motivates advocates and should minimize their concerns with involvement.

An organization can also capitalize upon the importance of social support. According to research, participation can be motivated by offering familiar social associations that build trust with an audience (Kwak et al., 2004). Because many animal lovers begin participating with another animal lover, a promotional message for first-time involvement could suggest that one volunteers, tries veganism/vegetarianism, or other such activities with a friend, family member, or significant other. Or, a message could recommend that an inactive animal lover contacts an existing animal advocate with whom he/she is familiar in order to learn about his/her advocacy experiences. Ideally, this one-on-one discussion with a trusted other could influence an inactive animal lover to consider action. This social aspect of involvement is an important part of the animal advocacy experience for many advocates, and an organization can utilize this knowledge in these ways when designing outreach materials.

Other types of outreach communication have proven to be motivating or de-motivating for participants. For example, advertisements that depict real animals (as opposed to drawings, cartoons, etc.) seem to resonate best. This applies to images that are considered to be cute, and to ones that are considered to be graphic. However, many animal advocates avoid
graphic/upsetting content. As I discussed above, this content is particularly motivating for LSPs, but not as much for SSFs. Presence of graphic imagery may motivate some in a general advocate audience (like LSPs), but may push others away (like SSFs). Therefore, when designing messages that are likely to reach animal advocates in general (members of both groups), it may be wise to minimize graphic depictions to reduce the possibility of deterrence.

When developing outreach materials, an organization can increase the likelihood of audience activity by creating a greater volume of messages, and by raising the level of attention to them (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). A way to increase level of attention to a message is to tailor the content to the audience’s interests (Schultz & Barnes, 1999). In the following sections, I recommend that organizations develop new outreach content, and I discuss how to target the interests of LSPs and SSFs (thereby increasing level of involvement).

**Designing messages: attracting LSPs**

My data indicate that, to appeal to an existing LSP, or to attract an animal lover that thinks like an LSP, an organization can concentrate on promoting veganism/vegetarianism. Because nearly all LSPs credit graphic informational materials for triggering their initial involvement or veganism/vegetarianism, an organization can develop pro-vegan/vegetarian outreach that highlights facts about animal suffering in the food production process (characterizing indirect fear appeals), or the ethical reasons to become vegan/vegetarian. These materials can also recommend that those who care about animals talk with a vegan/vegetarian friend about his/her veganism/vegetarianism (based on the effectiveness of social influence for adopting advocacy behaviors). My findings show that this exposure and modeling can increase the likelihood of adopting these eating habits. Taking this a step further, a message aimed toward existing vegans/vegetarians can suggest that they discuss their veganism/vegetarianism
with non-vegan/vegetarian animal lovers to potentially model this behavior for them. As discussed in the Results chapter, social influence and support not only motivate participants to act or continue to act, but participants can apply these strategies that effectively motivated their own behavior and attempt to influence others.

Other characteristics and interests of LSPs can guide an organization regarding effective outreach communication content and placement. LSP participants are 30 years old on average, and they are nearly all students. Consequently, outreach aimed toward LSPs can utilize tactics that appeal to a younger demographic (e.g., a popular culture spokesperson [relying on the effectiveness of celebrity identification and influence], directions for how one can follow veganism/vegetarianism in a college cafeteria, or focusing on the social normalcy of participation). Ads can be placed in locations frequented by students and young people (e.g., on college campuses, or on popular websites).

LSPs also demonstrate a related interest in environmentalism. Communication can therefore stress the connection between environmentalism and animal advocacy in order to attract LSPs or potential LSPs. This content can also be placed in locations frequented by environmentalists (e.g., in environmentally focused magazines, at environmental club meetings, or on environmental websites).

Additionally, communication can focus on the coping mechanisms that help LSPs to maintain their participation. These suggestions can be helpful for existing LSPs and can potentially preempt negative feelings of future LSPs. Because nearly all LSPs are internally motivated by philosophical and ethical stances about animals, outreach messages can aim to confirm these beliefs through pointed text. LSPs also tend to question the social normalcy of their participation. Outreach communication can therefore reassure this segment of their cultural
acceptance (e.g., stating how many people in the U.S. are members of animal advocacy organizations, how many are vegan/vegetarian, or describing how this lifestyle is accepted socially). This could help to convince LSPs that they are not alone in their beliefs, and may provide a sense of cultural approval or social support. All outreach aimed to LSPs should also confirm their self-efficacy by maintaining a positive, hopeful outlook for what the movement can achieve.

**Designing messages: attracting SSFs**

My data indicates particular characteristics, demographics, and interests of SSFs and potential SSFs that can help an animal advocacy organization to more effectively target this audience segment. For instance, the average age of SSF participants is 55 years. SSFs are typically either currently employed or retired. Thus, a message can be designed to rationally appeal to the needs of working animal lovers (e.g., suggesting types of involvement that can be accomplished on nights or weekends) or to retirees (e.g., demonstrating how animal advocacy involvement can fill their free time with something worthwhile). Outreach materials can also utilize cultural references targeted to middle aged and older generations (again, potentially utilizing popular celebrity spokespeople who would appeal to this age group). These strategies should work to increase levels of involvement and problem recognition.

SSFs also frequently engage in professions that center on nurturing, or have formerly worked in helping professions (prior to retirement). An animal advocacy organization can capitalize upon this connection by designing outreach materials that appeal to a caretaking tendency (e.g., an ad that depicts a volunteer comforting a shelter dog), thereby increasing levels of involvement and problem recognition. Additionally, by knowing that people in certain occupations (like nursing or women’s advocacy) may be attracted to animal advocacy, an
organization can place ads in locations that are likely to be seen by those in these fields (e.g., in a publication targeted to health professionals, or in e-mails sent to professional list-serves).

Outreach communication may be particularly appealing for SSFs if it focuses on the rewarding nature of animal advocacy. Because some SSFs report that they initiated their participation to fill an emotional void (for example, loneliness or desiring a substitute for children), SSF-targeted ads can advertise animal advocacy as a means to fulfill areas of emotional emptiness. For instance, an ad could depict an individual sitting contently at home, cuddling with a dog, to highlight the companionship of fostering shelter animals. This also speaks to the importance of hopeful/positive outreach content (and to positively valenced emotional appeals).

A similar strategy can be utilized to promote volunteerism to SSFs. Foremost, because SSFs tend to volunteer, SSF-targeted ads can advertise various volunteer opportunities. SSFs also note that they enjoy their relationships with other volunteers, and that this camaraderie helps them to overcome volunteer-related frustrations. Therefore, when designing a message to promote volunteerism, an organization can stress that participants may form meaningful friendships from involvement. Because many SSFs state that they began volunteering due to a specific request from an existing volunteer, a message targeted to existing SSF volunteers can instruct them to recommend volunteerism to their friends, family, and significant others. This social influence and social support has been shown to motivate initial and sustained action.

However, my data also suggest that particular outreach methods may be largely ineffective for SSFs. Fewer than half of participants feel motivated to act when viewing graphic/upsetting stimulus materials, and nearly all react negatively to sexualized advertising
(the “Pamela Anderson” ad). Thus, when designing messages and campaigns to motivate SSFs, an organization may be wise to avoid overly disturbing or sexualized content.

**Using appealing terminology**

Based on my findings, it seems that an organization should avoid use of the words ‘activist’ and ‘activism’ when promoting animal advocacy. Despite their participation in this cause, the vast majority of my participants do not consider themselves to be ‘animal activists.’ Instead, they generally prefer labels like ‘advocates’ or those who are ‘committed’ to helping animals. Participants demonstrate a clear-cut difference between how they conceptualize ‘advocacy’ or ‘commitment’ and how they conceptualize ‘activism.’ Consequently, if an organization refers to participants as ‘activists,’ animal lovers or advocates may feel disconnected from the message because they do not relate themselves with that terminology, or may feel excluded from messages that use this term because they do not feel that it applies to them. This can lead to reduced effectiveness of a message or campaign.

Furthermore, my data indicates that participants perceive a stigma with the ‘activist’ label. This further confirms that an animal advocacy organization should exercise caution with this term. If even those who participate in this movement tend to distance themselves from the term ‘animal activism,’ it would likely benefit an organization to avoid this terminology in its outreach.

**National organizations: gaining trust**

Seven participants (all SSFs) state that they do not trust national animal advocacy organizations. These participants are therefore less likely to act nationally and more likely to act locally. This hesitation to participate with large groups is rooted in three main concerns: skepticism regarding how their monetary donations will help the cause, the perception that
involvement with a national organization requires greater commitment (of both time and lifestyle), and a desire to see tangible results with individual animals.

These people may question the credibility of national groups, thus deterring their participation in them (Mika, 2006). Perceptions of credibility develop from both organizational outreach and from an individual’s own experiences. According to Gunther (1992), assessment of credibility is “a highly situational assessment” derived from personal experience with a group, rather than from “a dispositional view [that] predicts a reflex trust response across situations” (p. 149). Therefore, specific exposures that one has to an organization’s outreach communication, or to other animal lovers or animal advocates who participate in particular groups over others, can form impressions of trust or mistrust. An organization should therefore strive for positive outreach that focuses on hope and the promise of social support.

