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Turn Up the Volume: The Amplification of Shame (abstract)

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The Social Practice of Human Rights: Charting the Frontiers of Research and Advocacy

2015 Conference of the University of Dayton Human Rights Center

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Research Panel: Media and the Digital Age

Presenters: Baekkwon Park, Emory University; Amanda Murdie, University of Missouri; David R. Davis, Emory University.

Title: Turn Up the Volume: The Amplification of Shame

Abstract: One important strategy that HROs, and other actors, employ to call attention to human rights abuses around the world is “naming and shaming.” By calling attention to governments for their human rights violations, HROs hope to galvanize world public opinion and increase pressure on these states to halt abuses. While some HROs, like Amnesty International, communicate directly with their large membership bases, the vast majority of HROs rely on the international media to communicate their message to the international community.

Issuing reports and press releases is a major part of their strategy the international community aware of abuses The more media coverage an HRO's reports and press releases receive, the more their message is “amplified.”

This paper discusses the development of the first measure of amplification of HRO messages in the international media. Using this new data, this paper develops a theory and then tests hypotheses about how certain characteristics of HROs (their budget, their network connections to each other and to intergovernmental organizations, their membership bases, and their usual targets) matter for amplification.

Keywords: NGOs, shaming, media attention, human rights

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Baekkwon Park is a PhD candidate in the political science department at Emory University.

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