

WRITE ON: A 50-YEAR ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE
OF THE ALTERNATIVE PRESS IN THREE CITIES

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CHAD PAINTER

Dr. Lee Wilkins, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

WRITE ON: A 50-YEAR ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE
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Presented by Chad Painter

A candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

And hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Lee Wilkins

Professor Charles Davis

Professor Tim Vos

Professor Margaret Duffy

Professor Mitchell McKinney

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Chad Painter

Dr. Lee Wilkins, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This textual analysis traced the evolution of the radical, monitorial, facilitative, and collaborative roles of the alternative press in New York; Columbus, Ohio; and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Political and cultural articles were analyzed in 81 underground newspapers published between 1956 and 1983, three alternative newsweeklies published between 2002 and 2011, and five online alternative publications published between Oct. 1, 2011 and April 1, 2012. Publications were analyzed for content and story selection (elections, government activities, diversity issues, and arts), objectivity, use of sources, tone, efforts at community building, and relationships to mainstream media. The findings suggest that culture, in addition to politics, is a component of community and democracy. Further, the findings suggest that normative theory previously has been too narrowly conceived, as any news organization simultaneously might perform multiple roles.

INTRODUCTION

Greg Ginn started SST Records in the late 1970s to release independent, do-it-yourself records by punk bands such as Black Flag, Sonic Youth, and the Minutemen. Ginn's label had a very simple slogan: "Corporate Rock Still Sucks" (Azerrad, 2001). The idea was that record labels such as SST had to exist because corporate record labels were too concerned with making money to release exciting new music that pushed the boundaries of the art form.

A similar case can be made with newspapers. Upton Sinclair, in *The Brass Check*, argued that newspapers do not represent public interests, but private interests; they do not represent humanity, but property; they value a man, not because he is great, or good, or wise, or useful, but because he is wealthy, or of service to vested wealth (2003, pg. 123).

McChesney (1999) argued that a corporate media system set up to serve the needs of Wall Street and Madison Avenue cannot and does not serve the needs of the majority of the population. If corporate media are not meeting the needs of citizens or the republic—or, to paraphrase Ginn, if "Corporate News Still Sucks"—then there is a need for media that exist outside of this corporate paradigm. The alternative press could fulfill this need.

The alternative press is a tradition in the American media system. An alternative press, though taking many shapes and holding many positions, has served an important radical role alongside the mainstream media throughout

American history. The alternative press has been known by many names: partisan (Pasley, 2001; Smith, 1988), dissident (Ostertag, 2006; Streitmatter, 2001; Kessler, 1984), underground (McMillan, 2011; Lewes, 2000; Armstrong, 1981), alternative newsweekly (McMillan, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978), and online (McMillan, 2011; Streitmatter, 2001). A non-mainstream press system is neither time-bound nor period-bound but has existed alongside the mainstream press since the earliest days of the republic (Kessler, 1984).

Indeed, the alternative press is as much a part of America's journalistic heritage as the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, or *Time* magazine (Kessler, 1984). At times, the alternative press has been truly alternative, publishing far-out viewpoints that almost certainly never will be accepted by mainstream society. At these times, the alternative press played an important function in the constant reinvention of American society, promoting ideas, challenging corporate media control, and covering movements (Gustafson, 2011; Ostertag, 2006). The goal for these publications was to become an organizing tool for revolution rather than a vehicle for information (Lewes, 2000). At other times, however, the alternative press moved toward the mainstream by incorporating viewpoints that were reformist without being radical or revolutionary and by adopting many of the commercial practices of its mainstream counterparts (Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). One such time might be happening today. This is why the more radical voices could be moving away from the alternative newsweekly press and toward the online environment.

Political and cultural changes have spawned alternative publications. So, too, have technological changes. The abolitionist press was created, in part, because machine-made paper and durable iron presses made it easier for radicals to publish (Ostertag, 2006). The 1960s underground press was possible, in part, because offset printing lowered the costs of starting a movement journal (Ostertag, 2006). Similarly, the low costs of starting a website have spawned a new generation of alternative publications.

There is a limited amount of previous research about the transition from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press. However, there is little to no research about the transition from the alternative newsweekly press to an online alternative press. Further, there is no longitudinal research that traces the evolution of the alternative press from underground to alternative newsweekly to online. This study is focused on that evolution of the alternative press during two time periods. The first is the transition from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press, a gradual shift that occurred between the early 1970s and the mid 1980s. The second time period is the shift from a hard-copy alternative press to an online alternative press; a transition that is ongoing. The purpose of this study is threefold: First, to outline historically the role of the alternative press in the U.S. media system; second, to explain how the alignment between the alternative press and the dominant media system is maintained; third, to examine why the alternative press persists despite historical, social, cultural, and technological changes.

Previous researchers have theorized that many elements once found in the underground press—democratizing the media, helping to set the mainstream

agenda, circulating news rapidly, and giving voice to the otherwise voiceless—are now being seen in certain segments of the online press (McMillian, 2011; Streitmatter, 2001). However, this claim has not been studied systematically. This study is important to scholarship because the researcher does attempt to study systematically whether the underground or alternative press has moved online, and to place that transition in the context of the history and role of the alternative press. Further, this study is important to scholarship because the alternative press is understudied by scholars. Any attempt to understand the alternative press, which again has existed alongside the mainstream press since the earliest days of the republic, can aid academics by providing a richer, fuller picture of the U.S. press system both currently and historically.

This study also could have practical applications for industry professionals. The alternative press historically has been ahead of its times (Dicken-Garcia, 1989) in terms of both topics covered (civil rights, environmental concerns) and practices (native reporting, partisanship). By developing an understanding of the history and historical significance of the alternative press, industry professionals can gain a greater understanding both of role perceptions, audience, and where the industry might be heading in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW: NORMATIVE ROLES OF THE PRESS

Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini conceptualized the U.S. press system as part of the North Atlantic/Liberal model (2004). The Liberal model is focused on certain, key characteristics: an early expansion of literacy, an early adoption of commercialization, a fact-centered discourse, a high level of professionalization, and a relationship between the press and the state (Starr, 2005; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). In the United States, this relationship between the press and the state is characterized by the granting of certain legal rights, the regulation of media concentration, a commercial broadcasting system, favorable libel law, and a flow of information from the state to journalists (Starr, 2005; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). At the institutional level, the U.S. press also influences and is influenced by the larger society in which it operates (Nerone, 1995). Journalism has been shaped by changing economic and political structures, the emergence of new ideologies and cultural trends, evolving schools of ethical thought and values, and historical shifts in population composition and distribution (Dicken-Garcia, 1989).

There are longstanding debates about the role of the media. Indeed, it would be incorrect to say that there is a singular media role. Instead, the media often simultaneously play various roles, some of which are complementary, others of which are contradictory. John Dewey and Walter Lippmann held differing views on the ultimate role of the media. Lippmann argued that the media shape the “pictures in our heads” because “the world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported, and imagined” (1922, pg.

18). The world is too big, too complex, too out of sight and out of mind for anyone to know the goings-on throughout the country, let alone the world. Instead, the media function as the principal conduit of images of the outside world to the mind's eye (Lippmann, 1922), to tell and show the audience what is happening throughout the world. This mediated version of the world places a great deal of power in the hands of the press. The media could manufacture consent through propaganda, which is possible only when there is a barrier between the event and the public (Lippmann, 1922).

Dewey argued that the media's primary aim was not to shape the pictures in our heads but to supply the necessary information to service the U.S. political system (Dewey, 1954). He argued that the decisions and actions fostered by communication lead to a great society, and that, to paraphrase Jurgen Habermas (1989), engaging in the rational-critical debate central to the public sphere was the duty of every citizen (Dewey, 1954). Specifically, Dewey argued, politics was the daily work and duty of every citizen (1954). The role of the media was to help supply the information essential for the rational-critical debate needed for better-informed policy outcomes to occur (Dewey, 1954). Dewey argued that the knowledge necessary to be involved in politics was to be generated by the interaction of citizens, elites, and experts through the mediation and facilitation of journalism (1954). Consequently, journalists should change their emphasis away from happenings and toward alternatives, choices, consequences, and conditions to foster those decisions and actions (Dewey, 1954). The base of power was one major difference between Lippmann and Dewey. Lippmann saw the press as a powerful

agent that could manufacture consent; Dewey saw communication and the press as necessary tools for improving democracy through better-informed policy outcomes.

These philosophically informed polls of the role of the media in a democracy bracket current thinking about the four primary roles of the press: Radical, monitorial, facilitative, and collaborative. Each of these roles will be explored further and linked to that segment of the media ecology that historically and intellectually has been connected with particular roles and functions.

Radical role of the press

The alternative press historically has been known by many names: partisan (Pasley, 2001; Smith, 1988), dissident (Ostertag, 2006; Streitmatter, 2001; Kessler, 1984), underground (McMillan, 2011; Lewes, 2000; Armstrong, 1981), alternative (McMillan, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978), and online (McMillan, 2011; Streitmatter, 2001). A non-mainstream press system is neither time-bound nor period-bound but has existed alongside the mainstream press since the earliest days of the republic (Kessler, 1984).

In this study, alternative press will be used to encompass the overall structure of a non-mainstream press, whether that non-mainstream press is underground, alternative newsweekly, or online. Underground press will be used when referencing the largely 1950s-1970s radical press characterized by opposition to the Vietnam War and promotion of sex, drugs, and rock and roll. Alternative newsweekly press will be used when referencing 1980s-2010s newspapers that are left-leaning without being radical and contain a large focus on arts and

entertainment in addition to politics. Online alternative press will be used when referencing 2010s left-leaning blogs and websites.

In the literature and in society, the alternative press typically is based on and compared to the mainstream press (Lewes, 2000). When new communications systems emerge, battles ensue about the nature of news, what should and should not be considered journalism, and who should and should not be considered a journalist (Mindich, 1998). This battle raged during the 1960s, with the underground press labeled as partisan propaganda by mainstream journalists, who also did not consider their underground counterparts to be real journalists. The battle also carries over today in the online world.

The central role that alternative media serve is providing a radical voice (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Atton, 2002). The central aim of the radical media is to provide press access to protest groups, and to provide that access on their terms (Atton, 2002). Protest groups, radicals, and those on the fringes of society traditionally have been at best underserved and at worst ignored by mainstream media (Kessler, 1984). The response of these groups—whether abolitionists in the 19th century, immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th century, feminists in the early-and-mid 20th century, the anti-Vietnam-War underground and G.I. presses in the 1960s, the environmental press in the 1970s, or the online press today—have been to circumvent the mainstream press system by starting their own newspapers, magazines, and websites (Gustafson, 2011; Kessler, 1984).

The radical media seek to give voice to the voiceless (McMillian, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kessler, 1984; Armstrong, 1981), and to invert the power hierarchy of access by developing media spaces where activists and ordinary people can present accounts of their experiences and struggles (Atton, 2002). For example, *The Village Voice* gave front-page coverage to gay protesters during the 1968 Stonewall Uprising. This coverage included interviews and overheard quotes with protesters, as well as two native reporting accounts—one reporter outside the Stonewall Inn with the protesters, a second trapped inside the bar with New York City police officers. These were stories told from the perspective of decidedly non-elite sources from the fringes of 1960s society. The *Village Voice* coverage contrasts to coverage of the same events by *The New York Times*, which provided far less coverage, quoted only police sources, and framed the story as an almost unprovoked riot (See Lucian Truscott IV, “View From Outside: Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square,” *Village Voice*, July 3, 1969; Howard Smith, “View From Inside: Full Moon Over the Stonewall,” *Village Voice*, July 3, 1969; “4 Policemen Hurt in ‘Village’ raid, Melee near Sheridan Square follow action at bar,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1969; “Police again rout ‘Village’ youths, Outbreak by 400 follows a near-riot over raid,” *New York Times*, June 30, 1969; “Hostile crowd dispersed near Sheridan Square,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1969). This contrast of coverage can be seen time and again. Indeed, it foreshadowed the current coverage of the Occupy Wall Street movement, where *The New York Times* and other mainstream news organizations covered events much later and much differently than the alternative press.

Radical media also serve as an oppositional voice to the mainstream media (Atton, 2002). Indeed, radical publications—or the journalists who work for them—assume that the mainstream media are part of the power elite that the radical publications seek to subvert. That effort is both political and cultural. One, the alternative press recognized that culture was part of a person’s everyday experience (Williams, 2000). Arts coverage typically was both more expansive (arts were given more column inches in the radical press) and more comprehensive, including rock and roll, Off-Broadway plays, and avant-garde and contemporary art. Second, the ultimate goal of radical media is the transformation of roles, responsibilities, ideals, and standards—both in terms of journalism and to the society at large (Atton, 2002). The transformation of society was, in fact, the stated goal of many underground and, to a lesser extent, alternative newsweekly papers.

Several characteristics could be used when defining and then comparing the alternative and mainstream press systems. The first is role. The role of the mainstream press is to serve the monitorial, facilitating, and collaborative functions (Christians et al., 2009). The alternative press also could, and sometimes does, serve these roles. However, the primary role of the alternative press is radical (Christians et al., 2009). The second characteristic is the use of objectivity. The mainstream press adheres to standards of objectivity (Mindich, 1998; Schudson, 1978). The alternative press makes no claim that it is objective (Lewes, 2000), and is by definition partisan (Atton, 2002). Partisanship here is not tied or limited to a political party but instead is issue-oriented. It is this “lack” of objectivity in news accounts that allows the alternative press to execute its radical role at the

publication or systemic level. The third characteristic is the use of sources. Mainstream journalists tend to quote official, authoritative voices (Mindich, 1998). Alternative journalists seek to upset the power structure by providing access to the media to non-official sources (Atton & Hamilton, 2008). This different way of daily journalism also informs the larger, role based radical critique. A fourth characteristic is tone. Mainstream newspapers are written in a comparatively dry tone, often in an inverted pyramid style (Mindich, 1998). Alternative publications use a hip, with-it tone (Armstrong, 1981) that includes profanity and explicit sexual and drug references (Peck, 1998). As will be discussed in greater depth in the chapters that follow, this change in tone foreshadows journalistic experimentation at both the individual and organization levels. It is one instance where the radical alternative over time appears to have lead and potentially influenced the mainstream. Alternative publications exhibit all four of these major characteristics, which, in turn, contribute to a systemic role that alternative press historically has played. The alternative publications here are radical, journalists hold no pretense of objectivity, non-official sources are quoted, and the stories are written in a with-it tone.

Both the alternative press and what today is referred to as the mainstream media have historic roots in the partisan press of two centuries ago. The partisan press served as the earliest form of mass media in the United States (Pasley, 2001). In fact, Pasley argued, newspaper editors, through their use of partisan politics, helped establish the American political party system (2001). Partisan newspapers served the political party structure in two ways. First, the press system served as a

communication network between government officials, politicians, editors, and the reading public (Pasley, 2001). Second, partisan newspapers served political parties by communicating a party's message, promoting its candidates, attacking its opponents, and encouraging citizens to vote (Pasley, 2001). Many partisan press printers did have political, economic, and personal motives (Smith, 1988). However, many partisan printers also held Enlightenment ideals about the need to educate the public, especially in regards to the democratic process (Smith, 1988). Partisan newspapers eventually were displaced in the U.S. news ecology with the rise of the commercial press, but partisanship did not disappear—it simply went underground.

Commercialization was the process by which news values were redefined to include a concern for the bottom line (Baldasty, 1992). News became a commodity to be shaped and marketed with an eye for profit (Baldasty, 1992).

The shift from political patronage and a partisan press to a reliance on advertising meant that the press became more autonomous from government and political parties, and could appeal to a larger number of readers with a lower cost per capita (Baldasty, 1992). This shift occurred due to four reasons, according to Baldasty. First, the nature of politics within American life changed after the 1840s (Baldasty, 1992). Politicians depended less on the press, so financial support of the press by political parties subsequently lessened (Baldasty, 1992). Consequently, newspapers needed to find new avenues of financial support. Second, journalists and readers changed their thinking in terms of what journalism could and should do (Baldasty, 1992). Third, urbanization created a need for a press that served the wider world (Baldasty, 1992). Fourth, advertisers became a key economic

constituency, replacing political parties as the main financial base of the press (Baldasty, 1992). However, while the press became autonomous from government, the state still played (and continues to play) restrictive, regulating, facilitating, and participating functions (Siebert, 1960), as well as acquiescent functions in regards to the press.

The rise of objectivity mirrored the rise of the commercial press. Objectivity is the belief that one can and should separate facts from values (Schudson, 1978). Stephen Ward (2006) argued for a three-level framework of objectivity. The ethical-rhetorical level is concerned with the relationship between journalists and readers; the societal level is concerned with the economics, culture, and politics in a society; and the third level is concerned with the dominant social values of the era and the role of the press in society (Ward, 2006).