Additionally, participants often report a low level of knowledge about national organizations. Lacking a clear understanding of how their donations or involvement can help, animal lovers or advocates may avoid participation with these groups. Their uncertainty about the processes of national involvement often leads to stereotyped assumptions, and ultimately impedes national involvement. All of the factors discussed above could partially explain why all SSF participants act locally.

It is thus crucial for an organization to design outreach campaigns and cultivate a public reputation that projects credibility and gains public trust. Regarding skepticism about donating to a large, distant group, an organization should be forthcoming and transparent with how donations are used. For example, an ad can state that 90% of an individual’s donation will go to directly save seals from being killed in the Canadian seal hunt. This provides a definitive answer
to the question of how funding will be used, and presents the outcome of donation in concrete terms.

Because SSFs often prefer that their efforts result in tangible improvements for specific local animals, an organization can design messages that provide these concrete examples of how it helps animals in specific locations, or how its work affects individual animals’ lives. A message may be most motivational for SSFs if it can connect to small-scale, local areas of familiarity (like an ad that reminds an individual of his/her pet, or an ad that explains how the group has helped a specific community) (Kwak et al., 2004). For instance, a message could focus on the story of a single animal or group of animals saved by an organization. An organization can also focus a message on how it has aided animals in specific regions of the country. (Messages like these also concentrate on the positive work that an organization has accomplished: the strategy of ‘celebrating victories’ proposed by Einwohner, 2002). These explanations should not be vague; rather, they should be detailed enough for an audience to develop a real emotional connection with the animal(s) or issue(s) depicted. These associations can form bonds of trust that stimulate participation behaviors (Kwak et al., 2004).

To combat mistrust that stems from a low level of knowledge about national organizations, a group can once again aim for clearly worded, transparent explanations of its work. Although it is certainly important to provide this information on an organization’s website, an individual would have to actively seek out this website to find the information (and only four participants report seeking information in this way). Conversely, an individual does not necessarily have to exert effort to be exposed to an advertisement. Information about an organization’s work should therefore also be explained in ads and in other outreach materials.
Lastly, some SSF participants perceive that participation with a national organization requires a greater time commitment and lifestyle commitment than is required by a local organization. If these individuals only desire to help in small-scale ways that fit easily into their schedules, a national organization can assure them that participation does not need to be life-altering. Outreach materials can suggest specific ideas for how to help: even local opportunities for involvement. This may lead animal lovers and advocates to rethink their perception of the seemingly nebulous nature of national involvement, and increase self-efficacy for how they can participate.

**Conclusion: integrating research questions and overarching themes for animal advocacy organizations**

In this chapter, I have conceptualized research questions, themes, audience segments, and literature from a high level to examine the big picture of this study. Considering these areas from the perspective of the whole, the experience of the animal advocate becomes more nuanced and complex. I integrate these findings to advise organizations regarding the most effective means to initiate action of inactive animal lovers, maintain action of existing animal advocates, and manage advocates’ impressions of the animal advocacy movement, its organizations, and its outreach communication.

In order to motivate initial action for animal lovers (RQ1), an organization can focus on the three overarching themes of hope/positivity, social influence/social support, and the influence of communications. My data indicate the necessity of developing a positive perspective in order to build self-efficacy (which indicates low constraint recognition). The hopefulness involved in self-efficacy leads advocates to feel confident that their actions matter, thereby increasing their likelihood to participate. Because participants are often influenced to act by other animal lovers
or advocates, an organization can keep this connection in mind when designing outreach: focusing on the importance of social support as it relates specifically to LSPs (assuring this segment of social acceptance), to SSFs (promoting the opportunity to form friendships), and to all advocates (initiating involvement with an important other, and maintaining a supportive social environment). An organization can also consider the message characteristics that may influence participants to begin participation, continue participation, and that help to shape evaluations of the organizations that created them.

The themes of hope/positivity, social influence/social support, and the influence of communications can also inform an organization regarding motivation maintenance for existing animal advocates (RQ2). An organization should maintain a hopeful perspective regarding activity, and continue to highlight the social potential of involvement, for all advocates. As discussed above, this also involves reassurance of social acceptance of their involvement for LSPs, and of continued social benefits for SSFs. Participants place great importance on how interpersonal communication affects their motivation maintenance and overall participation experience. My data show that a sustained positive outlook, and a sustained atmosphere of social support, helps advocates to overcome perceived challenges with involvement.

An organization should also focus on disseminating communication messages that construct positive impressions of animal advocacy, its organizations, and the overall movement. Participants feel inspired by hopeful/positive communication that assures them of the potential to solve problems. Despite their typical motivation by graphic/upsetting content, LSPs are still motivated by hopeful messages. Outreach aimed toward LSPs can address the importance of social influence/social support by 1) suggesting that advocates or animal lovers discuss activity with existing advocates, 2) recommending that existing advocates discuss their activity with
inactive animal lovers, and 3) focusing on the cultural normalcy of veganism/vegetarianism.

Outreach targeted to SSFs can focus specifically on the social benefits of participation, including the rewarding nature of volunteering and interaction with other volunteers.

In these outreach communication materials, an organization should aim to maintain an appealing reputation for itself and for the animal advocacy movement. This includes utilization of attractive terminology and elimination of alienating terms. Additionally, national organizations can preemptively address SSFs’ mistrust by focusing on transparency regarding monetary donations, assuring audiences that participation need not require a great time commitment or monetary donation, and providing tangible examples of how their participation will help animals.

By considering each research question with respect to the high-level themes of hope/positivity, social influence/social support, and the influence of communications, an organization can develop outreach tactics that will be more likely to attract and retain LSPs, SSFs, and all animal advocates. These suggestions will also act to increase the likelihood of high problem recognition, high involvement, and low constraint recognition. All together, my findings can help animal advocacy organizations to attract active audience segments—and to keep them active.
Chapter 6
Conclusion

Justification of research

Animal suffering continues to be a widespread problem. Western societies tend to view human beings as dominant to all other species (e.g., Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978), which serves to justify animal mistreatment on individual and institutional levels. The animal advocacy movement struggles to gain the support needed to produce large-scale improvements for animals (e.g., Mika, 2006; Ramirez De La Piscina, 2007; Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004). This could be due to the culturally accepted hierarchy of speciesism (e.g., Ryder, 2000) that validates human interest over animal interest; to ineffective outreach communication strategies used by the animal advocacy movement; and/or to other individual reasons for abstaining from action (e.g., Jasper & Nelkin, 1992; Kruse, 2001; Mika, 2006).

To gain the power and cultural credibility that are necessary preconditions for helping animals on a worldwide scale, the animal advocacy movement must gain more active supporters (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; Stern et al., 1999). It has been argued that “an organization seeking to identify and communicate with relevant publics should worry about educated activists and devote most of its efforts to communicating with them” (Anderson, 1992, p. 155; Galloway, 2005; Grunig, 1977). In this study, I investigated the experiences of animal lovers who have already become involved, in order to learn the factors that led to their advocacy. Though my participants all actively engage in this prosocial behavior, I intend for my findings to not only be useful for understanding the perspectives and experiences of existing advocates, but for more accurately considering how to attract and motivate non-active animal lovers to act.
Summary of findings

Many people are animal lovers, but only some of them have chosen to become active in animal advocacy. I conducted interviews and a focus group with 24 animal advocates to better comprehend what factors or communication initially worked to trigger their involvement; the types of challenges that they perceive; how they overcome these obstacles; what factors or communication continue to motivate their action; what deters them from action; what types of outreach communication attract them; what types of outreach communication turn them off; and their impressions of the animal advocacy movement, its organizations, its outreach tactics, and its terminology. Because animal advocacy organizations attempt to reach audiences to increase donations, volunteerism, and general participation, I propose that organizations consider what has worked to spark advocates’ involvement: what it was for these advocates that convinced them to act. By understanding these characteristics of existing animal advocates, organizations can both communicate with advocates more effectively and devise more efficient ways to engage non-active animal lovers.

My data yielded an array of findings. During data collection, it quickly became obvious that there are two distinct ways of conceptualizing animal advocacy and participation in it: a large-scale, philosophical, ethical justification for animal advocacy (LSP), and a smaller-scale, individual-level, issues-based, locally-focused perspective (SSF). Each conceptualization proved to carry its own set of tendencies and characteristics (for example, LSPs skew younger, are mostly students, and are vegan/vegetarian, while SSFs skew older, are mostly working or retired, and center their advocacy on local volunteerism). Separating participants into these segments facilitated a more clear understanding of how different types of active participants conceive of their activity.
Regarding factors or communication that motivate initial involvement (RQ1), I found that participants generally share a characteristic of natural sensitivity toward the needs of other beings. This sympathy/empathy can lead participants to question societal treatment of animals, and can make animal advocacy outreach communication resonate deeply. This concern for others is paralleled in several participants’ other interests or career choices. For many, both positive and negative exposures to animals have developed their interest in and connection to the cause. Some also initiate participation to fill an emotional void. Participation is triggered by exposure to and support from other animal lovers or animal advocates, as well. A climate of social acceptance is important for motivating budding involvement.

Concerning factors or communication that help advocates to sustain their motivation to participate (RQ2), I learned that all participants face frustrations and obstacles that challenge their continued motivation to varying degrees. Advocates may feel a sense of helplessness and/or low self-efficacy, and often experience interpersonal conflicts with participation (some of which are unique to vegans/vegetarians). However, all participants are able to surmount these barriers enough to maintain involvement. Sustained motivation is both internally and externally driven by factors such as self-determination; a hopeful/positive perspective; a high (or adequate) level of self-efficacy; significant perceived impact for animals; a feeling of fulfillment; and support from others.

I also found that participants’ impressions of the animal advocacy movement, its organizations, and its outreach communication can positively or negatively affect involvement (RQ3). Advocates prefer outreach communication that is hopeful and positive, builds self-efficacy, and that clearly instructs them on how to contribute. Some are motivated by graphic content (that which is violent, sexual, or otherwise disturbing), while others avoid this material.
(although an individual can feel motivated by graphic content in one context, but avoid it in another). Many participants also criticize radical outreach tactics and organizations (especially PETA). Participants recognize negative public stereotypes of animal advocates, and most do not consider themselves to be ‘animal activists.’ One quarter of participants also express skepticism of national animal advocacy organizations. These perceptions motivate participant involvement in some ways and deter it in others.

I determined that three high-level themes pervade much of this data. First, participants repeatedly indicate the importance of focusing on hope and positivity in various contexts of involvement. A positive outlook builds the self-efficacy necessary for initial involvement and helps to maintain the confidence that their contributions are helping animals, and participants tend to be attracted to organizations and outreach that affirm this hopefulness. Second, participants continually explain the importance of supportive others in their own involvement. Exposure to, modeling of, and acceptance from other animal lovers or animal advocates often sparks initial action; this social support keeps participants feeling strong enough to sustain their involvement; and use of celebrities in outreach materials can bolster these feelings of encouragement. Third, participants report the importance of communications in their initial involvement, motivation maintenance, and impressions of animal advocacy organizations. Overall, participants are most likely to engage in prosocial animal advocacy behavior if they feel efficacious from within and from external sources, if they sense that they are not in this alone, and if they feel motivated by organizations’ communications.

**Main contributions**

I hope that my study contributes to animal advocacy in several meaningful ways. Foremost, I intend for animal advocacy organizations to utilize my findings to develop targeted
communications with publics. I have identified and defined the characteristics of LSP and SSF audience segments, which organizations can consider when designing communication. My data can also inform both organizations and literature regarding the processes by which individuals transform from animal lovers to advocates (or from aware/latent publics to active publics). This information can be applied to recruit current animal lovers to actively participate.

My findings contribute to relevant literature, as well. Like other researchers who have added to or expanded upon situational theory of publics (e.g., Dunlap & McCright, 2008; Hallahan, 2000a; Rawlins, 2006), I propose to broaden the applicability of the theory (to similar animal advocacy studies) in three main ways in order to better understand active audiences. First, I suggest the utility of considering a behavioral component for studies of this kind. Second, I propose that this behavioral component can be subdivided into categories that account for the characteristic differences that I found among those in the active segment (when applied to characteristically similar animal advocate audiences exclusively). Third, I found that level of constraint recognition did not always have a relationship to participant’s level of information seeking in this study. These findings can help expand the utility of situational theory by allowing for more direct application to animal advocacy research.

Finally, I aim for this study to begin to fill the gaps in literature about animal advocacy. While much research has been conducted about social movements and SMOs in general, shockingly little focuses on animal advocacy specifically. I purposely address a wide range of topic areas within my research questions and interview questions to provide the investigative foundations for various facets of animal advocacy.
Possibilities for future research

My data contain a wealth of potential for future research. While conducting the interviews/focus group, analyzing the data, and writing these chapters, I noted numerous areas of interest. Unfortunately, in-depth exploration of all of these topics is not within the scope of this particular project. The goal of this section is to provide ideas and directions for prospective exploration. These include, but are not limited to, the topics below.

1. The majority of my participant sample is female. I wonder if this is consistent for animal advocates in general. Research suggests that gender can be a predictor of participation in prosocial causes (e.g., Lee et al., 2010). For animal advocacy specifically, Hills (1993) found that women exhibit greater empathy for animals than did men. The study of gender and participation can therefore be a rich area for future research.

Further, it could be useful to identify the percentage of vegans/vegetarians that are male/female. This could help an organization to create more targeted outreach. For example, most of my participants are female, and most of my participants also found the sexual ―Pamela Anderson‖ ad to be ineffective. If it turns out that the majority of those considering veganism/vegetarianism are (heterosexual) women, perhaps an organization can reconsider the utilization of feminine sex appeal to attract this audience.

2. Some of my data point toward a potential overlap between animal advocacy involvement and other ‘out-of-the-mainstream’ ways of thinking (e.g., homosexuality/bisexuality or atheism). One participant, Lily, discusses this connection specifically: “Most atheists I knew were vegetarians (laughs) and most vegetarians I knew were atheists (laughs).” I have noticed these parallels in my own experience, as well. Future research could survey animal advocates in order to potentially identify a statistically significant connection between these characteristics,
and determine how this information can help an organization to most effectively target audience segments.

3. Though my study explores specific experiences, challenges, and motivations of vegans/vegetarians, I think that this topic can be examined more deeply. Gaining a full understanding of the vegan/vegetarian experience can help an organization to better suit their needs.

4. Several participants indicate hesitance and uncertainty about entering an animal advocacy career. They express concern regarding an expectation of low income, and they are unsure of available opportunities. Consequently, many of these advocates do not pursue a career in this area. Future research could explore how to more effectively attract animal lovers and animal advocates to animal-related professions.

5. While I examine stereotypes and social acceptance of the ‘animal advocate’ in this study, my data suggest that the perception of cultural normalcy can be explored further. When I ask participant Bill if his love for animals was always within him, he responds:

   Um… A lot of it had to do, I think, with maturing. When I was younger, looking cool, being cool, was important…but to be open and expressive about it, and to contribute to it, no. That wasn’t cool.

Bill refrained from participating in animal advocacy until he felt “mature” enough, as an adult, to look past potential criticism and help animals in need. Future research could investigate this notion of animal advocacy being ‘un-cool’; how this stereotype affects participation; and how it affects the experience of the animal advocate.

6. In this study, I focus on learning about the thoughts, opinions, and experiences of existing animal advocates. However, a significant reason to explore these characteristics and
perceptions of animal advocates is to potentially utilize this information to more effectively attract non-active animal lovers to animal advocacy. For instance, by understanding what triggered initial action for participants, I can better infer the measures that can trigger action for prospective advocates. Thus, a rich area for future research is an examination of how to persuade inactive publics to act (Hallahan, 2000a). (In situational theory, this would center on motivating latent or aware publics [or even non-publics] to become active.)

7. I address the avoidance of graphic/upsetting content throughout the Literature Review, Results, Discussion chapters, but within the context of motivation. Future studies can delve more deeply into the psychological mechanism(s) of avoidance.

8. Additionally, future studies can specifically test various types of advertising appeals. In this study, I address just the surface of this literature to better contextualize the characteristics of each stimulus material.

9. Though I ask participants to compare their impressions of different animal advocacy groups and their reputations, this is an area that deserves greater focus. Participants share specific opinions about local and national organizations that suggest potential for further research. For example, when describing her impression of The HSUS, Anna says, “I feel like I trust them… That’s kind of the image that I get from them, is really trustworthy, solid, like, ethical principles.” She also describes The HSUS as “reputable” and “respected.” Michelle also holds a positive impression of The HSUS, and compares its effectiveness to that of PETA: “They [The HSUS] don’t turn people off as much [as PETA], I think.” I suspect that a study that investigates the reputation and perceived credibility of various animal advocacy organizations would yield interesting and useful results.
10. Several participants expressed confusion and/or misinformation when attempting to recall the organization presented in the “Sarah McLachlan” ad. For instance, Amy and Joe mistakenly thought that the ad was from The HSUS; one focus group member asks if “BC” means “British Columbia,” which suggests that an acronym alone may not provide sufficient information about a group’s identity; and, despite having seen this commercial on television and recognizing it upon viewing in her interview, Shannon was unsure of which organization produced it. Future research can assess levels of organization recognition and recall, and can test various strategies to increase accuracy of identification and/or memory of an organization’s outreach communication (e.g., varying the prominence of an organization’s name/logo in an ad).

11. Among my participants, the average age of LSPs (30) is much lower than the average age of SSFs (55). Life stages differ markedly between these two groups, as well (e.g., students vs. retirees). Further investigation is needed to determine how representative these demographics are for the aforementioned segments.