Another argument is that objectivity is used as a way to draw a boundary around what is and what is not journalism. Mindich (1998) argued that the objective ethic paralleled the rising sense of journalism as a profession. Two structural choices go hand in hand with the rise of objectivity. The first, at Ward's societal level, is a reliance on authoritative sources (Mindich, 1998). Audiences generally see official sources as being more authoritative and more credible, so a journalist adhering to objectivity would seek out these types of sources. However, the reliance on official sources biases the news because it limits the number and variety of voices that are heard in the press system, and these sources might not always be credible.

There could be major drawbacks to a reliance on objectivity at each of Ward's three levels. Glasser argued that a strict adherence to objectivity could bias news coverage. First, "objective reporting is biased against what the press typically defines as its role in a democracy—that of a Fourth Estate, the watchdog role, an adversary press" (1992, pg. 176). Objectivity makes the press biased against its watchdog role because it forces reporters and editors to rely on official sources, and this reliance propagates the status quo by leading journalists to seek out established power holders as primary sources of news and comment (Curran, 2005). Second, "objective reporting is biased against independent thinking; it emasculates the intellect by treating it as a disinterested spectator" (Glasser, 1992, pg. 176). In strict adherence to objectivity, journalists are forced to remain impartial and neutral, which means that they should just report the "facts" as they are told instead of interpreting events through a critical lens. Third, "objective reporting is biased against the very idea of responsibility; the day's news is viewed as something journalists are compelled to report, not something they are responsible for creating" (Glasser, 1992, pg. 176). In this ideology, news exists as something for a journalist to gather "out there." A journalist has completed the job if he or she reports that a fact claim has been made; he or she can report such a claim "without moral impunity—even if he or she knows the content of the claim to be false" (Glasser, 1992, pg. 176). The alternative press holds no pretense of objectivity (Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Lewes, 2000). Indeed, one problem of the mainstream press, according to critics in the alternative press, is its adherence to objectivity (Lewes, 2000). It is impossible to separate facts from values, and it is morally and politically wrong to do so (Atton

& Hamilton, 2008). Even if it were possible to separate facts from values, objective facts are not the same as the truth (Lewes, 2000). Facts are less important than the truth, and the two are far from equal (Lewes, 2000). In summary, scholars traditionally have defined objectivity as a process, the opposite of partisanship, or a belief that one can and should separate facts from values. Objectivity has been conceptualized in the alternative press as the search for truth, with the understanding that is impossible, as well as morally and politically wrong, to separate objective facts from values.

The second structural choice that went hand in hand with the rise of objectivity was the use of the inverted pyramid (Mindich, 1998). This is one narrative technique, but other choices could be made and have been made by alternative press journalists—including point-of-view reporting and native reporting (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Atton, 2002; Lewes, 2000; Armstrong, 1981; Lewis, 1972; Glessing, 1970), as well as literary journalism and muckraking (Schudson, 1978).

One premise not found in those relying on objectivity is that news is a construction of reality, a selected account chosen for its ability to please both advertisers and readers (Baldasty, 1992). This reality should be seen through the lens that Ward calls “pragmatic objectivity” (2006). He suggested that journalists should seek the best obtainable version of the truth, but that journalists also should recognize and retransmit that newsgathering practices are imperfect due to constraints such as time and money (Ward, 2006). The constructed reality of the news is the result of a negotiation between journalists and other institutions,

including sources, advertisers, political parties, government agencies, and readers (McChesney, 1999; Baldasty, 1992). Public relations firms and the use of propaganda also could serve to bias the news, or at least lessen the ways in which news stories will be told (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Schudson, 1978). News choices also are influenced by the size and scale of a newspaper, costs, and competition (Baldasty, 1992).

However, the shift from a partisan to a commercial press did not mean that the partisan press ceased to exist. Instead, the partisan press resurfaced throughout American history to service the informational and communication needs of social movements. Streitmatter (2001) and Kessler (1984) chronicled many of these resurfacings—for example, the labor press in the 1830s, the abolitionists press in the 1830s through 1860s, the women’s rights press in the 1860s and again in the 1960s, the socialist press in the early 1900s, the Black Panther press in the 1960s and 1970s, and the LGBT press in the 1970s. However, the alternative press faces many of the same economic and commercial pressures of its mainstream counterparts. Many underground newspapers either ignored advertisers or were ignored by advertisers. As a result, many were short-lived due to financial shortfalls (Streitmatter, 2001).

That history of financial shortfalls has not been ignored by contemporary alternative newsweekly publications. Those papers often are published by people with commercial motives who seek to profit from matching upscale readers with niche-market products (Gibbs, 2003; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). The target audience for a contemporary alternative newsweekly publication is “middle-class

niches of taste rather than déclassé enclaves of dissidents” (Peck, 1998, pg. 160). Gibbs (2003), in a study of the *Honolulu Weekly*, argued that the “alternative” label was used to disguise alternative newsweekly publishers’ deep roots in capitalist modes of production and to justify the exploitation of reporters and staff who said the alternative ideal was a strong factor in their decision to work for the paper. These motivations influence content, which often is less focused on radical politics and more focused on entertainment and nightlife.

This historic shift in the acknowledged impact of media economics from the publications of the 1960s to their contemporary counterparts may result in a misalignment of values and role in the alternative press of the early 21st Century. Journalists have the mission to inform the public, empower the public, support democracy, and promote social change (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2002). A professional realm is authentically aligned when cultural values are in line with those of the domain, when stakeholder expectations match those of the field, and when the domain and the field are aligned (Gardner et al., 2002). Journalism, then, is authentically aligned when the press supports its four missions. This is best achieved during those times when an alternative press communicates informational needs ignored or misrepresented by the mainstream press, in other words when its content in general supports its radical role.

If the traditional press claimed the inverted pyramid (Mindich, 1998) as one way to achieve its role, that left other narrative techniques available to the alternative press to inform a radical critique. Point-of-view reporting and native reporting (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Atton, 2002; Lewes, 2000;

Armstrong, 1981; Lewis, 1972; Glessing, 1970), as well as literary journalism and muckraking (Schudson, 1978) debuted in the alternative press, albeit at different historic eras.

The underground press adopted a cool, with-it tone that read like Hippies talked (Armstrong, 1981). This tone included the use of four-letter words, as well as sometimes explicit references to sex, nudity, and drugs (McMillian, 2011; Emery & Emery, 1988; Armstrong, 1981; Glessing, 1970). The lack of restriction of four-letter words, nudity, sex, and drugs was “a policy widely adopted by underground editors to shock the authority structure” (Glessing, 1970, pg. 14). This cool, with-it tone also served as a way for underground journalists to differentiate themselves from the mainstream press. They assumed the vernacular—a far cry from the language of the political and cultural elite. Glasser (1992) argued that objectivity biases against the monitorial role by forcing reporters to rely on established power holders as sources. By writing like Hippies talked, underground reporters signaled their readers that they were not limiting their sources to official, “objective” power holders. Tone became one marker of the radical perspective.

Tone and content were a way for underground journalists to construct a society by differentiating between an in-group (the societal out-group—those who understood and accepted such language and visuals) and an out-group (the societal in-group—everyone else). The underground press was more likely to use native reporting, point-of-view reporting, or in-depth magazine-style pieces that would be uncommon in the mainstream press (McMillian, 2011; Stanfield & Lemert, 1987; Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978). The structure of news reporting allowed

underground journalists to interpret events through a critical lens. This is a different than objective reporting, which forces journalists to remain impartial and neutral by just reporting the “facts” (Glasser, 1992).

Underground and alternative papers had an expansive scope in regards to news and arts coverage (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978). News topics uncovered, undercovered, or miscovered by the mainstream press—such as anti-war protests, LGBT issues, and environmentalism—were commonplace in the underground (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Many of the same types of issues—anti-Iraq War coverage, LGBT issues such as marriage for same-sex couples, and environmental issues such as global warming—are uncovered, undercovered, or miscovered by the mainstream press today (McMillian, 2011; Gustafson, 2011; Ostertag, 2006; Streitmatter, 2001). These social movements, independent of the alternative press, in many ways constructed a radical critique of mainstream society. By giving these movements a media home, the alternative press contributes a radical voice to the public debate, one that was absent from mainstream coverage.

Similarly, the underground and alternative press supplied much more coverage of then-controversial arts such as rock and roll, experimental cinema, and avant-garde art (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). For example, *The Village Voice* provided coverage of its community’s interest in books and the arts (Emery & Emery, 1988), including off-Broadway theater, poetry, and avant-garde cinema (Armstrong, 1981). Many alternative papers provided extensive coverage of the local and national rock and roll music scenes (Peck, 1985; Armstrong, 1981; Leamer, 1972; Glessing, 1970). In addition, detailed guides to local nightlife such as listings

for entertainment and restaurants were an integral part to many alternative newsweeklies (Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978). For alternative journalists, art plays a crucial role in creating a culture. For example, the punk-rock movement in the late 1970s and 1980s included not just music, but also new political philosophies, new styles of dress and appearance, new vocabulary, and even new forms of sport and recreation such as Zephyr-style skateboarding. This type of arts, music, and nightlife coverage was missing from the daily media's coverage of their communities and became a major feature that distinguished alternative newsweeklies from their daily counterparts. Finally, the underground press included avant-garde comics, or commix, from counterculture artists such as R.Crumb (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). This type of coverage is important because culture is part of one's everyday life and experience (Williams, 2000). Further, the culture of the alternative press was different, and in many ways critical, of culture and the scope of cultural coverage in the mainstream media.

Government reaction was the final difference between the underground and mainstream press (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). The FBI and other federal and local government agencies launched a major anti-underground-press campaign that included the use of obscenity and anti-drug laws, harassment, anti-solicitation laws, and economic pressure (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). For example, record companies advertised extensively in the underground press until they came under government pressure to stop (McMillian, 2011). Similarly, presses that printed underground newspapers were pressured to stop such printing, either through vigilante-type threats or economic pressure from other, non-controversial

printing clients (McMillian, 2011). Underground newspapers often included foul language, descriptions of sex, and depictions of nudity. Existing obscenity laws were used against underground press editors, who were jailed or heavily fined, a severe punishment for those on the economic brink (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Some of these cases were seen to be frivolous at best, but the legal costs of fighting criminal action served to suppress a press that was barely financially solvent during the best of times (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Many underground newspapers relied on street sales, not home circulation, and anti-solicitation laws were used to stop these street sales (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Harassment included instances where underground press editorial offices were shot into or bombed (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Finally, there is some evidence that the federal government created fake-underground papers and used covert operatives to plant false or misleading stories about the counterculture (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). The mainstream press typically is very quick to denounce government attempts to suppress freedom of expression (Armstrong, 1981). However, the mainstream press largely ignored, downplayed, and at times encouraged the government's suppression of the underground press (Armstrong, 1981). Contemporary scholars (see Christians et al., 2009) articulate role expressly from the individual journalists' or media organizations' view. However, the history of government suppression of the underground press suggests that media role also can be defined by other institutions in society. By treating the underground press as a radical—potentially threatening—alternative to the institutions of the status quo (including the mainstream media), the alternative press' radical role was confirmed

by other societal institutions, including the more traditional press. The impact of this institutional level “sorting” is important in understanding historic changes in the institution of the underground and alternative press itself.

The underground press slowly evolved into the alternative newsweekly press, especially after the end of the Vietnam War (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Armstrong, 1981). The radical media generally are either geographically- or issue-oriented (Christians et al., 2009), and the underground press lost the major issue it was fighting against with the end of the Vietnam War. Some of the more radical papers were underfunded and short-lived. Others, such as *The Village Voice*, were less radical and very profitable. The *Voice* founders didn’t think of the paper as being politically radical. In fact, Dan Wolf later would say, “We were very middle-of-the-road, really. We were radical journalistically, perhaps, but never politically” (McAuliffe, 1978, pg. 20). Wolf said that the founders wanted to be seen not as revolutionaries, but as businessmen because, by being businessmen, they could “guarantee the very brashness, the independence, the sheer difference to their newspaper that people, both those who liked it and those who didn’t, misconstrued as leftism” (McAuliffe, 1978, pg. 114).

The underground press has received some scholarly attention, but researchers have paid little attention to the alternative newsweekly press. The major difference between underground and alternative newsweekly media is their functions as a radical force. The alternative newsweekly press cooled the fiery rhetoric of the underground press (McMillian, 2011; Peck, 1998). Alternative newsweekly publications and journalists rarely call for radical change, instead

providing favorable coverage to those who do call for such change (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). Alternative newsweeklies tend to be heavily community centered, focusing on one city or region without trying to connect to a larger counterculture community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

Alternative newsweeklies are easier to read than their underground counterparts, with a greater emphasis on style than on out-of-the-box design (Armstrong, 1981). Alternative newsweeklies, like mainstream newspapers but not necessarily like underground newspapers, are professionally edited (Armstrong, 1981). Arts and lifestyle issues dominate coverage, which often focuses less on radical politics and more on matching upscale readers with niche-market products (Gibbs, 2003; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981).

By losing the radical rhetoric and concentrating more on local communities and lifestyle issues, the alternative newsweekly press has become more accepted by mainstream readers and advertisers, and more financially secure. Two examples illustrate this point. The first is the rise of alternative press chains such as Village Voice Media, which owns alternative newsweeklies across the country. A press chain would have been unthinkable in the underground press, but such a chain could exist in the more commercial, more capitalistic alternative newsweekly press. The second is the relationship between daily and alternative newsweeklies and journalists. Daily newspapers have started alternative newsweeklies or bought existing newsweeklies. Alternative newsweekly journalists can and do leave those papers to work for dailies (Gibbs, 2003), a move that was virtually inconceivable for

an underground journalist to make unless he or she worked for a more established, almost mainstream underground publication such as *Rolling Stone* or *The Village Voice*. Part of the reason for a journalist's ability to move between the alternative newsweekly and daily press today might be that standards in terms of training and professionalism are similar between the two types of press, especially when compared to standards of training and professionalism for underground or online journalists. These changes have resulted in an alternative press that has moved closer to the mainstream. With that mainstreaming, there has been a move away from the radical role in the alternative press and toward a greater emphasis on other normative roles, particularly collaboration with local communities.

One major role of today's alternative press is to serve a community as a second source of news (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). That second-source role is a major component of the nature of alternative newsweeklies, which historically have assumed the role of the second paper for content in cities with only one daily newspaper. The alternative press has become an "alternative medium" because the mainstream papers do not publish radical, liberal, or anti-establishment news (Leamer, 1972). The alternative press breaks news that is missed or ignored by the mainstream. However, such news generally is not considered "news" until the mainstream press reports it because the alternative press, at times, is still considered too small or not respectable (Armstrong, 1981).

The distinctions between mainstream and alternative journalism are sometimes clear but other times blurred. For example, the partisan press was the mainstream press of its time. However, many elements found in the partisan

press—such as no pretense of objectivity, tone, and community-building role—typically are more commonly found in the alternative press. Some view the alternative newsweekly press today as relatively indistinct from the mainstream press. Gone is the fiery, radical rhetoric, replaced by lifestyle and nightlife guides that appeal to a slightly more upscale readership.

Distinctions between mainstream and alternative press systems, however, can be seen clearly throughout much of American history. The 1960s underground press, for example, was radical, with journalists calling for an end to the Vietnam War (including promoting sometimes violent protest demonstrations) and a liberalization of drug and sex laws, as well as advocating for countercultural arts and music. The distinctions between alternative and mainstream press systems, however, are not limited to the 1960s. Other examples include the abolitionist press in the 1850s, the immigrant press in the early 1900s, the women’s rights and LGBT presses in the 1960s, the environmental press in the 1970s, and the punk-rock and skateboarding zines in the 1980s and 1990s. The alternative press is not time- or period-bound but has existed alongside the mainstream press since the earliest days of the United States (Kessler, 1984). This suggests that there has been and continues to be a place for an alternative press. The mainstream press does not thoroughly or adequately fulfill its role to provide an outlet for people to express their views. This especially is true if those people are non-elite, non-white, non-male, or express dissident or radical viewpoints. Dissidents, in many cases, would rather use mainstream publications than start their own presses, but, far from having a marketplace open to all who want to participate, the mainstream press has closed

such an open exchange of ideas (Kessler, 1984). Forms of dissident, underground, and alternative media have attempted to expand the public sphere by creating a two-way channel of communication between writers and audiences; by inverting the power structure by publishing the stories, opinions, and perspectives of non-elite sources; and by serving the bridging and bonding functions of establishing communities (McMillan, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kessler, 1984; Armstrong, 1981).