12. An individual’s positive evaluation of outreach material may not necessarily lead to follow-through with the requested behaviors. For example, a few of the participants who like the pro-vegetarian “Pamela Anderson” ad are not vegan/vegetarian—and, even after viewing the ad, they do not indicate any intention to become vegan/vegetarian. How effective is this advertisement if an individual enjoys it, but does not rethink his/her views or take action? There is a difference between approving of outreach materials and actually considering the presented issue or becoming involved. Perhaps a longitudinal study could measure the degree to which an individual’s positive evaluation of an ad or a campaign leads or does not lead to associated behaviors.
13. Lastly, while I advise animal advocacy organizations concerning the most effective strategies to target specific audience segments (e.g., LSPs, SSFs, those in caretaking careers), I suspect that it may be largely unrealistic to separate audiences this exactly; to tailor outreach communication to each segment; and to deliver this content to appropriate segments only. However, future research can help to narrow down the most likely means by which specific segments may be reached.

**Personal reflection**

This study carries both personal and academic meaning for me. I believe that animal advocacy is among the most urgent, pressing issues of our time. The enormous amount of animal suffering—both in sheer numbers of animals, and in their quality of life (the immediacy of their pain, fear, and abuse)—justifies this cause as a top worldwide priority. I am highly sensitive to the needs of animals, and the vast extent of animal mistreatment upsets me deeply.

Regrettably, our current U.S. society is less concerned with the well-being of animals (e.g., Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978; Major, 1993). Like my participants, I often feel largely helpless to institute the improvements for animals that I wish to see. Despite the intense pain that I feel when confronted with animal suffering, and despite the contributions that I have made to animal advocacy through group involvement, shelter adoption, internship experience, academic research, and future goals of an animal advocacy-related career, I still struggle to believe that my efforts make enough of a difference. I fully classify as an LSP with high problem recognition, high involvement, and, sadly, high constraint recognition.

However, my experience with this study has been positive. In the two years that I have spent designing, conducting, analyzing, and writing this research, I have felt more active and focused on this cause than I ever had before. I explored an array of dimensions of the animal
advocate experience and applied this data to provide tangible advice for animal advocacy organizations. Further, my findings can serve to expand relevant literature.

I am still just one person who cares profoundly, and who is skeptical of my level of impact—but I feel hopeful that my findings can help animal advocacy organizations to develop outreach that attracts potential and existing animal advocates. With more public support, there will be more power to help animals. And, with increased support, perhaps I will feel less alone in my drive to alleviate the suffering of so many other beings. As the saying goes, many hands make a lighter load. I hope that the contributions of this study make the load a bit lighter for other animal advocates.
Appendix A: IRB Materials

Submitted by: Rachel Ruben
Date Submitted: April 12, 2011
IRB#: 36153
PI: Rachel Aliza Ruben
Review Type: Expedited
Protocol Subclass: Social Science
Approval Expiration: February 23, 2012
Class Project: No

Study Title

1> Study Title
   Exploring an underdog cause: What hinders or motivates participatory behavior in animal advocacy

2> Type of eSubmission
   Modification

Home Department for Study

3> Department where research is being conducted or if a student study, the department overseeing this research study.
   Mass Communications

Modification Questions

4> Is the study permanently closed to enrollment?
   No

Provide the following information:

5> Total number of participants/samples currently approved by the IRB
   100

6> Number of participants/samples entered/consented
   0
7>IRB-approved age range of the participants
   18 and up

8>Choose all of the changes that are being made in this modification request.
   [X] Compensation

9>Does this modification affect the risks to participants?
   No

10>Does this modification affect the benefits to participants?
   Yes

11>Explain how the modification affects the benefits to participants.
   Each participant will receive $10 more than originally anticipated.

12>Describe the reason(s) for the anticipated modifications.
   My funding source (Professor Patrick Parsons, College of Communications) told me that he can
   offer each participant $20 for participation, rather than the $10 that I'd stated in my earlier IRB
   applications.

13>Will this modification affect currently enrolled participants’ willingness to continue in the
    study (i.e., revised study procedures, changes in compensation, etc.)?
    No Currently Enrolled Participants

**Review Level**

14>What level of review do you expect this research to need? NOTE: The final determination of
    the review level will be determined by the IRB Administrative Office.
    Choose from one of the following:
    Expedited

15>Expedited Research Categories: Choose one or more of the following categories that apply to
    your research. You may choose more than one category but your research must meet one of
    the following categories to be considered for expedited review.
    [X] Category 7 – Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but
        not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication,
        cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral
        history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance
        methodologies.

**Basic Information: Association with Other Studies**

16>Is this research study associated with other IRB-approved studies, e.g., this study is an
    extension study of an ongoing study or this study will use data or tissue from another
    ongoing study?
    No
17> Where will this research study take place? Choose all that apply.
   [X] University Park

18> Specify the building, and room at University Park where this research study will take place. If not yet known, indicate as such.
   Not yet known.

19> Does this research study involve any of the following centers?
   [X] None of these centers are involved in this study

20> Describe the facilities available to conduct the research for the duration of the study.
   Either on-campus or off-campus buildings will be appropriate for data gathering (ex: campus library or James Building downtown [graduate student offices]).

21> Is this study being conducted as part of a class requirement? For additional information regarding the difference between a research study and a class requirement, see IRB Policy I – “Student Class Assignments/Projects” located at http://www.research.psu.edu/policies/research-protections/irb/irb-policy-1.
   No

Personnel

22> Personnel List

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<td>96194 03/22/2011</td>
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<td>Advertising/Public Relations</td>
<td>Advisor</td>
<td>96194 03/22/2011</td>
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Ruben, Rachel Aliza (Principal Investigator)

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<td>As sole researcher on this project, I will recruit participants, attain consent, administer the study, and analyze resulting data.</td>
<td>I have conducted interviews and a focus group for a previous project.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bortree, Denise Sevick (Advisor)

PSU User ID: dsb177
Phone: 814 865 1274
E-mail: dsb177@psu.edu
E-mail Notifications: Yes
PSU Person Type: Faculty
Dept: Advertising/Public Relations
Address 1: 106 Carnegie Building
Address 2:
Mail Stop:
City, State, Zip: University Park, PA 16802

Procedures: None; will simply act as the advisor to the dissertation project. (The PRAMS application wouldn't let me put only myself as the Principal Investigator because it says that it doesn't recognize my name--and that it needed a Principal Investigator that the system recognizes.)

Experience: No specific procedures/techniques will be performed by this person.

Funding Source

23> Is this research study funded? Funding could include the sponsor providing drugs or devices for the study.
   Yes

   NOTE: If the study is funded or funding is pending, submit a copy of the grant proposal or statement of work for review.

24> Sponsor List
   Sponsor Name
     None
     Patrick Parsons, College of Communications Professor

   • Sponsor Name
     None

   Sponsor address or other contact information

   • Sponsor Name
     Patrick Parsons, College of Communications Professor

   Sponsor address or other contact information
     pp6@psu.edu

25> Is the funding awarded through a subcontract?
   No

26> Is the sponsor providing drug, device, etc, free of charge?
   No
27> Does this research study involve prospectively providing treatment or therapy to participants?  
No

Conflict of Interest

28> Do any of the investigator(s), key personnel, and/or their spouses or dependent children have a financial or business interest(s) as defined by PSU Policy RA20, “Individual Conflict of Interest,” associated with this research?  NOTE: There is no de minimus in human participant research studies (i.e., all amount must be reported).
No

Purpose

29> Provide a description of the research that includes (1) the background, (2) purpose, and (3) a description of how the research will be conducted [methodology: step-by-step process of what participants will be asked to do]. DO NOT COPY AND PASTE THE METHODOLOGY SECTION FROM THE GRANT.

• Background/Rationale: Briefly provide the background information and rationale for performing the research study.
Currently, on the whole, the animal advocacy movement lacks the power to achieve its goal of increased animal protection (e.g., Taylor & Van Dyke, 2004; Ramirez De La Piscina, 2007). The movement could enhance this power, however, with the support of more participants (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; Stern et al., 1999). Public support is an essential component of a successful social movement (e.g., McCright & Dunlap, 2008; Stern et al., 1999). Greater public support can lead to increased monetary funding (Mathur, 1996; referencing Pitts & Skelly, 1984) and a reputational shift in public acceptance of animal advocacy as credible, respectable, popular, and mainstream (Mika, 2006). Increasingly, researchers recognize that both the general public and mass media are sources that have the ability to call policy makers’ attention to a movement’s issues (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; referencing Neidhardt & Rucht, 1991). Although securing positive public opinion is insufficient on its own to necessarily effect social change, favorable reputation can increase the opportunities and resources for social movements (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; referencing Beaford, Gongaware, & Valadez, 2000). Thus, the mobilization of public support is critical in efforts to influence capable actors and to stimulate cultural progress (McCright & Dunlap, 2008; referencing Stern et al., 1999).

Unfortunately, animal advocacy organizations have struggled to increase public involvement in the cause (Mika, 2006). If outreach strategies are constructed improperly, fewer people are likely to be convinced to care about a cause—and may even be deterred from it (Mika, 2006; Jasper & Nelkin, 1992). This may result in stunted active support. If constructed properly, though, an advocacy organization can potentially convince more people to care about its cause, which may lead to increased active support (Mobley, 2007). In order for animal conditions to improve, animal activist organizations must develop more effective outreach strategies—and, in order to develop effective outreach strategies, they must better understand which public(s) to target for involvement and how they can be realistically persuaded to help (Perloff, 2008; Shimp, 2003).

• Purpose: Summarize the study’s research question(s), aims or objectives [hypothesis].
In this project, I aim to better understand the motivating factors that can elevate concern into participatory action. To attempt to increase the power of the animal activist movement, I will
explore what has motivated a concerned public to participate in animal activism. This qualitative study will examine why people who like animals choose to engage in participatory action, and how these activists sustain their motivation to help. I will also gauge whether participants' activity level is low (for example, extent of action being adoption of a pet from an animal shelter) or high (for example, frequent participation with or donation to an animal advocacy group).

To address these issues, I propose the following research questions. The goal of this study is to understand:
RQ 1: What has worked to motivate action for existing animal activists?
RQ 2: What has worked to maintain motivation of existing animal activists?

I will use the following interview questions during my interviews and focus groups to answer my research questions. All questions will hopefully elicit responses that will illuminate individuals’ reasons for action, which may elucidate the factors that motivate and/or restrain receptive publics.

1. Tell me about your involvement with animals.
   A. What would you say is the difference between 'activism' and 'commitment'?
   B. How would you explain your level of activism compared to others who care about animal issues?
   C. (If the participant says that he/she has or has had an animal-related career): What motivated you to engage in an animal-related career?
   D. (If the participant has told me that he/she has not had an animal-related career, or if the participant has not indicated whether or not he/she has an animal-related career): How interested are you in engaging in an animal-related career?
2. Tell me about ways to participate in animal advocacy locally, nationally, and internationally.
3. Tell me about different animal advocacy groups.
4. Tell me about the relationship between non-animal activists and animal activists.
5. Where do you get information about animal issues?
5a. How often?
   A. How do you think non-animal activists view animal activists?
   B. Tell me about your impressions of [these animal advocacy groups].
   C1. How would you compare these groups?
   C2. Which groups do a good job?
   C3. Which groups do an average job?
   C4. Which groups do a bad job?
   D. How would you compare your level of knowledge about animal advocacy to other people who care about animals? (For example, about the fur industry, factory farming, abuse, etc.)
6. What is it about this cause that affects you?
7. Tell me the story of how you become involved in animal advocacy.
8. Tell me about your earliest memory of wanting to help animals.
9. Tell me about the first time you did something to help animals.
10. Tell me about an animal advocacy organization or a person who likes animals whom you admire.
   A. What about this group or person inspires you?
   B. What about these experiences inspired you?
11. Can you remember a time when an animal advocacy message resonated with you, or influenced you to do something for animals?
12. Tell me about types of communications or publicity that animal advocates do that you don't like.
   A. Are there specific advocacy messages (like demonstrations, commercials, television
episodes, websites, etc.) that have inspired you to help animals?

- (Auto-driver): (I'll show emotional ASPCA commercial with Sarah McLachlan, then ask):
  
  B1. Have you seen this commercial, or this type of commercial, before?
  
  B2. How do you feel when you watch this?
  
  B3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of a message like this?

- (Auto-driver): (I'll show an extreme PETA ad or set of ads [graphic/radical], then ask):
  
  C1. How do you feel when you see these images?
  
  C2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, compared to the ASPCA commercial?

- (Auto-driver): (I'll show a mainstream/professional/cute animal ad [like from The Humane Society of the United States], then ask):
  
  D1. How do you feel when you see this image?
  
  D2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach compared to the others I've shown to you?
  
  D3. Tell me about the differences in these messages.

13. Tell me about the impact that your actions have had on animals.

14. What kind of impact do you think that you're capable of having on animal issues?
   
   A. Why?

15. Tell me about your experience as a continued animal advocate over time.

16. Are there any challenges you face as someone who's committed to helping animals?
   
   A1. (If they say yes to challenges): How do you deal with the challenges of being committed to helping animals?
   
   A2: Is there anyone you talk to, or anything you try to think of, or do, or seek out, to regain motivation?
   
   B: What keeps you motivated to continue to engage in helping animals?

17. How do you see yourself helping animals in the future?
   
   A. Do you expect that your level of activism will stay about the same, or do you think you might become more or less involved? Why?
   
   B. Are there issues, events, or groups that you hope to stay involved with, or become involved with? Why?

I hope that my findings can inform animal activist organizations about how animal lovers can be persuaded to participate. This information can lead animal activist organizations to develop more effective promotional strategies. Ideally, implementation of this targeted outreach can increase public concern for animal activism, resulting in greater power for the movement. Increased power leads to greater funding, more opportunities for publicity (i.e., potentially influential mouthpieces like celebrities and politicians), and increased credibility of animal activism—

• Research Procedures involving Participants: Summarize the study’s procedures by providing a description of how the research will be conducted [i.e., methodology - a step-by-step process of what participants will be asked to do]. Numbering each step is highly recommended. DO NOT COPY & PASTE GRANT APPLICATION IN THIS RESPONSE.

I plan to conduct this study in a small town in the Northeastern United States where I have lived and attended a full-time graduate program for the past three and a half years. This town contains approximately 39,000 full-time residents: about 52% males and about 48% females, with a median age of 22. The town centers around a large public university of approximately 38,000 undergraduate students, approximately 6,000 graduate students, and approximately 5,500 faculty members. I will study participants who live in this town and who meet my criteria for an ‘active public.’
Individual interviews and focus groups with my sample will be the methods of data collection. I will conduct each interview individually and conduct one or two focus groups of ‘active’ participants (each focus group containing five to eight participants) after the interviews are completed in order to check my interview data. I will gather data from each participant only once. An individual will either be an interview participant or a focus group participant, but will not be both. I will audiotape each interview and focus group and transcribe them after each session.

Interviews
Participant selection will occur through e-mails sent to the e-mail lists of the campus vegetarian club (comprising both undergraduate and graduate students) and the campus animal advocacy club (comprising both graduate students and faculty members), as well as to local animal advocacy groups (like the local animal shelter, PAWS). I will indicate that I seek participants who participate in animal activism. I will clarify what constitutes ‘animal activism’ (as defined above) so that potential participants can determine whether or not they qualify. My e-mail will also indicate my general research area; how long an interview will last; how long a focus group will last; note that a gift certificate to the Penn State bookstore will be offered as compensation; and will ask interested parties to indicate their preference for participating in an interview or in a focus group. I will ask that anyone who is interested in participating—or anyone who knows someone who fits this description—may e-mail me back to express interest. I will recruit participants this way because I am familiar with this university, and I suspect that a mass e-mail to members of particular academic departments can potentially yield hundreds of contacts which may fall into either of my audience segments. After sending these recruitment e-mails, I will contact the presidents or webmasters from each group and ask if I can also recruit in person (at a group meeting, for instance) with an appropriate script that largely matches the content of my recruitment e-mail.

I will ask each interviewee for his/her preferred interview time and location because I want the research site to be convenient for the participant to engender comfort and openness. Once the interview begins, I will ease into the session with small talk to make the interaction more comfortable and conversational—as opposed to appearing as if I am merely trying to extract information from participants. Then, I will explain a bit about why I am conducting this research and how the participant’s responses can help. I will begin each interview with a question such as, “In the e-mail you received, I asked for participants who like animals but who do not participate in animal activism. What does ‘animal activism’ mean to you?” (or a similar question for an ‘active’ participant). I will then integrate my research questions in a conversational manner, letting the dialogue take its natural course: seamlessly inserting my research questions within the context of the dialogue.

I will conduct interviews until I think I have reached ‘theoretical saturation’ (Maxwell, 2005). Each interview will most likely last between 30 minutes and one hour. As stated above, each interview will be audiotaped and later transcribed, and I will write an analytic memo following each interview. I will not take notes during an interview, as it may serve as a distraction for both myself and the participant. To elicit vivid descriptions from participants, I will ask open-ended questions, and administer both follow-up questions and probes to fully understand participants’ responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). My questions will be phrased descriptively “to encourage an informant to talk about” the subject (Spradley, 1979, p. 85). The use of phrases such as ‘Can you step me through that?’ and ‘Can you tell me how you…’ invite rich narrative responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 160).
Focus groups
Participant selection will occur through the same means described above for interview participant selection. Once enough individuals have responded to my recruitment, I will tentatively suggest a meeting location for the session. However, to encourage participant involvement and to facilitate participant convenience and ease, I will invite suggestions for other preferred sites. Once a focus group begins, I will describe my research project and explain the important role of focus group participants. I will indicate that, while I do have a list of questions for which I seek responses, I want to keep the interaction very conversational (a semi-structured approach). To achieve this, I will then ask an ice-breaker question such as, “Tell me something interesting about yourself that few people know.” I will tell participants that their data will be used to check existing interview data.