As the alternative newsweekly press might have become more mainstream, researchers are beginning to suggest that the true alternative press is now found online. Streitmatter (2001) argued that new forms of dissidence are found in zines (typically Xeroxed, subversive niche-publications) and some components of the online news community. McMillan (2011) suggested that many of the elements once found in the underground press—democratizing the media, helping to set the mainstream agenda, circulating news rapidly, giving voice to the otherwise voiceless—are now being seen in certain segments of the Internet.

Kenix (2009), however, suggested that online media do not serve as a true alternative to mainstream news sources. Alternative media share common characteristics, such as in-depth analysis, independent reporting, unique stories not covered elsewhere, two-way patterns of communication between the writer and reader, engaged and open discourse, personalized reporting, and encouragement of social participation (Kenix, 2009). Kenix (2009) argued that Internet media are not alternative because they do not contain these characteristics. Instead, online media display dependent instead of primary reporting, story redundancy, one-way communication, caustic commentary, coded language, personalization, and

apathetic online participation (Kenix, 2009). In fact, remediaticization could serve to reinforce the views of mainstream news sources by giving them access to audiences that might not have seen a story in its initial presentation or publication (Kenix, 2009). Further, online media typically do not report a wide variety of topics. However, many functions of the underground and alternative newsweekly press—specifically, democratization of the media, rapidly circulating information, influence on the mainstream press agenda, and community building of like-minded groups—might be seen in online, non-mainstream media sources (McMillian, 2011). An in-depth analysis of these apparently conflicting points of view has been lacking in the scholarly literature. One aim of this research study was to examine whether or not online media function as an alternative to mainstream media.

The alternative press is different fundamentally from the mainstream press in regards to content, frames, and tone. One aim of this research is to examine if the alternative press had moved online as the alternative newsweekly press had become more mainstream. Previous researchers have suggested that the alternative newsweekly press has moved closer to the mainstream middle, possibly for greater financial stability and more respectability. The alternative press has existed throughout American history, so it is unlikely that such a press has ceased to exist, and possible that only the form or means of transmission has changed. If this version of events is historically accurate, then the alternative press has abandoned its radical normative role and now shares normative roles with the mainstream media.

In summary, radical media invert the power hierarchy of access by giving voice to the voiceless, serve as an oppositional voice to the mainstream media, and are a geographically- or issue-oriented imagined community. Some normative roles found in the mainstream press also are found in the alternative press. Specifically, the monitorial and facilitative roles are found in both elements of the press system. Further, the collaborative role is found in the alternative press, although the role is fundamentally altered. Each of these will be explored in the next sections. The ethical standards, values, and ideals that society seeks and expects from the mainstream press often are found in the alternative press, although possibly not obviously.

Monitorial role of the press

The monitorial role (Christians et al., 2009) is similar to the watchdog function, but it is distinguished by its emphasis on the open character of the activity and its intention to benefit the receiver of information rather than the agents of information and control (Christians et al., 2009). The search for and retransmission of certain kinds of news and information is a key component of any normative definition of journalism (Christians et al. 2009; The Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947). However, the media's relationship to social, economic, and political power shapes their ability to perform the monitorial role adequately (Christians et al., 2009; Gans, 2005; Herman & Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 1999). For example, advertisers might influence content because they serve as the primary source of income for the mass media (Herman & Chomsky, 2002; Baldasty, 1992).

Consequently, an advertising-based media system tends to marginalize or eliminate programming with significant public-affairs content (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). This lack of public affairs content could influence the monitorial role by shifting editorial away from hard news such as political reporting and toward soft news such as celebrity gossip.

One example of the press performing its monitorial role is election coverage. Most of the existing scholarly research of the content and patterns of election coverage focuses specifically on presidential elections. However, presidential elections are just one, arguably small, component of the entire political landscape. National election research can be generalized to state and local elections, at least to an extent, but there is a paucity of scholarship on the content and patterns prevalent in local election coverage. The relations and negotiations between journalists and politicians could be similar at the national, state, and local levels. The mainstream media could and should play an important role in state and local elections. High-quality news coverage is important in state and local elections because there are few competing sources of information in state and local elections (Graber, 1997). Local media, therefore, have a greater ability to provide voters with important information, and such media outlets will not have many competitors in providing that service to citizens and audiences. Still, local media increasingly are turning to national elections while neglecting state and local races (Gulati, Just, & Crigler, 2004). Media pay little attention to Senate and Congressional races, and almost no attention to judicial races, unless the race is competitive or there is a scandal (Gulati et al., 2004). Further, when local media cover these races, the reporters tend to be

young and inexperienced, and the coverage tends to focus on personalities instead of issues (Gulati et al., 2004). This lack of local and state coverage does not end at the conclusion of campaign season. Instead, there has been a steady decline in statehouse coverage in mainstream media. The intense geographical focus of most alternative publications might fill the gap created by both mainstream publications and candidate websites inability to adequately educate and mobilize citizens to vote in local and state elections. To better understand the monitorial role at the state, regional and local level, it is important to look at how alternative publications covered these local electoral contests. Regardless of author or era, most scholars agree that while the mainstream media have the monitorial role, at present it is incompletely fulfilled.

The alternative press aspires to play a major political role and did precisely that in some eras. The underground press might be more willing to cover and support “fringe” candidates and political parties. Also, the alternative press, which again is intensely geographically focused, could and should cover local and state elections that larger, mainstream news organizations might ignore. Providing adequate coverage of local and state elections could include the fulfillment of the monitorial role for alternative media, which serves the function of filling the gaps left by mainstream media (Atton & Hamilton, 2008). A strong geographic and community focus could mean more coverage of Senate, Congressional, and judicial races. More seasoned reporters who focus on the issues instead of personalities also could report this coverage. The alternative media could provide a second important political role by concentrating less on campaigns and elections, and more on the

day-to-day governing practices of elected officials, government and quasi-government entities. To distinguish monitorial from radical coverage of politics—in other words to document any potential alteration on roles—it is important to examine the kind of issues covered as well as the way in which facts and political constituencies are portrayed.

Another characteristic of alternative newsweeklies is that they watch the watchdog by monitoring traditional media outlets (Lewes, 2000). This watchdog role can be seen as an extension of the *Normative Theories* conceptualization of monitorial role. The media watchdog role arose out of the underground press, which sought a rebellion against both the national establishment and the mainstream media. The best of the underground papers “did a capable job of criticizing both and of breathing new life into the dead-center American social and political scene of the 1960s” (Emery & Emery, 1988, pg. 481). That tradition continues today, with the alternative newsweekly press providing needed context to news stories, providing differing frames and views, critiquing the mainstream press’ coverage of certain issues, and poking fun at the mainstream press when it begins to take itself a little too seriously. Critiquing mainstream news coverage would be one indication of a continuing radical role for the alternative press. Covering what traditional media outlets also covered, or reporting and writing in more traditional ways, would signal a shift from the radical to the monitorial role for the alternative press.

The monitorial role, as it has been written about in most academic work, is somewhat intentional on the part of journalists and individual publications.

Decisions about what to watch, and therefore monitor, would help distinguish

among publications that viewed themselves as radical and ones that defined themselves as mainstream. The facilitation role, while it includes elements of intentionality on the part of journalists and news organizations, also arises from the cumulative content and impact of journalism.

Facilitative role of the press

Facilitation is a third role performed by the media. In the facilitative role, the media seek to promote dialog among readers through communication that engages them and in which they actively participate (Christians et al., 2009; The Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947). For Dewey, this sort of facilitation was the stuff of smarter, policy driven governing. Journalism, as he envisioned it, would serve as a community-building forum, encouraging dialog in neighborhoods, churches, and other institutions and organizations outside of the state and the market (Christians et al., 2009). The goal of the facilitative role is to promote pluralism, which is a fundamental need and ideal for a functioning democracy (Christians et al., 2009). In this construction, journalism could facilitate radical change, a maintenance of the status quo, or the more gradual evolution of politics envisioned by those who drafted the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The current media climate might not encourage such dialog but instead could create media niches. Jurgen Habermas (1991) conceived of a public sphere outside of state control where people could engage in rational-critical debate, and exchange knowledge and views. Dewey argued that the decisions and actions fostered by such communication could lead to a great society, and that engaging in the rational-

critical debate central to the public sphere was the duty of every citizen (Dewey, 1954). Rational-critical debate was key to Habermas' conception of the public sphere (1991). This critical debate was rational in that it was based on facts, truth, reality, and reason (Habermas, 1991). The media could supply the information essential for the rational-critical debate needed for better-informed policy outcomes to occur (Dewey, 1954). Dewey argued that the knowledge needed to be involved in politics was to be generated by the interaction of citizens, elites, and experts through the mediation and facilitation of journalism, so journalists should change their emphasis away from happenings and toward alternatives, choices, consequences, and conditions to foster those decisions and actions (Dewey, 1954). Habermas argued that his ideal public sphere vanished with the rise of early mass media and the emergence of the welfare state (Habermas, 1991). As the foregoing discussion indicates, throughout history, the alternative press has published the sort of radical critique of which Habermas spoke, as well as provided a platform for less radical change of the sort that would implicate Dewey's smarter government. What is facilitated is tightly linked to what is reported and how those reports are crafted.

Many scholars suggest that a Habermas-ian public sphere exists online today. The Internet could serve both bridging and bonding functions (Norris, 2002). Bridging groups function to bring together disparate members of the community (Norris, 2002). Bonding groups reinforce close-knit networks among people sharing similar backgrounds and beliefs (Norris, 2002). Norris stressed that these functions should be placed on a continuum because the Internet (or other public spheres) could serve both a bridging and a bonding function (2002). However, while contact

with online groups could serve both bridging and bonding functions, the experience was slightly stronger for reinforcing bonding than for bridging (Norris, 2002). Reinforcement of bonding might be the result of the segmentation of Internet audiences (Hindman, 2009; Bennett, 2003), where readers only seek out information that conforms to their preexisting views, or it could be the result of the shallow nature of most web portal searches (Hindman, 2009). In terms of the existing normative paradigm, bridging, bonding and reinforcement all could be individual effects of the facilitative role.

The Internet as a public sphere could serve democracy by providing a forum to enhance public discussion and promote civic engagement (Coleman, Lieber, Mendelson, & Kurpius, 2008). However, Coleman et al. (2008) suggested that this new, online public sphere neither enhances public discussion nor promotes civic engagement. Indeed, while the Internet has properties that make increased participation possible and despite Internet access being shown as a predictor of civic participation, the Internet is not being used to promote increased deliberation among or between citizens and politicians (Coleman et al., 2008). The question then becomes why? One reason might be that the need for information can be used as a way to control the present and future for personal, political, and economic reasons (Briggs & Burke, 2009). Those who control the means to disseminate information also control the means to influence conceptions of symbols, rituals, conventions, and stories that form a culture (Briggs & Burke, 2009; Zelizer, 2004). The conceptualizations that come to dominate content suggests which of the normative

roles journalists and their publications are attempting to perform. Audience response would determine which of the normative roles is being actualized.

The mass media, therefore, have some power to influence some behaviors (Duffy & Gotcher, 1986). Individuals who inhabit a rhetorical vision form a rhetorical community (Duffy & Gotcher, 1986). The rhetorical community could be seen as a type of imagined community (Anderson, 2006), whether that community's rhetorical vision is influenced by a print, broadcast, or online news source. The rhetorical vision presented in this imagined community is not neutral (Duffy & Gotcher, 1986). Instead, a rhetorical vision is always organized to present events from a certain perspective while inviting others to share that perspective (Duffy & Gotcher, 1986). The alternative press historically has presented a rhetorical vision that typically has been radically different than the rhetorical vision presented by the mainstream press. Internet content has yet to be evaluated for this sort of radical rhetorical vision in any systematic, scholarly way.

A second reason that the Internet might not enhance public discussion or promote civic engagement is that the reading or viewing audience is not looking online solely for political information. The mass media have the explicit objective of entertaining as well as informing (Briggs & Burke, 2009). People turn to the press for diversion and escape in larger doses than for information or knowledge, so useful knowledge cannot be diffused unless readers also are entertained (Briggs & Burke, 2009). This seems to be true for both online and traditional news sites. Only a small number of websites get the majority of Internet traffic, and those sites tend to be non-political in nature (Hindman, 2009).

Hindman (2009) suggested that digital democracy is a myth because political traffic is a tiny portion of web usage, the link structure of the web limits the content that citizens see, most search engine use is shallow, some online content is prohibitively expensive to produce, social hierarchies have quickly emerged, and much of what citizens seek is familiar. Further, online politics tend to mirror traditional patterns (Hindman, 2009; McChesney, 1999). Hindman (2009) argued that a small number of political websites received a hugely disproportionate share of the limited amount of web users seeking political information online. Indeed, Hindman (2009) wrote that the vast majority of online bloggers have fewer readers than the average college newspaper. This small audience, however, often is very influential (Hindman, 2009), consisting of politicians, mainstream journalists, and Wall Street bankers. The greatest power of online journalists, at least so far, has been in the scandals that they have exposed or at least allowed to unfold more rapidly (Hindman, 2009). If this analysis is correct, then online news could have a monitorial and facilitative role, as well as a more radical role.

The democratization myth of the Internet could influence the Habermas-ian public sphere. The descriptive definition of democratization presumes that technology will amplify the political voice of ordinary citizens (Hindman, 2009). True participation, however, requires citizens to engage in direct discussion with other citizens (Hindman, 2009).

The great hope of the online public sphere is that it could open access to anyone who wanted to join the rational-critical debate, and it could free the control of information from the hands of a few elite, traditional mainstream journalists.

However, Hindman (2009) suggested that this has not been the case, and that those who control information online still tend to be elite, white male professionals with advanced degrees. Further, those who seek political information online tend to be the same types of people who seek political information from more traditional sources (Tedesco, 2004). These seekers are not representative demographically in terms of income, education, race, geography, gender, or education (Bennett, 2003). While this public sphere probably is closer to the reality of the actual public sphere about which Habermas has theorized, it is far from ideal. How online media content reflects—or challenges—the facilitative role, as opposed to the historical radical role of the underground press or the historic collaborative role of the mainstream press, will be a focus of this research effort.

In order to document these fine-grained distinctions, some brief review of current scholarship on media coverage of politics—and its link to role—is necessary. The media, in the facilitative role, promote communication that engages readers to participate actively (Christians et al., 2009; The Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947). However, the facilitation provided by the mainstream media is collaboration with the status quo—with little room for dissident viewpoints or radical critiques. As a result, there are voices that are shut out of the mainstream press (Kessler, 1984). Kessler (1984) argued that a free press should include diverse ideas and encourage diversity. However, Ostertag (2006) and Kessler (1984) suggest the marketplace of ideas espoused by the mainstream press is nonexistent because dissenting, divergent, and unpopular voices are left out of the discussion. These voices belong to protest groups, dissidents, or anyone who does

not conform to the narrow range of topics allowed admittance into the marketplace by the mainstream press (Ostertag, 2006; Kessler, 1984). The mainstream press traditionally has spoken for and to the homogenous middle (Ostertag, 2006; McChesney, 1999; Kessler, 1984). Dissident groups, in being shut out by the mainstream press, must create their own communications systems to construct an alternative reality if they want to share their ideas and ideals (Kessler, 1984).

Dissident or alternative journalism serves an advocating role (McMillian, 2011; Ostertag, 2006; Lewes, 2000; Kessler, 1984). Dissident groups seek two audiences with their media outlets. The first audience is internal, and the aim is to build a counterculture community of like-minded voices (Gustafson, 2011; Kessler, 1984). The second audience is external, and the aim is to convert more people to the cause by expanding the base of people hearing the protest message, to transmit the protest message of the dissident group on its own terms, and to provide a channel for a mainstream audience to communicate with the dissident group (a channel that is not being provided by the mainstream media) (Ostertag, 2006; Streitmatter, 2001; Kessler, 1984).

Another sort of evidence that shows the role distinctions between the mainstream and underground presses is the use of sources. Mainstream journalists rely almost entirely on official sources. Underground journalists relied almost exclusively on non-official sources (McMillian, 2011; Lewes, 2000). Part of the reason was that a reliance on official sources, underground reporters felt, led to a news system that was framed or slanted against the counterculture and toward the mainstream middle (McMillian, 2011; Lewes, 2000). Reporters in the underground

press wanted the voices of ordinary people to balance this perceived news slant (McMillian, 2011; Lewes, 2000). Underground reporters argued that the mainstream press always viewed crime stories from the side of the police and only reported about minority groups when the news was negative (McMillian, 2011; Glessing, 1970). In an extreme view, the *Los Angeles Free Press* “almost always assume[d] that the dissident, the accused, the rebel, and the militant version [was] correct” (Leamer, 1972, pg. 29).

Later researchers studying framing and the alternative press suggested that the reporting and writing in the alternative press continued to be different from the mainstream press. B.A. Kimball studied the coverage of a Santa Barbara bribery scandal. He concluded that the *Santa Barbara News and Review*, the alternative paper, covered the full story better than the daily *Santa Barbara News-Press*, which did not give any historical context and steered away from anything that could be considered editorializing (Kimball, 1974). Tony Harcup analyzed the headlines, themes, concerns, and language of the alternative and daily newspaper coverage of the 1981 Chapeltown riots in Yorkshire, England (Harcup, 2003). He found that the newspapers framed the stories much differently, with the alternative paper focusing on the perspective of the poor while the daily paper focused on a lawless youth angle (Harcup, 2003). While not every news story reflects these distinctions, contemporary scholarly work suggests that how journalists “do” journalism influences the normative—and institutional-level—role their journalism will play. Both the mainstream and underground or alternative press seek to facilitate community, but each focuses on different sorts of communities and provides

different sorts of “reasons.” For the underground press, community is forged through an alliance of the powerless and politically and culturally disenfranchised. For the radical role to be achieved, critique as well as monitoring of the mainstream is essential. For the mainstream press, monitoring, but not critiquing, existing institutions dominates coverage. Community continues through a partnership with existing political and economic institutions that serve the needs of the majority. What is determined to be news—and what sources are seen as central to its creation—can distinguish one role from the other.

In academic work, the facilitative role is related to social responsibility theory, which is based on a communitarian model that seeks justice, covenant, and empowerment (Christians, Ferre, & Fackler, 1993). The fourth component of communitarianism is an organizational culture that is based on mutuality (Christians et al., 1993). The ultimate goal of reporting becomes social transformation (Christians et al., 1993). It is important to realize that this social transformation could occur at the local, state, regional, nation, or international level. Consequently, the press should change its emphasis away from happenings and toward alternatives, choices, consequences, and conditions to foster conversation and improve knowledge (Dewey, 1954). For example, abolitionist editors served as agents of change, and often became synonymous with the movement, by adopting the concept of an open forum while speaking on behalf of the oppressed and arguing for moral change (Streitmatter, 2001; Kessler, 1984). Many of the anti-slavery arguments first published in the abolitionist press eventually were adopted by its mainstream counterparts, at least in the North. Christians and other proponents of a

socially responsible press would argue that the press only makes sense in terms of public and public life (Christian et al., 1993; Dewey, 1954). If the press is failing its normative role to be socially responsible in terms of justice, covenant, and empowerment for radicals, dissidents, and the oppressed, then the society in which it operates most likely also will be failing. Similarly, if the social, political, and economic systems are failing, then the press will not be able (or as able) to fulfill its role in society.

A media system based on social responsibility is premised on the idea that freedom of expression is a positive freedom (Berlin, 2002; Nerone, 1995). Expression is not an inalienable right, but an earned moral right (Nerone, 1995). That moral right, and the nature of the press' freedom, is serving the public (Nerone, 1995). That public, however, is not limited to the homogenous middle. For the press to earn its moral right, it must tolerate and communicate dissenting, divergent, or unpopular ideas (Kessler, 1984). In addition to the responsibilities outlined above, a socially responsible media should service the political system, enlighten the public, serve as a government watchdog, service the economic system, entertain, and maintain its self-sufficiency (Nerone, 1995).

Researchers previously have suggested that the media have a three-fold impact by reporting on politics and governance. First, the media largely have replaced political parties, at least on the national level, in winnowing weaker or more unlucky campaign contenders from the field of prospective candidates and choosing candidates who are most likely to be successful or electable (Sabato, 2000; Patterson, 1993). Second, the media highlight candidate foibles and flaws that affect

public performance (Sabato, 2003). Public performance, in turn, becomes a surrogate for individual ability to govern, common sense and history to the contrary. Third, the mainstream media view their role, at least in part, as giving the public what it wants and expects (Sabato, 2003). This “wanting” and “expecting” could have both positive and negative consequences for the political system. Positively, the media could increase politicians’ openness and accountability (Sabato, 2003). Negatively, the media could trivialize political discourse, encourage cynicism, and dissuade promising candidates from running for office (Sabato, 2003). However, it is important to note that these three effects are facilitative in nature but do not involve a radical critique or an inversion of the existing political power structure.

How the media accomplish this is documented in the literature. First, the media do play a major role in choosing which candidates run and in influencing voter turnout. Second, the media exert this influence with a structural bias that presupposes a game schema. Third, the media interact and have both positive and negative interactions with politicians, their managers, and the voting public. Fourth, the Internet has changed the complexion of political reporting, influencing reporters, as well as politicians and the public. Fifth, the media serve an educative function that enables citizens to self-govern. In general, and with some obvious and previously noted exceptions, this sort of political coverage best fits what is called the facilitative role—that is facilitating existing democratic government, allowing for gradual change but emphasizing the status quo.

The media control information, which is extremely important in a democracy (Tedesco, 2004). The media influence public opinion in a variety of ways. First, the press highlights an early winner, providing a major boost to his or her campaign (Patterson, 1993). The media also determine the electability of a candidate (Patterson, 1993). Together, the prediction of an early winner and the determination of electability influence the field of candidates by narrowing the field of choices. This ultimately preselects those politicians who run for a public office, thus limiting the field of potential candidates before the voting electorate has had the ability to make a decision or cast a vote. Researchers suggest that the media cannot and do not change voter preferences, at least not after the initial screening and winnowing of candidates (Graber, 1997; Weaver, 1990). The media, instead, reinforce predispositions that a voter already had about a candidate (Graber, 1997). The media also largely determine the crucial issues by which candidate competence will be gauged by voters (Graber, 1997), and can play a role in increasing or suppressing voter turnout in a given election (Graber, 1997).

Partisanship is a well-accepted and established feature of the mainstream. The U.S. third-party alternative, some of which might be considered radical in nature, largely has been unsuccessful in electoral contests. There is an assumption that the media have a partisan bias. However, Gulati et al. (2004) suggest that the media collectively, as well as individual media organizations, only have a modest partisan bias. Gulati et al. (2004) found that the media do have a strong structural bias, and media organizations will be more likely to report those stories, issues, or candidates that most readily fit into their preconceived and predetermined

structures. One example of a structural bias is the game schema. Journalists view political campaigns as a game in which a candidate's every move is predetermined and carefully planned as a strategic way to gain an advantage over an opponent (Patterson, 1993). The media tend to highlight certain aspects of a political contest as a result of this game schema. Patterson (1993) suggests that journalists emphasize conflict, controversies, clear-cut issues, and candidate blunders due to the game schema, and that this emphasis has real consequences for candidates and candidate images, voter choices, and the governing of our democracy as a whole. The game schema—particularly a game among well-established and accepted players—facilitates the political status quo, a charge that is leveled against the mainstream media from by a variety of scholars.

The alternative to the game schema is for the press to provide a real dialog between candidates and voters. The press here could perform the facilitative role by promoting dialog among readers through communication that engages them and in which they actively participate (Christians et al., 2009). Politics is the daily work and duty of every citizen (Dewey, 1954). The necessary knowledge for citizens to engage actively in politics should be generated by the interaction of citizens, elites, and experts through the mediation and facilitation of journalism (Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Dewey, 1954). Consequently, journalism should change its emphasis away from happenings and toward alternatives, choices, consequences, and conditions to foster conversation and improve this necessary knowledge (Jamieson & Waldman, 2003; Dewey, 1954). Journalists also should expand the dialog by incorporating differing viewpoints. Kessler (1984) argued that mainstream media stifle unpopular

ideas and refuse access to minorities and groups working for social and political change. Minorities, dissident groups, and politicians could circumvent these restrictions to access by creating their own forms of media.

Researchers suggest that finding reliable information online might be difficult. The Internet contains a maze of too raw information that often is unofficial, unsubstantiated, impenetrable, and largely lacking interactivity (Tedesco, 2004). Citizens have information overload, and that information is imperfect (Patterson, 1993). In addition, Tedesco (2004) suggested that those people who use the Internet for political participation tend to be the same politically active people who use other available means of participation. The Internet also provides the tools for a segmentation of political information, giving people the ability to seek out only that information that confirms and supports their attitudes and opinions without challenging those attitudes and opinions with differing viewpoints or ideas (Hindman, 2009; Tedesco, 2004). This segmentation could lead to a public marginalized by its inability to communicate a shared experience (Tedesco, 2004).

Inferring role from these sorts of interactions is difficult. However, by examining Internet content, it should be possible to make a preliminary determination of whether politics on the Internet is more or less like political coverage of the underground press of the 1960s to 1980s, the alternative newsweekly press up to the 2010s, or the mainstream press as outlined by the scholarship reviewed above. This will allow scholars to test the assertions of the potential radical political role of the Internet against empirical data analyzed through normative dimensions.

Collaborative role of the press

A fourth role that the media perform is one of collaboration with the state (Christians et al., 2009). The collaborative role implies a partnership built on a mutual trust and shared commitment between the media and the state to mutually agreeable means and ends (Christians et al., 2009). Conditions for collaboration fit into three broadly distinguishable categories: acceptance, compliance, and acquiescence (Christians et al., 2009). Only acceptance deals specifically and exclusively with the merits of a collaborative role because journalists and the state effectively agree that it is right to collaborate given what each knows about the means and ends of a cooperative relationship, as well as the possible consequences of those means and ends for all constituent groups (Christians et al., 2009). The media, again, function in a larger society and can influence and be influenced by social, political, and economic concerns.

The media and the state often work together on matters of public safety (Christians et al., 2009). For example, the state might ask a news organization to withhold or release certain information, such as the description of a robbery suspect. Inversely, the government does not want certain information to be made public. One example is the movements of troops during wartime. Publishing this type of information might aid an enemy because attacking a convoy is much easier if one knows where the convoy was coming from and going. It is not legal to publish this type of information in the U.S. system, but it also would be ethically wrong (or at least problematic) to publish the information.

Radical media also perform a collaborative role. However, unlike the mainstream media, the radical press collaborates by being a change agent instead of collaborating to maintain the status quo. The constituent groups involved in the collaboration are very different than the collaboration between the mainstream media and the state. The collaboration is between alternative journalists and their community instead of established, mainstream state and economic institutions. The radical media generally are either geographically- or issue-oriented (Christians et al., 2009). The radical press is not neutral (Christians et al., 2009), and many papers typically promoted one position, whether that was ending the war in Vietnam, ending the disparity between blacks and whites in the South, or promoting the use of recreational drugs. The radical press, especially the underground press in the 1960s and the alternative newsweekly press that followed, was intensely geographically based. The concerns in Flint, Michigan, were very different than the concerns in New York or Boston, and each paper reflected its community. However, the papers also helped foster a sense of a nationwide community of like-minded, countercultural individuals who were doing the same types of things (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

That nationwide community could be seen as an “imagined community” socially constructed by people thinking of themselves as part of a larger group (Anderson, 2006). Anderson (2006) conceptualized an imagined community as “imagined” because it is impossible to know even a large minority of fellow-members, “limited” because there are finite borders or boundaries, and a “community” because it always is conceived of in terms of deep comradeship. Today,

the radical community, and by extension the radical media, increasingly is moving online (Christians et al., 2009).

Research questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the concept of the role of the alternative press and to inquire about whether such a press was moving online. Specifically, the researcher sought to further the understanding of the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the predominant roles of the alternative press in U.S. history with a particular emphasis on recent U.S. history?

RQ2: How is the alignment between the alternative press and mainstream press balanced?

RQ3: What conventions and norms of writing and story selection in the alternative press contribute to an alternative idea of politics and culture?

And, finally, how does all of this allow scholars to understand the evolution of role in a particular segment of the American media landscape?

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE NORMATIVE ROLES OF THE UNDERGROUND PRESS

An understanding of the history of the underground press is necessary to gain an understanding of the characteristics that would be found in the alternative press today. This idea of continuity is the foundation of historical research (Shafer, 1980). Respect for what is old gives researchers perspective about the new, allowing historians to see problems in the longer perspective (Shafer, 1980). The historical research for this project focused on several aspects of the underground press found in the literature. Specifically, it focused on content or story selection, lack of objectivity, the use of sources, tone, efforts at counterculture community building, and voicing opposition to the mainstream media.

The study is focused on the institutional role. However, to gain an understanding of the institutional level, it is important to analyze the individual and organizational levels. Individual workers' characteristics, personal and professional backgrounds, personal attitudes, and professional roles can influence media content (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), as well as role. Organizational-level factors also have a critical impact on media content (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996), as well as role. These organizational factors include roles performed, the way those roles are structured, the policies flowing through that structure, and the methods used to enforce those policies (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). By understanding the individual and organizational levels across a wide spectrum of media (underground press,

alternative newsweekly press, online alternative press) and geographic locations (New York; Columbus, Ohio; Santa Fe, New Mexico), the researcher can suggest some institutional factors that might contribute to alternative news content and role. The research focused on individual and organizational parts, and how each contributed to the institutional whole.

Historical research should not be seen as a record of the past. Instead, it should be seen as a selection of data and other information made by historians (Berger, 1998). A historical researcher can find interesting ways of looking at how contemporary ideas about various topics, events, and personalities have evolved (Berger, 1998). Historical research, however, is only as good or as bad as a limited perspective can be (Zelizer, 2004). Historians deal with incomplete, biased data, and study the available evidence to form theories to explain it (Nord, 1989).

Historical evidence should be from primary sources such as records and relics, and should be studied in the context of its time (Smith, 1989). The primary sources for this study were collected in the Underground Newspaper Microfilm Collection at the University of Missouri. The researcher focused on a sample of the lead stories, as well as political and cultural articles, in underground newspapers published in New York; Columbus, Ohio; and Santa Fe, New Mexico, between 1956 and 1983 (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998) (see Appendix A). The three cities were chosen because of population and geographical differences. New York is a major international city on the East Coast. Columbus is a mid-size city in the Midwest. Santa Fe is a small city in the Southwest.

The time period is important because the transition from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press began in the early 1970s (McMillian, 2011; Peck, 1998). The underground press set a template in terms of content, tone, efforts at community building, the use of sources, and the relationship to the mainstream press and other institutions. This template was followed, to varying degrees and with some major differences, by the alternative newsweekly and online alternative press. The rise of the alternative newsweekly press meant a professionalization of the underground media, with circulation strategies, reader surveys, polished layouts, expanded arts coverage, and upscale demographics (McMillian, 2011). Quality journalism, instead of advocacy for a social movement, was prioritized along with sounder financial footing (McMillian, 2011). However, the change from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press did not occur overnight (Armstrong, 1981). By looking at a 27-year period, the researcher can provide evidence that marks this gradual change from underground press to alternative newsweekly press.

Every historian makes some leap of faith between evidence and generalization (Smith, 1989). However, the goal is not to generalize but to illuminate—to understand a particular event in a particular place and time (Nord, 1989). Historical research is premised on context, or the intricacies of time and place (Nord, 1989; Smith, 1989). Historians explain the past by telling stories (Nord, 1989; Shafer, 1980). However, narrative is not just description. Instead, it is a logical organization of material into a chronological sequence for the purpose of explanation (Nord, 1989; Shafer, 1980). This narrative attempts to explain the

predominant roles and characteristics of the alternative press that began with the underground press, transitioned to the alternative newsweekly press, and might be transitioning again from hard copy to online.

Content and story selection

Underground papers had an expansive scope in terms to news and arts coverage, publishing news stories that often were left uncovered by the mainstream media (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978). The expansive coverage printed in the underground press included election coverage, reports about diversity issues, a focus on less traditional arts, and, what made that coverage sometimes difficult, harassment of underground newspapers—both those who worked for them and the publications themselves.

The coverage also included a wide range of topics that were ignored or poorly covered by the mainstream press such as high-speed light rail (reported by *Testube* in December 1982), police brutality (reported by *The Needle* in April 1968), and attacks on members of the Black Panthers (reported by Gary Thiher in an undated issue of *Rat*). The reason the underground press devoted so much time and energy covering such topics was twofold. First, this coverage allowed underground journalists to construct a community by differentiating between an in-group and an out-group. The in-group in this case was the societal out-group—the progressive, cultural class that cared about topics such as light rail, police brutality, and civil rights and other issues that concerned the Black Panthers or other extremist dissidents. The out-group was everyone else, but specifically those in power.