Each focus group will be audiotaped and transcribed afterwards. Once again, I will not take notes during the focus groups because they may distract both myself and the participants.

30>How long will participants be involved in this research study? Include the number of sessions and the duration of each session - consider the total number of minutes, hours, days, months, years, etc.
Each participant will be involved for the duration of a one-time, 30 minute to one hour session.

31>Briefly explain how you will have sufficient time to conduct and complete the research within the research period.
I will have from March to October of 2011 to conduct and complete this research. This is sufficient time because recruitment and data collection should not take more than one to two months, leaving me with approximately six to seven months to analyze and write up my findings.

32>List criteria for inclusion of participants:
Each participant will belong to an active audience segment. All participants will be contacted in the manner described earlier in the application, and from the population of those previously described. Once selected for participation, participants will then be categorized as having a low level of involvement (described earlier in the application) or a high level of involvement (described earlier in the application).

To determine which potential participants are appropriate to include in this study, I must define what constitutes 'animal activism.' I will define ‘activism’ as having engaged in one or more of the following in one’s adult life: monetary donation to an animal advocacy cause, working or volunteering with an animal advocacy group (including university-based animal activist organizations), being a vegan or vegetarian specifically because of concern for animals, adoption of a pet from an animal shelter specifically because of concern for animals (one’s own adoption, as opposed to one’s parents’ adoption of a family pet or roommates’ adoption of an animal), and/or engaging in academic research pertaining to animal advocacy issues. Additional suggestions from participants regarding what may constitute ‘activism’ will be considered, if reasonable.

I am no longer inviting faculty to the research simply through their affiliation with an academic department. However, faculty may be included as participants if they are involved in the groups that I contact and would like to participate.

According to situational theory of publics, aware publics recognize a particular issue or problem. This definition matches my participants because they understand animal advocacy to be a valid
issue. Furthermore, situational theory states that active publics denote those who engage in behaviors concerning a particular issue or problem. Once again, this is how I define my active segment.

Situational theory examines the independent variables of ‘problem recognition,’ ‘constraint recognition,’ and ‘level of involvement’ to determine which audience segment is appropriate for each individual. In other words, an individual’s placement in either the ‘aware’ or the ‘active’ segment involves consideration of whether the individual recognizes an issue as a problem (problem recognition), degree of self-efficacy about solving the problem (constraint recognition), and relevance of the problem/issue to the individual (level of involvement) (Rawlins, 2006).

These independent variables determine the dependent variable of ‘information seeking’ (i.e., active communication behavior) which establishes whether an individual falls into the ‘active,’ ‘aware,’ ‘latent,’ or ‘non-public’ segment. Those who actively conduct information-seeking behaviors belong to the ‘active’ audience segment (as defined by situational theory, as well as by my category of the ‘active’ public), while those who passively process information as it happens to cross their paths belong to the ‘aware’ or ‘latent’ segments (as defined by situational theory). For the purposes of my study, the ‘aware’ information processors may comprise my lower-level active participants. My research questions are designed to appropriately assess participants as belonging in either the lower-level active audience segment or the higher-level active (‘active’) audience segment based upon consideration of these determinants.

33> List criteria for exclusion of participants:
A participant will be excluded if I determine that I have a closer relationship to the participant than that of a passing acquaintance (i.e., an existing friendship or a student/professor relationship would be excluded); if a participant is under the age of 18 years old; if a participant does not match my aforementioned criteria for an 'active' audience segment; or if a participant cannot attend an interview or focus group session in the State College area.

Multi-Center Study

34> Is this a multi-center study (i.e., study will be conducted at other institutions each with its own principal investigator)?
No

Participant Numbers

35> Maximum number of participants/samples/records to be enrolled by PSU investigators. NOTE: Enter one number – not a range. This number should include the estimated number that will give consent but not qualify after screening or who will otherwise withdraw and not qualify for inclusion in the final data analysis. This number should be based on a statistical analysis, unless this is a pilot study, and must match the number of participants listed in the consent form.
100

36> Was a statistical/power analysis conducted to determine the adequate sample size?
No

Age Range of Participants
37> Age range (check all that apply):
   [X] 18 - 25 years
   [X] 26 - 40 years
   [X] 41 - 65 years
   [X] 65+ years

Participant Information: Participant Categories

38> Choose all categories of participants who will be involved in this research study.
   [X] Healthy volunteers
   [X] Women of reproductive potential at the time of the research
   [X] Other

39> You have indicated women of reproductive potential will be used as research participants in this study. Choose one of the following:
   [X] The research poses no added risk associated with pregnancy and/or lactation

40> Identify the ‘other’ categories of participants that will be used in this research study.
   Any adults (over the age of 18) who respond to my recruitment and fit into the category of 'animal activist' as I have defined the term.

41> Will Penn State students be used as study participants in this research study?
   Yes

42> Will students be recruited from a Subject Pool?
   No

43> Will participants be currently enrolled in a course/class of any personnel listed on this application?
   No

44> Will participants be employees of any personnel listed on this application?
   No

45> Does this research exclude any particular gender, ethnic or racial group, and/or a person based on sexual identity?
   No

46> Could some or all participants be vulnerable to coercion or undue influence due to special circumstances (do not include children, decisionally impaired, and prisoners in your answer)?
   No
47> Describe the specific steps to be used to identify and/or contact prospective participants, records and/or tissue. If applicable, also describe how you have access to lists or records of potential participants.
I will contact (by e-mail) those in charge of the campus animal interest reading group and the campus vegetarian club for permission to recruit from their membership. I will also contact (by e-mail) those in charge of local animal advocacy groups. After sending these recruitment e-mails, I will ask those in charge if I can also come to recruit participants in person (with a highly similar script to that of the e-mail).

48> Will recruitment materials be used to identify potential participants?
No

49> Who will approach and/or respond to potential participants during recruitment?
As the primary investigator, I will approach and respond to all potential participants.

50> Explain how your recruitment methods and intended population will allow you access to the required number of participants needed for this study within the proposed recruitment period.
I will recruit from several campus clubs and local animal advocacy groups, meaning that my e-mails will be received by hundreds of people. I will request in my recruitment e-mail that members mention this project to anyone else who may fit the description of participants that I seek. If my response seems low, I will attempt to gain permission to recruit from additional animal-related groups.

51> Before potential participants sign a consent document, are there any screening/eligibility questions that you need to directly ask the individual to determine whether he/she qualifies for enrollment in the study?
[X] No

52> Will investigators access medical charts and/or hospital/clinic databases for recruitment purposes?
No

53> Will physicians/clinicians provide identifiable, patient information (e.g., name, telephone number, address) to investigators for recruitment purposes?
No

54> Will researchers who are not involved in the care of potential participants review and/or use protected health information before a consent/authorization form is signed in the course of screening/recruiting for this research study (e.g., reviewing medical records in order to determine eligibility)?
No

Participant Consent/Assent

55> When and where will participants be approached to obtain informed consent/assent [include the timing of obtaining consent in the response]? If participants could be non-English speaking, illiterate, or have other special circumstances, describe the steps taken to minimize the possibility of coercion and undue influence.
Participants will be approached to obtain informed consent at the time of each participant's interview or focus group session, at the site of the interview or focus group. Participants must speak adequate English to participate in this study, as it involves lengthy conversation.

56> Who will be responsible for obtaining informed consent/assent from participants?
   As the primary investigator (and sole researcher), I will be responsible for obtaining this information.

57> Do the people responsible for obtaining consent/assent speak the same language as the participants?
   Yes

58> What type of consent/assent will be obtained? Choose all that apply.
   [X] Signed consent – participants will sign the consent form

59> If multiple groups of participants are being utilized (i.e., teachers, parents, children, people over the age of 18, others), who will and will not sign the consent/assent form? Specify for each group of participants.
   Each individual participant will be required to sign a consent form, regardless of personal characteristics.

60> Participants are to receive a copy of the informed consent form with the IRB approval stamp/statement on it. Describe how participants will receive a copy of the informed consent form to keep for their records. If this is not possible, explain why not.
   I will provide this to participants in person, when they come to participate in an interview or a focus group.