Second, by establishing this in-group, underground newspapers were attempting to establish a community, both locally and nationally. Locally, the papers reflected the issues that concerned their readers. Nationally, the papers also helped foster a sense of a nationwide community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

Reporting on government and quasi-government activities was widespread in the underground press. Stories about college and university issues, and about government crackdowns on protest activity, were commonplace. Many underground newspapers were both written and read by college students (or college-age non-students), and many stories were framed from an anti-establishment point-of-view that was commonplace among many young people during the 1960s. For example, Mike Golash wrote in the Dec. 20, 1968, *Hard Core* article “Columbia octopus grabs land” that

It is interesting to note that on the substantive issues affecting the neighborhood, Mr. [I.M.] Pei needed more time for study. But on the issue of who was to be the liaison with the community, one of the most difficult questions of all, Mr. Pei has decided to deal with the Morningside Renewal Council, an organization in which Columbia has a significant say and which is most prone to compromise the community interests for the political advantage of its members and especially of Columbia University and other institutions on the Heights.

Similarly, in the Jan. 19, 1977, *Columbus Free Press* article “F.B.I. tried to ruin Antioch,” an unnamed reporter wrote,

Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, has the dubious distinction of being the first known case in which an educational institution itself was the target of a Cointelpro program. Late this fall Antioch's student paper *The Record* reprinted documents from the FBI Cincinnati office released by the Senate Intelligence Committee Nov. 19, 1975. These documents, censored by the FBI before release, identify Antioch's Yellow Springs campus and the town itself as a "center for New Left activity" and outlined a plan of action to discredit Antioch's academic reputation.

To "expose the pseudo-intellectual image of Antioch," the FBI would identify Antioch graduates with a "low achievement record." It would then furnish the information to "friendly news media," parents and other sources of financial support for the college.

The underground press, in these articles, was fulfilling the monitorial role of the press. Indeed, underground reporters were writing about substantial issues that were left uncovered by their mainstream counterparts. This anti-establishment tone consistently was present throughout the time period analyzed. One reason why many underground papers might have felt freer to report on such anti-establishment issues was that many such papers either ignored advertisers or were ignored by advertisers, so they did not face the same economic and commercial pressures of their mainstream counterparts (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

The construction of news is the result of a negotiation between journalists, sources, advertisers, political parties, government agencies, and readers (McChesney, 1999; Baldasty, 1992). The underground press, by and large, did not

negotiate with advertisers, political parties, or government agencies. Further, many articles included few if any sources, and underground newspaper readers typically held a different worldview than mainstream newspaper readers. This differing worldview later will resurface, at least to an extent, in the online alternative press. The resulting news construction, as exemplified by the Antioch story, therefore, would be different in the underground press than in the mainstream press.

In addition to reporting the day-to-day activities of government institutions, underground publications also extensively covered elections. Previous researchers suggested that local mainstream media increasingly are neglecting Senate, Congressional, and judicial races (Gulati et al., 2004; Graber, 1997). However, unlike their mainstream counterparts, underground publications did cover local, state, and national elections. Here, the underground press was serving the function of filling gaps left by mainstream media (Atton & Hamilton, 2008). For example, Steve Sterrett reported on both the Democrat and Republican gubernatorial primaries in two May 5, 1982, *Columbus Free Press* articles. The first, "Democratic governor's race: Heavy on image, light on answers," covered nominees Richard Celeste, William Brown, and Jerry Springer. About the latter, Sterrett presciently wrote,

Referring to himself as an "underdog" in the primary, Springer not surprisingly claims to be running an issue-oriented campaign. At the same time, he is handsome with a quick wit and knows how to use the media.

The second, "Republican governor's race: Light on image, light on answers," covered the five nominees vying for the party nomination.

In these two articles, Sterrett touched on four of the five primary aspects of how the media report of political campaigns. (The fifth is focused on how the Internet has changed the complexion of political reporting, but the Internet was not a factor in the early 1980s.) The media do play a major role in choosing which candidates run and in influencing voter turnout. Sterrett first eliminated all third-party candidates. He also might have influenced voter turnout by denigrating all of the candidates as being “light on answers.” The media have a structural bias that presupposes a game schema. This could be seen in the underground press as well as the mainstream press. Sterrett framed Springer as someone playing a game. Springer, the “underdog,” “claims to be running an issue-oriented campaign,” but he really is a quick-witted, handsome man who “knows how to use the media.” The media interact and have both positive and negative interactions with political candidates, their managers, and the voting public. Here, the interaction was negative. Sterrett claimed that the Democratic contenders had style but no substance while the Republican contenders had neither charisma nor substantive ideas. The media serve an educative function that enables citizens to self-govern. Sterrett did provide readers with a quick list of the likely gubernatorial contenders, and editorialized on the few strengths and many weaknesses of those contenders.

Similarly, the *Columbus Free Press* offered a Congressional candidate primer on Oct. 1, 1980. The article, “Few good candidates offered in House races,” included brief overviews of each person in Ohio running for Congress. For example, an unnamed reporter wrote that Jo Ann Davidson, “If elected, can be expected to continue serving Big Business. One bright spot is that she reportedly is good on

many feminist issues.” The media largely determine the crucial issues by which the candidate competence would be gauged by voters (Graber, 1997). Here, the *Free Press* is narrowing the major issues down to two: a candidates’ relationship to “Big Business,” and a candidates’ stand on feminist issues (although the newspaper does not elaborate on what specific “feminist” issues are most important). The coverage often was snarky, and the political biases of many reporters and publications were quite clear. However, underground publications at least were reporting on local and state elections, coverage that many mainstream organizations were abandoning.

The underground press extensively covered diversity issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. This should come as no surprise because protest groups, radicals, and those on the fringes of society traditionally have been at best underserved and at worst ignored by mainstream media (Kessler, 1984). The underground press, like previous radical media, sought to give voice to the voiceless (McMillian, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kessler, 1984; Armstrong, 1981), and to invert the power hierarchy of access (Atton, 2002).

Racial issues were a prominent focus of the papers studied. For example, the *Columbus Free Press* reported in Nov. 2, 1977, about upcoming school board elections where “many citizens will actually take the trouble to find out how the candidates stand on one issue—desegregation.” Court-ordered busing to achieve school desegregation was a major topic in the late 1970s. Courts attempted through forced busing to desegregate large school systems in Boston, Massachusetts; Cleveland, Ohio; Kansas City, Missouri; Richmond, Virginia; San Francisco, California; and Detroit, Michigan, between 1972-1980. Columbus Public Schools also

largely were segregated, so candidates' positions on the topic were big news in Columbus in 1977.

Similarly, the *Columbus Free Press* reported on Dec. 15, 1976, that a Columbus judge had "taken a 6-year-old boy from his mother because her fiancée frequently spends the night with her." The unnamed reporter then speculated that the judge based his decision on the fact that the mother and son were white while the fiancée was black. Mixed-race couples were still largely taboo in 1970s America. The *Free Press* speculation about a mother's loss of custody due to a mixed-race relationship could be an attempt by the paper to serve as an advocate by bringing the issue into the public sphere.

Gender issues also were covered extensively in the pages of underground press publications. A feminist collective seized control of New York's *Rat* on Feb. 9, 1970. In the first issue after the takeover, Rita Mae Brown wrote,

Sex is used to sell everything in our country...magazines, cars, art and *Rat*. If you packaged shit, called it Fabulous Feces and utilized a buxom woman to the advertising campaign, it would sell. All this rampant commercial sexuality with the focus on woman as walking sperm receptacles is incredibly destructive. Damned if I want our bodies to sell the leprous products of our great society. Damned if I want my body to send a movement male on his butch ego trip. It's one thing if plastic people relate to each other as automatic genitalia but it's a whole other scene if we radicals and revolutionaries are a distorted version of the mass culture.

Advertising is the primary income source of the mass media (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Advertisers' choices, therefore, influence the media because advertisers select news outlets on the basis of their own principles (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). As Brown writes, "Sex is used to sell everything in our country." News outlets allow this to happen because of their reliance on advertisers. However, Brown and the *Rat* have decided that enough is enough, that they do not want "our bodies to sell the leprous products of our great society." It is interesting that Brown distinguished between the underground and mainstream press. The mainstream press, she suggested, was beyond fixing in regard to the portrayal of female bodies. Writers and editors in the underground press, however, should have held themselves to a higher standard.

Robin Slim compared local abortion clinics in a July 15, 1981, letter to the *Columbus Free Press*. She wrote, "As a woman who has gone through an abortion herself, I would like to point out some of the positive aspects of abortion clinics." Slim is a reader of, not a writer for, an underground publication. This foreshadows user-generated content, a key component of many online alternative and mainstream websites. One aspect of the underground press was to allow the voices of ordinary people to balance the one-sided news slant of the mainstream press (McMillan, 2011; Lewes, 2000). This increase in voices also expanded the public sphere by creating two-way communication between writers and audiences; by inverting the power structure by publishing the stories, opinions, and perspectives of non-elite sources; and by serving the bridging and bonding functions of establishing communities (McMillan, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kessler, 1984; Armstrong,

1981). Here, Slim potentially was speaking to two audiences. The first audience was internal, an attempt to build a community of like-minded voices (Gustafson, 2011; Kessler, 1984). The second audience was external, an attempt to convert more people to the cause by expanding the base of people hearing the message (Ostertag, 2006; Streitmatter, 2001; Kessler, 1984).

LGBT issues also were addressed frequently in underground papers. For example, M. Flower reported on a rally at the statehouse in the Sept. 15, 1976, issue of the *Columbus Free Press*:

Publicity for the rally urged those attending to wear masks and to carry signs indicating their jobs, to show that gays are in every segment of the population. The masks were to enable gays and their supporters to participate without fear of job or social repercussions, and to dramatize the oppressive dual life-style most gays are forced to lead.

Underground publications extensively covered diversity issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. Radical media seek to develop media spaces where activists and ordinary people can present accounts of their experiences and struggles (Atton, 2002). By expanding the number of voices heard in the media (McMillian, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kessler, 1984; Armstrong, 1981), the underground press was attempting to include diverse ideas and encouraging this diversity. A free press should include and encourage this coverage because a diversity of ideas is necessary for public welfare and a democratic society (Kessler, 1984).

This diversity of ideas also included a wide-ranging spectrum of arts coverage. Previous researchers suggested that the underground press supplied

much more coverage of then-controversial arts (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Many underground papers provided extensive coverage of the local and national rock and roll music scenes (Peck, 1985; Armstrong, 1981; Leamer, 1972; Glessing, 1970). This type of arts, music, and nightlife coverage was missing from the daily media's coverage of their communities and became a major feature that distinguished the underground press from its daily counterparts.

Movie coverage tended to add a different voice or frame to the discussion about a film. For example, in a Jan. 9, 1980, review of *Kramer vs. Kramer*, an unnamed *Columbus Free Press* critic wrote,

Although the story of the Kramers has some emotional moments, it would be more moving and interesting to see a film about parents who don't have college educations, \$30,000 a year jobs and relatives who absolutely don't interfere.

One aim of the radical media was to seek to develop media spaces where people could present accounts of their experiences and struggles (Atton, 2002). Atton was writing specifically about the political experiences and struggles of dissident groups. However, it is not a major leap to extend that access to movie portrayals because culture is part of a person's everyday life and experience (Williams, 2000). The major aim was the transformation of roles, responsibilities, ideals, and standards (Atton, 2002). Here, that transformation was twofold. First, the filmmakers transform the caregiver role from the mother to the father. Second, the reviewer would rather see the shifting of a portrayal from a dysfunctional upper-class family to a middle- or lower-class family that might have more in common with the

majority of viewers than the rich, urban Kramers. The publication of a review of a top Hollywood film, and the debut of a Nora Ephron as screenwriter, is also a mark of the underground press trying to attract the sort of reading public that might attend a film such as *Kramer vs. Kramer*.

An *East Village Eye* critic, reviewing *The Deer Hunter* in the June 15, 1979, issue, compared the film to Nazi propaganda:

Der Deer Hunter made war seem more fun than a party. War could help you understand life a little more. Did you ever piss and take a drink of beer at the same time? *Der Deer Hunter* is a lousy, boring, stupid, meaningless, long, expensive cheap shot of a movie made by men playing cowboys and Indians for too many years.

The review was accompanied by an illustration of the Oscar statue making the Nazi salute. The reviewer saw the film as a pro-war propaganda piece, even calling it a “cheap shot of a movie.” The article was a stark contrast to the majority of critics who positively reviewed the Oscar-winning film; however, it was consistent with the pacifistic editorial stance of most underground newspapers.

The underground press was not just out-of-step with the mainstream in terms of film coverage. Music coverage tended to focus on new artists or genres, especially those that were being ignored by mainstream media. For example, the January 1982 *East Village Eye* featured a long interview with Fab Five Freddy, a pioneering rap MC, as well as a two-page photo spread showing a break-dancing competition. Previous researchers have argued that the underground press supplied substantially more coverage of then-controversial arts (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong,

1981). That coverage continued with the rise of hip-hop. Underground newspapers such as the *Eye* began covering the burgeoning movement long before it became acceptable to mainstream audiences. This is consistent with previous literature and findings because the underground press covered matters of race earlier and often better than the mainstream press. Hip-hop, at least in its earliest stages, was a predominantly black, urban musical phenomenon.

Similarly, an unnamed *Village Voice* editorialist, writing on Dec. 20, 1973, commented on the state of women in music:

Some of the all-girl rock bands that have been playing clubs around the city have been accused of doing “cock rock” (but isn’t that the best stuff to dance to?) and of being apolitical. But they have their problems too, like playing gay women’s bars and being too uptight to react to audiences. Then there are performers like Patti Smith, a poetess-singer I caught the other night at Reno Sweeney and who is incredibly interesting, probably because of her polymorphous identity that switches, often mid-song, from vamp to little-girl-lost to toughie to earth mother to dyke.

Like underground press coverage of hip-hop, editorials concerning women in music were consistent with previous literature and findings because the underground press covered gender earlier and often better than the mainstream press. Women in rock have always received less coverage than men, so highlighting women “cock rock” musicians in New York could be considered an inversion of the power hierarchy in music.

Such inversions, whether political or cultural, did come with a price. Underground papers dedicated a great deal of editorial space to reports of harassment of such papers by police and government bodies. This finding is consistent with previous literature, which suggests that government agencies launched a major anti-underground-press campaign that included the use of obscenity and anti-drug laws, harassment, anti-solicitation laws, and economic pressure (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

For example, *Rat* editors were arrested for obscenity in February 1970, reported under the headline “Rat Busted!” for using curse words in the publication. Similarly, *Hips Voice* reported in its March-April 1971 issue that “Harassment of street sellers, investigations by the City Council, visits by assorted pigs, and various types of pressure have been put on *The Hips Voice* in the last month.” Many underground newspapers relied on street sales, not home circulation, and anti-solicitation laws were used to stop these street sales (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

Underground papers also reported on harassment of other publications. For example, the *Columbus Free Press* wrote two stories in November 1979 (“School newspaper barred by officials”) and February 1980 (“‘Subversive’ mag faces harassment”) about efforts by Columbus Public Schools officials to shut down the student-written *Subversive Scholastic*. While underground papers reported on harassment of other publications, researchers suggest that the mainstream press largely ignored, downplayed, and at times encouraged the government’s suppression of the underground press (Armstrong, 1981). The mainstream press

typically is very quick to denounce attempts by the government to suppress freedom of expression (Armstrong, 1981) except, apparently, when those suppression attempts are aimed at underground publications.

This harassment might have been one reason why the underground press slowly evolved into an alternative newsweekly press. The alternative newsweekly press cooled the fiery rhetoric of the underground press (McMillian, 2011; Peck, 1998), and this cooling might have made the alternative newsweekly press more palatable to mainstream readers, advertisers, and officials. Harassment also might have stopped once certain underground press publications, such as *The Village Voice*, started becoming very profitable and gained influence as almost-mainstream publications.

No pretense of objectivity

The underground press was by definition partisan (Atton, 2002), and it made no claim that it is objective or neutral (Christians et al., 2009; Lewes, 2000). The point-of-view of underground journalists often could be seen in the word choices used in the underground press. For example, an unnamed *Hips Voice* reporter wrote in a July 1, 1970, article that National Guard members “maliciously bayoneted people” at a peaceful protest. Similarly, an unnamed reporter writing for Columbus’s *Faculty Peace News* on June 3, 1968, used the terms “harshness and vindictiveness” in an article about the indictment of 34 students. These word-choice decisions were consistent with the stance of the *Los Angeles Free Press*, which “almost always

assume[d] that the dissident, the accused, the rebel, and the militant version [was] correct” (Leamer, 1972, pg. 29).

Articles often were framed differently in the underground press than in the mainstream press. For example, the front page of the Sept. 9, 1981, *Columbus Free Press* included a dictionary-style paragraph that read:

Ex*tor*tion (ik-stor’shan), *n.* 1. Getting money by threats, misuse of authority, etc: sometimes applied to the exaction of too high a price. 2.

Something extorted. *The Columbia Gas rate increase is an act of extortion.*

Underground press journalists would contend that it is impossible to separate facts from values, and that it is morally and politically wrong to do so (Atton & Hamilton, 2008). Even if it were possible to separate facts from values, facts are less important than the truth (Lewes, 2000). The truth in this case, the *Free Press* journalists might contend, was that another rate increase by Columbia Gas was an act of extortion. This was a far cry from the oftentimes pro-business editorial slant found in the mainstream press.

Similarly, Mark Kramer, writing for the High School Independent Press Service (the story was published in New York’s *High School Independent Press* on Nov. 18, 1968), reported on a school board meeting held in Williamstown, Mass., where parents complained about a student newspaper editorializing against students saying the pledge of allegiance. Kramer wrote,

The meeting resolved to ban outside agitators, whom it blamed for the forthright publication. It seems that most parents of high school aged kids are very hung up with the term “outside agitation.” Parents can never see

their children doing something wrong all by themselves, so they have to say that some “commie agitator” is telling their precious darlings to say such nasty things about their flag and their country.

In addition to holding no pretense of objectivity, underground press writers often criticized mainstream journalists for their adherence to the concept. For example, in the Oct. 1, 1980, *Columbus Free Press* article “Objectivity?” an unnamed writer reports,

Viewers of television coverage of black community rebellion last spring in Miami, Chattanooga, and Orlando wondered why they were not shown interviews with persons doing the rebelling. *TV Guide* has provided the answer by publishing guidelines distributed by NBC to its reporters covering the rebellion.

The guidelines read: “Regard with suspicion any interviewing of participants during riots. It is questioned whether such interviews serve a valid purpose and they may incite rather than inform. Trained persons, including police and officials, may offer useful facts.”

Many writers in the underground press saw this reliance on official sources by news organizations such as NBC as a major problem. One major issue with a strict reliance on objectivity is that it could bias news coverage “against what the press typically defines as its role in a democracy—that of a Fourth Estate, the watchdog role, an adversary press” (Glasser, 1992, pg. 176). Forcing reporters and editors to rely on official sources propagates the status quo by leading journalists to rely on established power holders as primary sources of news and comment (Curran,

2005). Instead of speaking only to police and officials, these writers would contend, journalists also should seek out those involved in the story so they could present accounts of their experiences and struggles (Atton, 2002).

Ward argued that journalists should seek the best obtainable version of the truth (2006). It is difficult if not impossible to get such truth if a reporter only speaks to “Trained persons, including police and officials.” Underground reporters would argue that the news system was framed or slanted against the counterculture and toward the mainstream middle (McMillian, 2011; Lewes, 2000) that always viewed crime stories from the side of the police and only reported about minority groups when the news was negative (McMillian, 2011; Glessing, 1970). The underground press attempted to fill the gaps in coverage. Further, the underground press tried to highlight for its readers the failings of the mainstream press, failings such as policies against “any interviewing of participants during riots.”

Tone

Previous researchers have suggested that underground publications used a hip, with-it tone (Armstrong, 1981). Tone, here, operationally will be defined as the use of profanity, as well as sexual and drug references, either to distinguish underground papers—and also the alternative newsweekly and online alternative publications that follow—from the mainstream press (Peck, 1998), to shock the authority structure (Glessing, 1970), or to construct an alternative society by differentiating between an in-group and an out-group.

The in-group in the case of underground papers could be personified by a 1971 *East Village Other* front-page photo that showed a woman dressed in stockings, high heels, and a low-slung dress that revealed a lot of cleavage. The woman is smoking, holding an empty liquor glass in her right hand, and a gun in her left hand. She is stepping on a man whom she presumably has just shot. The headline reads, "Celebrating the decline of traditional values." This decline of traditional values included the celebration of sex, drugs, rock and roll, and a counterculture lifestyle. On a surface level, this photo is a cultural statement. However, it also serves as a political statement, showing a different kind of "silent majority"—one that does not follow the strict mores of the Nixon era.

A curse word was used at least once in almost each edition of every publication studied. Used continuously and conversationally, these words lost any offensive power. Lack of offense, however, was the point: Expletives were like any other words to the counterculture; it was only the mainstream society and its press that gave them a special, negative connotation.

Recreational marijuana use was promoted extensively in the underground press. For example, an April 15, 1970, headline in the Santa Fe paper *Hips Voice* declared, "Psychiatrist says teens who don't smoke pot are 'sick.'" *Hips Voice* also ran a series of random items in its March 25, 1970, issue, including the line, "Canyon Road Park was the scene for a heavy festival over the week-end and kites as well as people flew high. Good vibes all over the place." Similarly, an undated Bill Beckman cartoon in *Other Scenes*, titled "Pot inspirations," featured a series of drawings respectively captioned "The Joint," "The Pipe," "The Bomber," "The Roach," "The

Hookah, Narguila, or Hubbly-Bubbly,” “The Cocktail,” “Pot Cookies,” “The Flying Saucer,” and “Downwind of the In-Group.” The message is that the “in-group” smokes marijuana.

Much like the use of four-letter words, drug references were used as a way for underground newspapers to distinguish themselves from their mainstream counterparts, which either did not write about drug use or framed drug use very negatively. Marijuana coverage would shift between the underground press and the alternative newsweekly press. The underground press featured articles about recreational drug use being fun. The alternative newsweekly press often was more informative, featuring articles about changes in drug laws such as medical marijuana in certain states.

While many underground publications featured articles about drugs, especially marijuana, even more underground reporters advocated for drug legalization. For example, in the March 1973 *Yipster Times* article “National Marijuana Day,” an unnamed reporter wrote,

Now that straight Amerika has its POW’s back, it’s time for Freek Amerika to gets its POW’s—Prisoners of Weed. One hundred thousand innocent people are rotting in jail for a non-existent “crime” which will soon be abolished. Marijuana will be legalized within the next three years! (sic) if we keep pushing. If we don’t, they may soon have the death penalty for second offences, as was recently proposed in Vermont. It’s up to us which way it goes.

Similarly, the *Columbus Free Press* published a drug quiz in its March 12, 1975, issue. One question asked:

What is probably the greatest threat to your health and well-being that can come from smoking marijuana?

- a. Blindness, insanity, and death.
- b. Lethargy, sexual problems, and possible brain damage.
- c. Arrest and incarceration.

Correct answer: C.

The implication from both articles is that marijuana is not dangerous. Indeed, the only real danger posed by marijuana use is that one might get arrested. The *Yipster Times* and *Columbus Free Press* examples, however, were not intended just to shock the authority structure. The legalization of drugs, especially marijuana, was a major issue for many underground press writers and readers. By writing about the issue, underground press journalists were helping to foster a sense of a nationwide community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Here, the radical role possibly intersects with a collaborative role. The collaboration, however, is between underground journalists and their communities instead of established, mainstream state and economic institutions.

Sex was another frequent topic in underground publications. Sexual references often were used for humor, especially humor at the expense of national political and entertainment figures. In these cases, sex was not truly about sex, but used as a tool to illustrate politics and values. For example, in the undated article "Scoops: Lindsay caught screwing," a *Pax* reporter wrote, "[New York] Mayor John Lindsay, long accused of screwing people, has been caught (red-handed) screwing a light bulb into an erect lamp last week at City Hall." Similarly, a 1971 *Realist* photo

shows Lady Bird Johnson holding a bouquet of flowers by her midsection while a dog sniffs the flowers. The caption read “Soft-Core Pornography of the Month: Lassie Performs Caninelingus on Lady Bird.” Finally, in the undated *Reliable Source* article “Penthouse eliminates ‘small penises’,” an unnamed reporter wrote,

When writer Richard Neville finally read his treatise on “small penises” in *Penthouse*, he was shocked to find that although the article freely cites Jerry Ruin and Arnold Schwarzenegger, among others, for their small members, *Penthouse* lawyers had cut out the names of two notoriously short men: Dennis Hopper and Roman Polanski. NOTE: since the article’s publication, well-wishers have deluged Neville with names of other slightly-endowed fellows, including William Burroughs and European revolutionist, John Gerassi.

Sex, in each of these examples, was used both as humor and as a way to distinguish the in-group from the out-group; the out-group here being establishment figures in politics and entertainment who would not be self-aware or self-deprecating enough to enjoy the joke. Emery & Emery contended that the best of the underground papers “did a capable job of criticizing both and of breathing new life into the dead-center American social and political scene of the 1960s” (1988, pg. 481). Here, the critique is in the form of underground journalists poking fun at people who might be taking themselves too seriously. For example, Lindsay was a divisive figure in New York politics, especially among younger potential voters. Johnson was the wife of the president most associated with the Vietnam War, a war that many underground papers fought against vehemently. Hopper, Polanski, and Schwarzenegger were all

actors and directors, professionals who are notorious for taking themselves too seriously.

Not all references to sex and sexuality, however, were humorous. They often were used to illustrate a larger issue or problem in society. For example, a *Rat* reporter, in the Dec. 13, 1968, article “Did anybody see the naked” wrote,

District Attorney James Boll has been unable to find a single person to testify on his side in an obscenity case against a University of Wisconsin co-ed and the director of a play in which she allegedly appeared nude. So the charges are being dropped.

A crowd of more than 1,000 persons witnessed the presentation of Peter Pan, which included a 10-minute dance segment depicting the creating of Never-Never land—in the nude.

“No one will sign a complaint,” said Boll despairingly, “and there are those who believe the play was a work of art.”

The point here was that nudity has been part of art for centuries, but the establishment, represented by the district attorney, could not or would not appreciate art that stepped outside of societal norms. Similarly, the illustration accompanying the Jan. 26, 1971, *East Village Other* story “Pus! The Private Plague” could be considered obscene. The illustration featured a giant, diseased penis dripping infected pus on the skyline of New York City. The eye-catching image, however, was used to illustrate an article about a growing syphilis epidemic in Manhattan, a story that was underreported in the mainstream press.

Underground journalists often used tone to connect culture to politics. Drugs, especially marijuana, were considered fairly harmless, fun, and recreational. As the *Columbus Free Press* stated in a 1975 issue, the greatest threat to one's well-being from smoking marijuana was "arrest and incarceration." The perceived harmlessness of drug use could be seen as the polar opposite of the potential harm of a person being drafted and sent to Vietnam. Sex, similarly, often was used as a political tool to criticize the social and political middle. However, the underground press also reported on the dark side of sex with the 1971 *East Village Other* article about a syphilis epidemic in Manhattan, and later coverage of the rise of AIDS.

Efforts at community building

Community building took many forms in the underground press papers in the three cities analyzed. Some papers targeted specific subcommunities. *La Gaceta Chibcha* in New York was written in Spanish for a non-English speaking community, while the *High School Independent Press* in New York and the *Subversive Scholastic* in Columbus addressed concerns of students in public school systems. Most papers tried to establish the sense that the readers of the underground press were different from the mainstream. For example, an R.Cobb cartoon published in the September-October 1978 issue of *Times Change* featured two full-grown pigs, caged and standing in mud and filth in the foreground with a big building labeled "Sausage City" in the background. Two younger pigs escape through cracks in the cage. One older pig says to the other, "That's all the younger generation seems to care about nowadays, escape from reality!" The message is clear: The younger generation is

different, and the older generations cannot possibly comprehend how the times are changing. This is a common theme in underground publications, and will be seen later in the alternative newsweekly press and the online alternative press.

Community building was seen on two levels. The first was local. For example, the bottom of the Feb. 12, 1972, front page of New York's *Appleseed* contained a handwritten note reading "hungry cats under Grand Central Station are being fed daily by John—he needs help. 873-8144." This could be seen as an early form of social media. The *Rat* published a letter from A.J. Weberman on Jan. 7, 1970, that read like a counterculture ad "Could you please publicize the fact that I am going to be playing my collection of rare Dylan tapes (many of which are of high political significance) over WBAI starting on Jan. 10, 1970 at 8 PM." Similarly, the *Columbus Free Press* published a May 11, 1977, story about the eighth annual Community Festival that read "'Dream together, scheme together' is the theme. The Spring Community Festival is the result. It's a free-wheeling alternative to the commercialized, capitalistic entertainment we in Columbus know so well." Each of these could be seen as an attempt to build a counterculture community at a local level through shared experience. That experience often was somewhat trivial, such as listening to Bob Dylan or feeding cats, but the idea that there was a large community of like-minded people living in your city was anything but trivial.

Each of these local communities also communicated with each other through the underground press, creating a sense of a national community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Here, the radical role might intersect with the collaborative role. Collaboration generally implies a partnership between the media and the state built

on mutual trust and a shared commitment to mutually agreeable means and ends (Christians et al., 2009). However, collaboration here is not between the media and the state, but between the media and dissident groups fighting against the Vietnam War while trying to radically rebuild society in the peace, love, and togetherness image of the Hippies. For example, Santa Fe's *Hips Voice* published a short note on May 13, 1970 that read:

Our Brothers and Sisters

Killed

May 4, 1970 by unidentified National Guard members

Allison Kruse, 19

Jeffrey Glen Miller, 20

Sandy Lee Scheuer, 20

William Schroeder, 19

Kent State University, Ohio

We cry for peace.

This story is significant for two reasons. First, the paper was publishing news, albeit a story of national significance, that happened nearly 1,600 miles from Santa Fe. Second, the Kent State victims were listed as "Our Brothers and Sisters," suggesting a sense of shared community.

Reporting far-away events was common in underground papers. Santa Fe *Supplement* reporter Sandy Darlington wrote in October 1969 about the Wild West Festival in San Francisco and Woodstock in New York. Similarly, *Columbus Free Press* reporter Liz Estrada wrote in the June 5, 1974, issue about the S.L.A. shootout

with police in Los Angeles. Todd Gitlin's story about a student strike at San Francisco State University was published in many underground papers, including New York's *Hard Core* and *Rat*.

Underground papers also encouraged two-way patterns of communication between writers and readers, as well as an engaged and open discourse. For example, the December 1972 issue of *Yipster Times* included a note to readers stating, "This paper cannot exist without the support of you—the human being who reads these words now. There are many way you can keep the paper strong." The note then suggested ways readers could support the paper, including sending materials, letters, and clippings, as well as selling the paper, and sending mailing lists. This two-way pattern of communication foreshadowed user-generated content.

Oppositional relationship to mainstream press

Radical media serve as an oppositional voice to the mainstream media (Atton, 2002). This oppositional voice could take a couple of forms. First, the underground press reported stories left uncovered by the mainstream media. Second, the underground press scrutinized coverage by mainstream media, often through the use of humor. This relationship between the underground press and its mainstream counterparts could best be summarized by a Feb. 11, 1981, front-page in the *Columbus Free Press*. Under the headline "Alternative newspaper" was the declaration that the paper, "Contains news about nukes, El Salvador, Nixon, abortion, boy scouts, CETA cuts, attacks on gays, plus comics, calendar and features

not found in newspapers costing much more.” Underground newspapers served their communities as a second source of news (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981), often assuming the role of the second paper for content in cities with only one daily newspaper. It broke news that was missed or ignored by the mainstream—such as early reports of AIDS or the rise of hip-hop—although such news generally was not considered “news” until the mainstream press reported it because the underground press was considered too small or not respectable (Armstrong, 1981). The underground press became an “alternative medium” because the mainstream papers did not publish radical, liberal, or anti-establishment news (Leamer, 1972).

Many attacks by underground press writers toward the mainstream press featured humor. For example, an undated issue of the New York paper *Reliable Source* featured fake TV listings such as “8:00 (2) Mary Tyler Moore—Comedy. The WJM news crew find themselves out of work following the station’s takeover by a ruthless Australian press baron. (Last show in the series). (30 min)” and “8:30 (4) Sanford and Son (and the Man)—Comedy. Lamont seeks help for his secret heroin habit; Fred joins the Hanafi Muslims; the Man sells the Sanford lot to a ruthless Australian press baron. (30 min)” The “ruthless Australia press baron” is Rupert Murdoch, who purchased the *New York Post*, *New York* magazine, and *The Village Voice* in the 1970s. That spending spree inspired a front-page skyline on the undated premier issue of *Reliable Source* that read, “This magazine not owned by Murdoch!” The underground press often poked fun at the mainstream press when it began to take itself a little too seriously. However, this fun also had a deeper political meaning. McChesney (1999) argued that mainstream media serve the

needs of Wall Street and Madison Avenue instead of the needs of the majority of the population. Media conglomeration could be seen as a detriment to the facilitative role because one voice—in this case, Murdoch—controls so much of the dialog. Christians et al. (2009) argued that role is not directed toward uniform public opinion but toward a multicultural mosaic and multifaceted governance. Here, Murdoch could be creating a uniform public opinion by controlling such a large swath of the New York media.