Cost to Participants: Compensation

61> Will the participant bear any costs which are not part of standard of care?
   No

62> Will individuals be offered compensation for their participation?
   Yes

63> Indicate the type(s) of compensation that will be offered. Choose all that apply.
   [X] Gift Certificates

64> What is the amount of the gift certificate?
   $20.00

65> Will compensation be pro-rated? NOTE: Pro-rating is required for FDA-regulated studies.
   No

Data Collection Measures/Instruments

66> Choose any of the following data collection measures/instruments that will be used in this study. Submit all instruments, measures, interview questions, and/or focus group topics/questions for review.
Focus Groups

Individual Interviews (e.g., open-ended, semi-structures, in-person, telephone)

67> Will participants be assigned to groups?
   Yes

68> Will a control group(s) be used?
   No

Drugs/Medical Devices/Other Substances

69> Does this research study involve the use of any of the following? Choose all that apply.
   [X] None of the above will be used in this research study

Biological Specimens

70> Will biological specimens (including blood, urine and other human-derived samples) be used in this study?
   No

Recordings - Audio, Video, Digital, Photographs

71> Will any type of recordings (audio, video or digital) or photographs be made during this study?
   Yes

72> What type of recordings will be made (including digital)? Choose all that apply.
   [X] Audio

73> What will be recorded or photographed (i.e., the interview, the focus group, the observations)?
   All interviews and focus groups will be audio-taped.

74> Where will the recordings/photographs be stored?
   Recordings will be stored in my home.

75> Who will have access to the recordings/photographs?
   Only I, as the sole researcher, will have access to these recordings.

76> How will the recordings/photographs be labeled?
   I will label these recordings using pseudonyms for each participant to maintain anonymity, I will label the date and time of each session, and I will indicate whether the session was an individual interview or a focus group.

77> Can participants’ identities be determined from the recording or image (i.e., facial image, name)?
   No

78> How will the recordings be transcribed, coded and by whom?
   Recordings will be transcribed by listening to the audio recordings and typing responses using
Microsoft Word, and will be coded through organization in Microsoft Word as well (all by myself, the sole researcher).

**79>** Will the recordings/photographs be destroyed?
Yes

**80>** How and when will the recordings/photographs be destroyed?
Audio recordings will be destroyed once my project (doctoral dissertation) is definitively complete (i.e., once I graduate from Penn State in December, 2011).

**81>** Will the recordings/photographs be used outside of this research study?
No

**Computer/Internet**

**82>** Will any data collection for this study be conducted on the Internet or via e-mail (e.g. on-line surveys, observations of chat rooms or blogs, on-line interviews surveys via e-mail)?
No

**83>** Will a commercial service provider (i.e., SurveyMonkey, Psych Data, Zoomerang) be used to collect data or for data storage?
No

**Risks: Potential for and Seriousness of**

**84>** List the potential discomforts and risks (physical, psychological, legal, social, or financial) AND describe the likelihood or seriousness of the discomforts/risks. For studies presenting no more than minimal risk, loss of confidentiality may be the main risk associated with the research.
Because this study contains only minimal risk, loss of confidentiality could be the main risk involved. Another potential (minor) risk includes the sharing of one's viewpoints with myself as the researcher, and, in some cases, with other members of a focus group.

**85>** Describe how the discomforts and risks will be minimized and/or how participants will be protected against potential discomforts/risks throughout the study (e.g., label research data/specimens with code numbers, screening to assure appropriate selection of participants, identify standard of care procedures, sound research design, safety monitoring and reporting).
I will minimize risks/discomforts to participants by ensuring them that their responses are confidential, and that I will not judge their perspectives. I will assure participants that their honesty is crucial to my research and that I will not take offense to their responses. Accordingly, I will maintain a polite demeanor throughout interviews and focus groups, and will encourage participants to share their views.

**86>** Does this research involve greater than minimal risk to the participants?
No
**Benefits to Participants**

87> What are the potential benefits to the individual participants of the proposed research study? (If none, state “None.”) NOTE: Compensation cannot be considered a benefit.

   Both interview and focus group participants may feel a sense of catharsis and release from being encouraged to share their perspectives on animal advocacy, knowing that their views are being listened to and appreciated. Focus group participants may benefit from learning the perspectives of other focus group members.

88> What are the potential benefits to others from the proposed research study?

   Animal advocacy organizations can benefit from this study because I aim to determine what keeps animal lovers from participating in animal activism, what may motivate them to act, and what has worked to motivate existing activists. This can help animal advocacy organizations to more effectively target audiences through campaigns and other methods of outreach. In a larger sense, a group that will benefit from this study will be animals of all kinds.

**Deception**

89> Does this study involve giving false or misleading information to participants or withholding information from them such that their “informed” consent is in question?

   No

**Confidentiality**

90> Describe the provisions made to maintain confidentiality of the data, including medical records and specimens. Choose all that apply.

   [X] Locked offices

91> Describe the provisions made to protect the privacy interests of the participants and minimize intrusion.

   Pseudonyms will be used to maintain anonymity of participants when I write up my analysis. No one but myself will have access to my audio recordings or written data. These materials will be kept in my locked home, which I do not share with any roommates.

92> Will the study data and/or specimens contain identifiable information?

   No

93> Who will have access to the study data and/or specimens?

   No one but myself will have access to this data.

94> Will identifiers be disclosed to a sponsor or collaborators at another institution?

   No

95> Will a record or list containing a code (i.e., code number, pseudonym) and participants identity be used in this study?

   Yes

96> Where will the list linking the code numbers to participants be stored?

   This will be stored on my personal computer, and also saved as a file attachment in my personal
97> **How will the list linking the code numbers to participants be secured?**
   I do not let anyone else have access to my personal computer or e-mail account. I keep my computer locked in my home.

98> **Who will have access to the list linking the code numbers to participants?**
   Only I, as the sole researcher, will have access to this list.

99> **When will the list linking the code numbers to participants be destroyed?**
   This list will be destroyed once I graduate from Penn State in December, 2011.

100> **What will happen to the data when the research has been completed? Choose one.**
   [X] Stored for length of time required by federal regulations/funding source and then destroyed [minimum of 3 years]

101> **Is information being collected for this research that could have adverse consequences for participants or damage their financial standing, employability, insurability or reputation?**
   No

102> **Will a “Certificate of Confidentiality” be obtained from the federal government?**
   No

**HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)**

103> **Will participant’s protected health information (PHI) be obtained for this study?**
   No

**Radiation**

104> **Will any participants be asked to undergo a diagnostic radiation procedure while enrolled in this study?**
   No

**Physical Activity**

105> **Will participants be required to engage in or perform any form of physical activity?**
   No

106> **Will any type of electrical equipment other than audio headphones be attached to the participants (e.g., EMG, EKG, special glasses)? Submit a letter regarding the most recent safety check of the x-ray equipment being used with the supporting documents for this application.**
   No
**APPROVAL LETTER**
Document 1001 Received 04/12/2011 09:40:06 AM - --E-mail
Document 1002 Received 04/12/2011 09:41:17 AM - --Formal

**CONSENT FORMS**
Document 1001 Received 04/12/2011 23:10:31 - Modified to reflect new compensation amount

**CORRESPONDENCE**
Document 1001 Received 02/24/2011 05:06:32 PM - Correspondence - Training E-mail - 02-24-11

**DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**
Document 1001 Received 04/12/2011 09:28:57 AM - --Updated Focus Group Questions

**RECRUITMENT**
Document 1001 Received 02/24/2011 04:24:54 PM - Recruitment Materials - E-mail to be sent to Potentia
Document 1002 Received 04/12/2011 23:13:12 - Recruitment e-mail- Modified to reflect new compensation
Document 1003 Received 04/12/2011 23:11:59 - Verbal Script- Modified to reflect new compensation amo

**REVIEW - REQUEST INFO**
Document 1001 Received 03/30/2011 03:20:13 PM - Returned for Additional Information

**SUBMISSION FORMS**
Document 1001 Received 04/12/2011 09:16:30 AM - Application Auto-generated by eSubmission Approval
Title of Project: Exploring an underdog cause: What hinders or motivates participatory behavior in animal advocacy

Principal Investigator: Rachel Ruben, Graduate Student
115 Carnegie Building (Mailbox)
University Park, PA 16802
(302) 584-2299; rar274@psu.edu

Advisor: Dr. Denise Bortree
106 Carnegie Building
University Park, PA 16802
(814) 865-1274; dsb177@psu.edu

1. **Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research is to explore what may realistically motivate a concerned public to participate in animal activism and what has motivated the participation of existing activists. This study will examine why people who like animals choose to participate in animal activism, as well as what maintains their motivation to participate.

2. **Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to engage in either an individual interview with the researcher or in a focus group led by the researcher. If you speak about the contents of the focus group outside the group, it is expected that you will not tell others what individual participants said. Interviews and focus groups will be audio recorded. Recordings will be stored in the researcher’s locked home and will be destroyed by December 2011. Only the researcher will have access to the recordings.

3. **Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort.

4. **Benefits:** The benefits to you may include a sense of release from being encouraged to share your perspectives on animal advocacy, knowing that your views are being listened to and appreciated. Focus group participants may benefit from learning the perspectives of other focus group members.