Murdoch and his publications, however, were not the only news organizations to find themselves in the crosshairs of the underground press. For example, an August 1972 edition of New York's *Realist* ran side-by-side headlines. The first was "10 Years on Death Row." The second was "17 Years on CBS News." The implication was that reporting for CBS was like being on death row. Similarly, the *East Village Other* ran this found "News Poem" in a Jan. 12, 1971, issue:

Hit-Run Taxi Kills Man,
Driver Demands Fare
New York (AP)—
Police said a 26-year-old woman said she
had hailed the cab with two friends.
while the cab was headed north on the Bowery,
she spotted the pedestrian and shouted to
the driver: "Watch out, you're going to hit
him." One of her companions sobbed: "Oh, my
God, you must have killed him. Please stop."

she reported.

The driver, described as about 50, drove two blocks. The woman said she told him: "My God; do you know what you just did?" She said the driver answered: "Never mind that. Just give me \$1.45."

The implication of publishing a "found" news poem was that the news, as reported by the Associated Press, was not news but only a construction of words and phrases to tell a story. The *Washington Post* also received criticism in the undated *Reliable Source* article "Wash. Post lauds self":

The *Washington Post* has nominated itself for a Pulitzer Prize for its self-serving coverage of the strike by *Post* pressmen last year. Column after column in the paper pilloried the pressmen, equating them with political assassins and airplane hijackers, all because of strikers' hijinks which disabled the *Post's* presses for a few days. Not only did the constant hyperbole spewed by the *Post* preclude any chance of the pressmen getting a fair trial in D.C., but the paper also pushed for and received a nine-month grand jury investigation.

Major news organizations were scrutinized again and again in the pages of the underground press. In addition, the entire mainstream press system was found lacking at an institutional level. For example, a writer for the New York paper *Pac-O-Lies*, in an anonymous article published Dec. 25, 1969, wrote,

The media have continually distorted reports by their own correspondents which reveal the true nature of the Vietnam war by incorporating Pentagon

euphemisms and Administration rhetoric. They continually befuddle the reader in his search for objectivity by reconciling language and style with U.S. foreign policy assumptions and propaganda.

Reporters, however, were not the only journalists found lacking. The photo that accompanied the abovementioned article was packaged with an anonymous editorial, with a *Pac-O-Lies* writer arguing that

Despite its distortion, the picture does have two socially redeeming characteristics. First, it shows how readily a news photographer (who supplied the information to a caption writer) and a gullible public are willing to accept things by their appearance, without checking any facts. And second, it depicts the way that the media began hiring Black reporters primarily so that they could be sent into ghetto areas in times of trouble, especially after many white newsmen said "Hell, no, we won't go."

Underground journalists and publications were radical. However, individual journalists, as well as underground news organizations and the institution of the underground press, also demonstrated the monitorial, facilitative, and collaborative roles of the press. The goal of the underground press, at the institutional level, was to connect the disparate communities spread throughout America into a national counterculture movement that could radically rebuild society.

Content and story selection focused on election coverage, government and quasi-government activities, diversity issues, arts, and harassment. Individual underground journalists published these types of stories for three primary purposes. First, there was an attempt to establish a community, both locally and

nationally. Many underground publications had an extremely local focus; however, there simultaneously was an effort to connect these various communities into a nationwide counterculture community. Underground journalists attempted to establish the idea that this community was different from the mainstream by differentiating between the in-group and the out-group. This attempt can be seen in the coverage of diversity issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation because the mainstream media undercovered each of these stories. This attempt also can be seen in the coverage of then fringe arts such as hip-hop, as well as a different frame or voice in arts coverage (such as the reviews for *Deer Hunter* and *Kramer Vs. Kramer*). User-generated content (such as Robin Slim's abortion letter to the *Columbus Free Press*) also showed a willingness of underground journalists to open their pages to their readers, a facilitation not seen in the mainstream press but foreshadowing the online press.

This type of coverage illustrates the monitorial role. Covering government actions and elections is a key component of the monitorial role. However, the conceptualization of the monitorial role was furthered in the underground press by underground journalists and organizations monitoring the watchdogs of power, the mainstream press. Facilitation was encouraged by the use of user-generated content, as well as coverage of underreported topics such as diversity issues and the culture-as-politics coverage of arts.

Underground journalists also were unwilling to conform to certain journalistic norms. One example is the lack of objectivity. Instead, through word choices and framing, underground journalists attempted to provide a different

“picture in our heads” of the days events. Indeed, underground journalists often criticized their mainstream counterparts because of their reliance on objectivity. The underground press had an adversarial relationship to the mainstream press. Underground journalists scrutinized mainstream media coverage, often by using humor, and reported stories left uncovered by mainstream journalists. A second example is tone. The prolific use of profanity was used as a way to establish the idea that this community was different from the mainstream. Further, recreational drug use—especially marijuana use—was promoted extensively, and many underground journalists contended in their publications that the only real danger posed by marijuana was the threat of arrest. The use of sex was twofold. First, sexual references were used humorously to illustrate the politics and values of the non-mainstream culture. Second, sex was used to illustrate larger issues or problems in society, such as attempted censorship of nudity in art and outbreaks of sexually transmitted diseases.

The tone and non-objective reporting of underground journalists and publications point toward a collaborative role at the institutional level. Underground journalists were not removed from their stories. Instead, there was an attempt for journalists to collaborate with dissident individuals and groups attempting to reconstruct American society in the image of the 1960s counterculture movements. This collaboration could be seen in drug-legalization stories, as well as attempts to construct a national community through reportage of faraway events such as the Kent State massacre, the Vietnam War, and the S.L.A. shootout with Los Angeles police.

The underground press slowly evolved into the alternative newsweekly press, especially after the end of the Vietnam War (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Armstrong, 1981). The major difference between underground and alternative newsweekly media is their functions as a radical force. The alternative newsweekly press is less radical rhetorically than the underground press (McMillian, 2011; Peck, 1998). Alternative newsweekly journalists rarely call for radical change, instead providing favorable coverage to those who do call for such change (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). Alternative newsweeklies tend to be heavily community centered, focusing on one city or region without trying to connect to a larger counterculture community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981).

One major reason for the rhetorical change might have been that alternative newsweeklies, unlike most underground newspapers, did make money. As Charles P. Pierce wrote about his time at the *Boston Phoenix*:

In the late 1970s, I was working for an alternative newspaper in Boston—this was what was once called an “underground” paper, until it started turning \$5 million a year, which was when it became alternative (2012).

Researchers have suggested that alternative newsweeklies have lost much of what made the underground alternative. The next chapter will analyze the alternative newsweekly press, comparing and contrasting similarities and differences between it and its underground ancestors.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE NORMATIVE ROLES OF THE ALTERNATIVE NEWSWEEKLIES

Textual analysis "...is a means of trying to learn something about people by examining what they write" (Berger, 1998, pg. 23). Researchers using textual analysis "assume that behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes found in this material reflect and affect the behaviors, attitudes and values of the people who create the material" (Berger, 1998, pg. 23). A textual analysis allows for a complete reading of all aspects of a narrative, including tone, syntax, word choices, and visuals, as well as omissions (Kavoori, 1999). Text should be thought of as "an indeterminate field of meaning in which intentions and possible effects intersect. The task of the analysis is to bring out the whole range of possible meanings" (Larsen, 1991, pg. 122). Thick description is used to determine what those structures of meaning are and to digest their meaning (Geertz, 1973). Exactness is key in thick description (Geertz, 1973) because one has to understand structures and their meaning to understand a culture.

News is not a picture of reality but a construction of reality culled and crafted from the virtually limitless amount of possible informational items found in any given news cycle (Shoemaker and Vos, 2009). Readings have preferred narratives and subjects (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 2002). A researcher should begin with a long soak in the material, followed by a close reading of specific texts chosen because they possibly could answer the research question in the best way possible (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 2002). Researchers do agree that multiple readings are possible, and that the author of a text might not have intended what the

researcher found in his or her reading of the text (Lester-Roushanzamir & Raman, 2002).

The purpose of this textual analysis is to further the understanding of how the roles performed by the alternative press have changed as it has evolved from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press to the online alternative press. This section of the textual analysis will focus on a 10-year sample of front-page stories, as well as political and cultural articles, from *The Village Voice* in New York, *The Other Paper* in Columbus, and the *Santa Fe Reporter* in New Mexico from 2002-2011 (Riffe, et al., 1998). The three papers were chosen because they are the only alternative newsweeklies in their cities recognized by the Association of Alternative Newsmedia (see altweeklies.com).

Ultimately, the researcher hopes to understand how certain conventions and norms of writing and story selection in the alternative press contribute to alternative ideas of politics and culture, as well as how those alternatives have changed over time.

Like the historical research, the textual analysis focused on several aspects of the alternative press found in the literature. Specifically, it focused on the use of sources, framing, partisanship or a lack of objectivity, tone, content or story selection, efforts at community building, and providing an oppositional voice to the mainstream media. While coding themes and patterns, the researcher isolated something “(a) that happens a number of times and (b) that consistently happens in a specific way” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, pg. 215). The goal of the textual analysis was to determine the similarities and differences in the underground press,

alternative newsweekly press, and online alternative press. Through this analysis, the researcher can trace the evolution of the alternative press during the past 50 years.

There are many advantages to using textual analysis. It is an unobtrusive method of collecting data because the information is fixed, so the presence of a researcher will not influence the response of the subject being studied (Berger, 1998). Also, using prefixed materials is an inexpensive way to get information from people (Berger, 1998).

Content and story selection

The three alternative newsweeklies analyzed in this study covered political campaigns with much more frequency than their underground counterparts. Consistent with previous literature, political coverage in alternative newsweekly papers tended to be heavily community centered, focusing on one city or region without trying to connect to a larger community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Underground publications were community centered while attempting to foster a sense of a nationwide community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). Alternative newsweeklies, by contrast, were local; they did not try to foster a sense of a nationwide community. Alternative newsweekly journalists covered local and statewide elections with much greater depth and breadth than they covered presidential elections. Indeed, they covered all levels of election—city, county, state, legislative, and judicial.

The underground press often covered local campaigns by ridiculing the entire slate of candidates. In contrast, alternative newsweekly coverage tended to be more similar to its mainstream counterparts, although often framed much differently. For example, Sharon Lerner, in the Feb. 12, 2002, *Village Voice* article “Rich man, poor people,” reported on the disparity between millionaire Mayor Michael Bloomberg and his constituents. She wrote,

Let this fact sink in: The United States has the most unequal income distribution of any advanced economy in the world, with the current gap between rich and poor now greater than at any time since 1929. In New York State, the disparity is far wider than in the rest of the country, with the top fifth of families making 14 times what the bottom fifth do. In New York City, the problem is starker still. Despite the sense that the rising financial tide of the ‘90s raised all boats, only the richest 5 percent of New Yorkers increased their share of income between 1987 and 1997.

“New York is somewhat of a poster child for the inequality problem,” says Jared Bernstein, an economist with the liberal Economic Policy Institute. “You have more poverty and far more extensive wealth.” A magnet for poor immigrants who hope it will provide them with a better way of life, home to communities that have long been mired in poverty, the city has an underclass that is increasingly alien from the city’s ultra-rich. Almost 1.6 million of the city’s 8 million citizens fall under the poverty line. Meanwhile, says Bernstein, “here are tremendous earning opportunities for people like Michael Bloomberg.”

Indeed, the unprecedented disparities in our current economy might be summed up by the strange fact that the city's entire projected budget deficit—now estimated at \$4.5 billion—is roughly equal to the estimated net worth of the new mayor. With some \$4.5 billion in corporate and real estate holdings, Bloomberg is both the city's most powerful political leader and its fifth richest citizen. (With \$7.5 billion, publishing magnate Rupert Murdoch ranks No. 1.)

Lerner wrote this article in 2002, a full 10 years before the Occupy Wall Street movement brought such income disparity into the mainstream discussion.

Other local election coverage centered on City Council and school boards. For example, the Jan. 26, 2005, *Santa Fe Reporter* included the paper's endorsements for school board ("Election 2005: School Board picks"). An unnamed reporter wrote,

Crowds are not expected at the polling spots for the Feb. 1 Santa Fe Public School District Board of Education election—these traditionally have low turnout.

This lack of participation is a strange thing to ponder. There is every indication that most people recognize the value of public education. School funding is one of the most heated topics at this year's Legislature, particularly regarding teacher pay, pre-kindergarten programs and—at least for some—arts education.

At the local level, public conversations about the potential closure of small, downtown elementary schools (Acequia Madre, Alvord, Carlos Gilbert) has prompted huge outcry.

This example is inconsistent with Graber (1997), who suggested that the media largely determine the crucial issues by which candidate competence would be gauged by voters (Graber, 1997), and play a role in increasing or suppressing voter turnout in a given election (Graber, 1997). Here, the reporter was recognizing that “most people recognize the value of public education,” as well as the importance of school funding and debate about potential school closures. The crucial issues by which candidates would be gauged by voters, it seems, already have been decided by the voters. However, the reporter acknowledged that many if not most citizens would not vote on election day and made little to no attempt to increase or decrease voter turnout. Instead, the reporter simply stated that “crowds are not expected at the polling spots.” This type of reporting is inconsistent with the radical role, where journalists would be expected to advocate for political action—especially political action that could result in a better community.

All three newspapers analyzed covered both local and county elections. County government election coverage often focused on infighting between candidates from the same party or skirmishes between Republican and Democratic candidates vying for the same position. However, there were exceptions. For example, Dan Williamson’s July 22, 2004, *The Other Paper* article “Democrats give free pass to embattled Republican” uncovered a deal between contending political parties. Williamson wrote,

Relatively speaking, Franklin County Recorder Rob Montgomery is a lucky man.

Montgomery, a Republican, is the target of two lawsuits filed separately—though through the same attorney—by two employees last month. One accuses him of forcing his employees to perform political work, and the other accuses him of racial discrimination.

While the lawsuits are certainly unpleasant for Montgomery, who said the accusations are “ludicrous” and vowed he will be cleared of them, he needn’t worry that they could cost him his job.

Montgomery is running unopposed.

County Democratic Party Chairman Bill Anthony said it’s regrettable that Montgomery’s getting a free ride. But some Democrats are quietly grumbling that it’s no accident.

Rumor has it the Democrats agreed to let Montgomery run unopposed in exchange for the county Republicans’ promise to extend the same courtesy to Democratic Treasurer Rich Cordray.

The monitorial role (Christians et al., 2009) is similar to the watchdog function, and the search for and retransmission of certain kinds of news and information is a key component of any normative definition of journalism (Christians et al., 2009; The Commission on the Freedom of the Press, 1947). Here, Williamson was performing the monitorial role by reporting on a deal that served two politicians and political parties instead of the governed electorate.

Coverage of statewide elections often centered on horserace coverage. This is consistent with previous researchers, who suggested that coverage of political campaigns conform to a game schema. For example, in the July 28, 2005, *The Other*

Paper article “Blackwell’s in the money,” Dan Williamson reported on a gubernatorial primary fight between then Ohio Attorney General Jim Petro and former Ohio Secretary of State Ken Blackwell. Williamson wrote,

Jim Petro is inviting fellow Republicans to the Columbus Maennerchor on South High Street Friday to update them on his ever-growing campaign war chest.

The Ohio attorney general will remind them of what they already know: that with some \$3 million in the bank, he’s the best financed of the three Republican candidates for governor.

But Petro will also tell them something they might now know: Ken Blackwell is getting stronger....

Petro hopes that moderate and establishment Republicans who fear a Blackwell nomination will unite behind him in the Republican primary election, to be held in May—and pressure [former Secretary of State Betty] Montgomery to quit the race.

The horserace here was not polling numbers. Instead, the race was for campaign funding. Petro had \$3 million while Williamson reported that Blackwell had \$1.1 million (and growing) in his campaign war chest. Williamson is performing three roles. He provides the monitorial role by providing his readers with needed information about a primary election campaign. However, he also could be demonstrating the facilitative role by opening discussion about massive campaign money flowing into the Republican gubernatorial race. While Petro could be the safe choice for the party, Blackwell is gaining momentum with stronger campaign funds,

and Montgomery might have to quit the race due to a relative lack of money.

Williamson also might be providing a radical role, critiquing a political system that offers no alternative to this sort of democracy.

The publications analyzed also spent a considerable amount of space covering judicial elections and appointments. For example, Tom Robbins, in the July 17, 2007, *Village Voice* article “Benchwarmers,” reported on how appellate judges were appointed. He wrote,

I was warned about writing this column.

“You might think twice about doing that judges story,” were the exact, ominous words.