   The benefits to others may include helping animal advocacy organizations to better understand what keeps animal lovers from participating in animal activism, what may motivate them to act, and what has worked to motivate existing activists. Animal advocacy organizations may therefore be able to more effectively target audiences through campaigns and other outreach methods. In a larger sense, a group that will benefit from this study will be animals of all kinds.
5. **Duration/Time:** It will take between 30 minutes and one hour to complete either an interview or a focus group session. Only one session is required for each participant.

6. **Statement of Confidentiality:** Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured at the researcher’s home in a password protected file. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections, the Institutional Review Board and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this research study. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. Pseudonyms will be used in the storage and final write-up of data.

7. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Rachel Ruben at (302) 584-2299 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. **Payment for participation:** Each participant will receive a $20 gift card that can be used at either Barnes and Noble or the Penn State bookstore as compensation for participation.

9. **Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____________________________________________  ________________  
Participant Signature  Date  
_____________________________________________  ____________________  
Person Obtaining Consent  Date  

This informed consent form was reviewed and approval by The Pennsylvania State University’s Institutional Review
Appendix B: Recruitment E-mail Script

Dear members of Visualizing Animals,

I would like to offer you an opportunity to participate in a research study concerning interest and participation in animal advocacy. I am seeking individuals who fit the description (below) of an ‘animal advocate.’ You are eligible to participate if you are at least 18 years of age and fit into this category.

For the purposes of this study, an ‘animal advocate’ will be defined as one who has engaged in one or more of the following in one’s adult life: monetary donation to an animal advocacy cause, working or volunteering with an animal advocacy group (including university-based animal advocacy organizations), being a vegan or vegetarian specifically because of concern for animals, adoption of a pet from an animal shelter specifically because of concern for animals (one’s own adoption, as opposed to one’s parents’ adoption of a family pet or roommates’ adoption of an animal), and/or engaging in academic research pertaining to animal advocacy issues.

Individuals may choose to participate in either an individual interview (which will last from 30 minutes to one hour) OR a focus group (which will last between 30 minutes and one hour). Compensation will be provided for each participant in the form of a $20 gift card that can be used at either Barnes and Noble or the Penn State bookstore.

If you are interested in participating, please e-mail me back to express interest. In this e-mail, indicate whether you’d prefer to participate in an individual interview or in a focus group. We will then make arrangements for date, time, and location based on mutual availability.

If you know someone else who fits into this category, is not included on this e-mail list, but who may be interested in participating, you may ask that individual to e-mail me back to express interest, as well. Participants need not be affiliated with Penn State University, but must be able to attend either an interview or a focus group in State College, PA.

Please e-mail me by Wednesday, April 20 if you, or someone you know, would like to participate.

Thank you for considering participation in this study. If you have questions about the study, please don’t hesitate to contact me at rar274@psu.edu.

Sincerely,

Rachel Ruben
Doctoral Candidate and Instructor
Penn State University
Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your involvement with animals.
   A. What would you say is the difference between 'activism' and 'commitment'?
   B. How would you explain your level of activism compared to others who care about animal issues?
   C. (If the participant says that he/she has or has had an animal-related career): What motivated you to engage in an animal-related career?
   D. (If the participant has told me that he/she has not had an animal-related career, or if the participant has not indicated whether or not he/she has an animal-related career): How interested are you in engaging in an animal-related career?

2. Tell me about ways to participate in animal advocacy locally, nationally, and internationally.

3. Tell me about different animal advocacy groups.

4. Tell me about the relationship between non-animal activists and animal activists.

5. Where do you get information about animal issues?
5a. How often?
   A. How do you think non-animal activists view animal activists?
   B. Tell me about your impressions of [these animal advocacy groups].
      C1. How would you compare these groups?
      C2. Which groups do a good job?
      C3. Which groups do an average job?
      C4. Which groups do a bad job?
   D. How would you compare your level of knowledge about animal advocacy to other people who care about animals? (For example, about the fur industry, factory farming, abuse, etc.)

6. What is it about this cause that affects you?

7. Tell me the story of how you become involved in animal advocacy.

8. Tell me about your earliest memory of wanting to help animals.

9. Tell me about the first time you did something to help animals.

10. Tell me about an animal advocacy organization or a person who likes animals whom you admire.
    A. What about this group or person inspires you?
    B. What about these experiences inspired you?

11. Can you remember a time when an animal advocacy message resonated with you, or influenced you to do something for animals?

12. Tell me about types of communications or publicity that animal advocates do that you don't like.
    A. Are there specific advocacy messages (like demonstrations, commercials, television episodes, websites, etc.) that have inspired you to help animals?
    - (Auto-driver): (I'll show emotional ASPCA commercial with Sarah McLachlan, then ask:)
       B1. Have you seen this commercial, or this type of commercial, before?
       B2. How do you feel when you watch this?
       B3: What are the strengths and weaknesses of a message like this?
    - (Auto-driver): (I'll show an extreme PETA ad or set of ads [graphic/radical], then ask:)

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C1: How do you feel when you see these images?

C2: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach, compared to the ASPCA commercial?

- (Auto-driver): (I'll show a mainstream/professional/cute animal ad [like from The Humane Society of the United States], then ask:)

D1: How do you feel when you see this image?

D2: What are the strengths and weaknesses of this approach compared to the others I've shown to you?

D3: Tell me about the differences in these messages.

13. Tell me about the impact that your actions have had on animals.

14. What kind of impact do you think that you're capable of having on animal issues?
   A. Why?

15. Tell me about your experience as a continued animal advocate over time.

16. Are there any challenges you face as someone who's committed to helping animals?
   A1. (If they say yes to challenges): How do you deal with the challenges of being committed to helping animals?
   A2: Is there anyone you talk to, or anything you try to think of, or do, or seek out, to regain motivation?
   B: What keeps you motivated to continue to engage in helping animals?

17. How do you see yourself helping animals in the future?
   A. Do you expect that your level of activism will stay about the same, or do you think you might become more or less involved? Why?
   B. Are there issues, events, or groups that you hope to stay involved with, or become involved with? Why?
Appendix D: Biographical Face Sheet

**Basic demographics and current situation**

I request that you answer the questions below so that I can obtain basic information about you and about your lifestyle.

*You may skip any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering.*

1. Date of birth:
2. Sex:
3. Occupation:
4. How long have you been actively involved in animal advocacy?
5. How would you describe your amount of ‘free time’ (i.e., time that is unencumbered by work responsibilities, family responsibilities, etc.)?
6. How would you describe your level of discretionary income (i.e., hardly extra money to spend, some extra money to spend, plenty of extra money to spend)?
Appendix E: Stimulus Materials

Stimulus Material #1: PETA’s “Pamela Anderson” ad (Source: www.peta.org)

Stimulus Material #2: PETA’s “McCruelty” ad (Source: www.peta.org)
Stimulus Material #3: PETA’s “Bloody Burberry” ad (Source: www.peta.org)

Stimulus Material #4: The HSUS’s “Lend a paw” ad (Source: www.humanesociety.org)
Stimulus Material #5: The HSUS’s “Horse Slaughter” ad (Source: www.humanesociety.org)

Stimulus Material #6: BCSPCA’s “Sarah McLachlan” commercial (Source: www.youtube.com)

Available: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9gspElv1yvc
References


VITA
Rachel Ruben

Education
Ph.D., Mass Communications, The Pennsylvania State University (August 2012)
M.A., Communication, Culture, and Technology, Georgetown University (May 2006)
B.A., Anthropology, Philosophy, Bucknell University (May 2004)

Teaching experience and recognitions
Graduate School Teaching Certificate, The Pennsylvania State University (2011)
Instructor, COMM 411: Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media, The Pennsylvania State University (Fall 2009, Spring 2010, Fall 2010, Spring 2011)
Guest Lecturer, COMM 590: Colloquium, The Pennsylvania State University (2010)
Teaching Assistant (Undergraduate level), COMM 100: Mass Media and Society, The Pennsylvania State University (Spring 2008, Fall 2008, Spring, 2009)
Teaching Assistant (Undergraduate level), COMM 411: Cultural Aspects of the Mass Media, The Pennsylvania State University (Fall 2007)
Teaching Assistant (Graduate level), Communication, Culture, and Technology graduate program, Georgetown University (2005-2006)

Conference and research presentations
Union for Democratic Communications: 2012 International Conference; presented an individually-written research paper examining the potential of the ‘culture jamming’ strategy to advance the goals of the animal advocacy movement, Tallahassee, FL (2012)
Penn State Graduate Poster Exhibition; sole presenter of a quantitative group research paper exploring whether online activity acts as a substitute for offline relationships, State College, PA (2008)
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication: Midwinter Regional conference; presented same quantitative group research paper described above, Pittsburgh, PA (2008)

Professional and volunteer experience
Public Relations Intern, The Humane Society of the United States, Gaithersburg, MD (2010)
Volunteer, Wild Lens, Inc., Boise, ID (participating remotely) (2011-2012)
Volunteer, Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research, Newark, DE (2005)

Additional related experience
Interview, Valley Magazine; selected to serve as an expert source on whether technology is a catalyst for social cohesion or for social isolation (2010)