OK, the threat came from my editor, who added: “Nobody cares how judges get picked. Where is that S&M piece you promised?” I did not knuckle under. As you may know, this paper is currently owned and operated by out-of-towners and recent transplants, so I was able to convincingly argue that, aside from rent hikes and Alex Rodriguez, there is no subject New Yorkers get more passionate about than the selection of appellate judges. Please do not cross me up on this.

Here, then, is the unvarnished truth—which only the *Voice* will tell you—about how New York came to select a rookie judge with a powerful ally as the presiding justice for the busiest and most powerful appeals court in the state.

Robbins’ editor might not have wanted the article. More likely, he performed the role of surrogate straight man for the reader. However, Robbins did perform the

monitorial role by transmitting the news and information about the appointment of judges, a key component of any normative definition of journalism.

Local and statewide elections were covered far more frequently than national elections in the publications analyzed. Further, when national elections were covered, reporters often tried to find a local angle. For example, Julia Goldberg, in the Jan. 30, 2008, *Santa Fe Reporter* article “Ready, set, caucus,” described how New Mexican caucus elections differed from primaries and caucuses in other states. She wrote,

In 2004, New Mexico Democrats held their first presidential caucus, choosing John Kerry as the state’s nominee. Next week, on Feb. 5, voters will weigh in as the state participates in Super Tuesday, in which more than 20 states will vote for presidential nominees.

State-to-state, caucuses vary widely; in New Mexico, for example, only Democrats will vote on Feb. 5, and the only race in play is the presidential one. All the other primaries for state and federal races for both of the state’s major parties will happen on June 3. Further, unlike other states, only registered Democrats can participate in New Mexico’s Democratic caucus. This hyperlocal focus is consistent with previous researchers who suggested that political coverage in alternative newsweekly papers tended to be heavily community centered, focusing on one city or region without trying to connect to a larger community (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). This also is a difference between underground and alternative newsweekly publications. Underground publications were community centered, but attempted to foster a sense of a

nationwide community. Alternative newsweeklies, by contrast, were heavily community centered but did not try to foster a sense of a nationwide community.

Political coverage did not stop with elections, however. One aim of this research was to determine if alternative media provided an important political role by concentrating less on campaigns and elections, and more on the day-to-day governing practices of elected officials, and government and quasi-government entities. The three papers analyzed extensively covered the day-to-day actions and policies of local and state government institutions. For example, in the Feb. 13, 2003, *The Other Paper* article “Moss isn’t likely to be ejected from meeting,” Kristen Convery wrote about a confrontation between two Columbus School Board members, a common occurrence because of highly combative board member Bill Moss. Convery wrote,

Columbus school board President Stephanie Hightower knew trouble was brewing when her vice president, Karen Schwarzwaldler, leaned over and whispered that there was a shoe on the table in front of Bill Moss

Moss, the school board’s resident renegade for most of a generation now, raised eyebrows only slightly by wearing fatigues to the Feb. 4 meeting; he’s done that before.

But Hightower was concerned about the shoe, with good reason. Moss soon picked it up and started pounding it on the table as he ranted about Hightower’s decision to fold the technology committee he had chaired into a bigger committee.

Jeff Cabot, that committee's chairman, might be about to discover exactly how Hightower felt. If Moss's earlier warning is true, he has no intention of being quiet today when he, Cabot and Andy Ginther gather for their first finance and operations committee meeting.

Convery's story was an example of an alternative journalist performing the monitorial role. Tom Robbins demonstrated a similar monitoring function in his Sept. 21, 2004, article "City goes judge shopping." In the article, Robbins wrote,

Officials detained hundreds during the Republican National Convention—held in contempt for "failing to heed [a judge's] order to promptly release those held long past the normal 24-hour period." City attorneys argue that the writ of habeas corpus was unfair because "the city wasn't allowed to present witnesses as to why it was taking so long to get protesters and others swept up in the mass arrests out of jail."

"If the appeals panel agrees [with city attorneys], the contempt issue will become moot, and Mayor [Michael] Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly, who have jointly declared their handling of the convention protests a major success, will be spared a political black eye.

They have good reason to be optimistic.

Although the First Department covers the overwhelmingly Democratic electorate of Manhattan and the Bronx, [Gov. George] Pataki, who gets to pick all of the state's appeals court judges, has placed five Republicans from upstate and Long Island on the 15-member panel."

Monitoring government agencies did not stop at the local level. Instead, the three papers analyzed spent considerable space reporting on the actions of state government. For example, Zane Fischer, in the Sept. 8, 2010, *Santa Fe Reporter* article “Nationally guarded,” reported on issues surrounding the deployment of the National Guard to police the U.S.-Mexico border. This deployment was national news, covered by the mainstream press. However, such coverage did not provide the contextual depth of the *Santa Fe Reporter* article. Fischer wrote,

The recent deployment of members of the National Guard along New Mexico’s Mexican border delicately straddles the Posse Comitatus Act, and smudges the already blurry lines between police, military and private contractors.

Posse Comitatus is the 1878 law that prevents the military from acting as law enforcement. It is intended to prevent us folks here in the “land of the free” from living in a police state or under conditions of martial law. Because of Posse Comitatus, the guardsmen are assigned “support” roles, although they are working more directly—albeit in unspecified ways—with Border Patrol than they did when deployed on the border in 2005 by President George W. Bush.

Similarly, Lyndsey Teter, in the Feb. 10, 2011, *The Other Paper* article “A womb divided,” reported on the controversial “Heartbeat Bill” that was then being debated in the Ohio Legislature. Teter wrote,

When it rains, it pours for anti-abortion legislation in Ohio. Following a dry spell under a Democrat-controlled House, anti-abortion advocates have

so many bills to choose from these days that they can fight over which ones are best.

Just in time for Valentine's Day, amid 4,000 red heart-shaped balloons, state Rep. Lynn Wachtmann (R-Napoleon) announced plans to introduce the Ohio Human Heartbeat Protection Act—or the “Heartbeat Bill”—into the 129th General Assembly. The bill, which would ban abortions as soon as a fetal heartbeat can be detected—which advocates on both sides of the argument agree can begin as early as three weeks after conception—joins a chorus of anti-abortion legislation already pending in the Ohio House.

Interestingly, the Heartbeat Bill was launched Wednesday *without* the support of Ohio Right to Life, arguably the state's most active anti-abortion lobby.

This story might be an example of the changing coverage of a social movement. In the underground press, abortion and abortion rights were covered as a movement. Here, the same topic is covered as an issue. No longer is abortion a “fringe” topic. Now, abortion is discussed and debated in the Ohio Legislature. Further, the abortion-rights movement has spawned an anti-abortion rights movement, and both sides are covered by alternative publications.

Politics and government were not the only topics extensively covered by the alternative newsweeklies analyzed. Previous researchers have suggested that alternative newsweekly papers had more comprehensive and expansive news and arts coverage (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981; McAuliffe, 1978). The alternative press recognized that culture was part of a person's everyday experience (Williams,

2000). Each paper analyzed in this study included a large amount of arts coverage. Indeed, arts coverage received more pages in the papers than political coverage. Like previous research, the scope of arts coverage was fairly comprehensive, including music, movies, art, literature, and nightlife.

Music coverage was featured most prominently in the three publications. This is consistent with the literature, which suggests that many alternative papers provided extensive coverage of the local and national rock and roll music scenes (Peck, 1985; Armstrong, 1981; Leamer, 1972; Glessing, 1970). For example, *The Other Paper* provided months-long coverage about the onstage murder of musician “Dimebag” Darrell Abbott, who was shot along with four others in the Columbus concert venue the Alrosa Villa on Dec. 8, 2004. The last story in the series, “I have no worries about that ever happening again,” written by Brian O’Neill in the March 24, 2005 issue, profiles Volume Dealer, a Columbus heavy metal group that opened for Abbott’s band the night he was shot, and that was playing the venue for the first time since the shootings.

Not all of the music coverage was news-based. Each paper featured several concert and CD reviews of local and national bands. Rob Harvilla, in the Jan. 2, 2003, issue of *The Other Paper*, took it a step further, ridiculing music critics’ year-end lists. In the article “Rock critic might be the dumbest profession ever,” Harvilla wrote,

The especially naïve among you may believe that the list simply compiles a person’s 10 favorite CDs from that particular year. Ho, ho. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, Top Ten lists are chosen primarily

with hipster credibility in mind. In essence, it's a giant game of I Am Cooler Than You.

In the interest of demystifying this wondrous process, here, then, is an inside look at a typical Top Ten list.

Nos. 1-3: CDs you actually liked.

No. 4: The Official Indie rock Record of the Year....

No. 5: An African world music CD whose title you can neither pronounce nor spell correctly.

No. 6: A home-recorded tape from a local dude who works at a record store, to ensure that he keeps giving you free stuff.

No. 7: Some bullshit punk compilation you bought your 13-year-old nephew for Christmas, name-dropped here to ensure your ongoing good standing with the disaffected suburban youth of America.

No. 8: The most misogynistic, violent and destructive hip-hop CD you can find, included solely to piss off Tipper Gore.

No. 9: The Hipster-Approved Jazz Reissue of the Year. (For 2002, it's John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*.)

No. 10: Bob Dylan's latest masterwork. If Dylan was inactive that year, leave this space blank for symbolic purposes.

Like many underground and alternative newsweekly journalists, Harvilla used humor to critique the mainstream journalists. In this case, he specifically targets mainstream (and other alternative) music critics. The critique here is that the year-

end lists are formulaic, really provide little-to-no actual insight or thought on the part of the critic, and do not help readers much either.

Music, however, was just one part of nightlife coverage. Each paper also reported on and reviewed its city's bar scene. For example, Tricia Romano, in the May 7, 2002, *Village Voice* article "Let's get this party started right," wrote,

In order to open up a nightclub in New York City, you'd better be an angel or a saint. At least, that's the impression I got watching the two-hour song and dance given by Crobar representatives to Community Board 4 last Wednesday night. Club owners Callin Fortis and Ken Barilich did everything to prove that they are model citizens, not like those *other* club owners (Sleazy, Shady, and Skanky). Fortis and Barilich brought in an army of people to testify before the board—including former Miami Beach mayor Neisen Kasdin, ex-special narcotics prosecutor for New York City Robert Silbering, and, believe it or not, a Tibetan monk, the Venerable Nicholas Vreeland, a liaison for the Tibet Center on 32nd Street, who gamely offered, "I guess I'm here to represent the spiritual side of Crobar." The only people not present to vouch for Cal and Ken: their mothers.

The nightlife coverage was a contrast to the mainstream press, which almost never reported on a city's bar scene except in crime stories or an occasional article about the opening of a new nightclub. The alternative newsweekly press here is fulfilling its role as a second source of news, reporting on topics that have been missed or ignored by the mainstream.

Coverage of fine art tended toward chronicling the plights of local artists. For example, in the Feb. 3, 2004, *Santa Fe Reporter* article “Standing in O’Keeffe’s shadow,” an unnamed reporter contrasted the image of Santa Fe as an arts-friendly city with the reality that local artists often struggle to be noticed by arts patrons. This type of coverage could be considered community building. A city’s art scene often helps define the local community, and that certainly was the case for Santa Fe in regards to O’Keeffe. However, according to the reporter, Santa Fe residents, while considering themselves arts-friendly, largely have abandoned the local arts community. The reporter wrote,

Santa Fe is an art town. Any guidebook will tell you so. The business of art is part of the fabric of life in Santa Fe—what local has never been asked for directions to Canyon Road? How many downtown plazas are lined with crafts on a daily basis? As ARTnews Magazine has said, “Art is simply part of life in this area.”

Yet when it comes to contemporary art, the importance of Santa Fe’s role, despite a huge population of artists, art galleries and nonprofit arts groups, is more difficult to assess. In the shadow of Georgia O’Keeffe, many presume that Santa Fe artists would continue to play a valuable role in a larger, global conversation regarding the evolution of art.

Similarly, Richard Ades, in the Aug. 27, 2009, *The Other Paper* article “What’s in a name?” chronicled the hassles of the Olde Towne East section of Columbus attempting to start a community Gallery Hop. The trouble was that a Gallery Hop is a long-standing monthly tradition in the Short North area of Columbus, and the Short

North Business Association fights attempts by other areas to start a similar program.

Christians et al. (2009) argued that culture is a crucial dimension of our citizenship, so it, therefore, must be both democratized and politicized. Arts, and coverage of the arts, are integral to culture and the formation of a city's cultural identity. Here, the three alternative newsweeklies analyzed are performing part of their facilitative role by providing the communication that is the driving force of cultural formation.

Literature coverage tended toward reviews of new or upcoming books. However, there were examples of hard news in this coverage. For example, Graham Rayman, in the March 18, 2008, *Village Voice* article "Boy soldier of fortune," reported on memoirist Ishmael Beah. Rayman wrote that Beah's "celebrated memoir threatens to blow into a million little pieces," a reference to another celebrated-then-vilified author, James Frey. Rayman wrote,

Ishmael Beah, the author of a powerful memoir about his time as a child soldier in Sierra Leone, may have made one major tactical mistake in writing his book. Explaining why he was able to remember his horrific experiences in such detail, Beah wrote that he has a photographic memory that allows him to "indelibly" recall the events in his life. So once critics, over the course of the last two months, began to raise questions about the validity of certain events described in his book, the 27-year-old author, who now lives in Brooklyn, had less room to maneuver than if he'd simply said he'd done his best to remember things as accurately as possible.

The papers analyzed were not hesitant to tackle controversial topics, or at least to provide favorable coverage to those who presented controversial art. This is consistent with previous researchers, who suggested that alternative newsweekly journalists provide favorable coverage to those who call for radical change (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). For example, Wes Flexner, in the Dec. 16, 2010, *The Other Paper* article “Wex shows film banned from Smithsonian exhibit,” wrote,

On Dec. 8, the Wexner Center of the Arts entered a national controversy by screening the silent video *Fire in the Belly*.

The short film by the late David Wojnarwicz is in the middle of a Washington brouhaha due to its recent expulsion from the Smithsonian exhibition “Hide/Seek,” which focuses on sexual differences. The expulsion came following pressure from the Catholic League and two prominent Republican congressmen: incoming Speaker of the House John Boehner of Ohio and incoming House majority leader Eric Cantor of Virginia.

Boehner has vowed to cut funding for offensive art, and Cantor publicly stated that he saw the film as “an obvious attempt to offend Christians during the Christmas season.”

The film’s offending moment is an 11-second clip that depicts ants crawling on a crucifix.

The Wexner Center chose to show the banned film to stand in solidarity against censorship, said Shelly Casto, the institution’s director of education.

Here, Flexner was providing favorable coverage to an arts institution that had entered a national controversy in order to “stand in solidarity against censorship.” The Wexner Center, which is affiliated with Ohio State University, is a state institution battling with two U.S. Congressmen. Flexner favored the more liberal state institution over the more conservative Boehner and Cantor.

Race, gender, and LGBT topics and concerns were prominently featured in the alternative newsweeklies studied. Coverage of race went beyond simple narratives about minority Black and Hispanic populations. For example, Columbus has had an increasingly growing Somali population for the past 15 years. Jen DiMascio, in the Jan. 3, 2002, article “City Beat: The Somali vote” highlighted one aspect of this ever-increasing minority. She wrote,

The Somali Community Association elected officers for its rapidly expanding constituency last month.

Considering the fact that most city and town councils preside over audiences of two or three, this election—held at the Franklin County Board of Elections—was a civic-association whopper. Turnout neared 2,700 voters, and traffic was steady from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 23....

What was unique about the Somali situation was the size.

“There are some that are that large, but very few have had as much participation, so it was very unusual in that regard,” he said.

The election was necessary because the community has grown to 17,000, from 500 in 1998.

This coverage could be seen as an example of community building on two levels. The first level is community building within the Somali population in Columbus. The second level is community building between the Somali population and the greater Columbus population. As DiMascio wrote, instead of the usual two or three audience members, the Somali Community Association saw nearly 2,700 voters turn out at the polls. This could set an example for voter participation for other ethnic groups in Columbus, and it could send a signal to the rest of Columbus residents that the Somali vote could matter in citywide elections.

While Columbus has seen an ever-growing Somali population, the residents of Santa Fe always have included native Navajos. The *Santa Fe Reporter* consistently covered this community. For example, an unnamed reporter wrote the April 27, 2005, article “Native land not for sale” about the Navajo Nation’s rejection of uranium mining on its territory. The reporter wrote,

After a half-century of watching mining companies dredge its land for riches, often with devastating effects, the Navajo Nation has had enough.

On April 19, in a decision certain to have powerful implications throughout Indian Country, the Navajo tribal government voted to prohibit uranium mining and processing on its land.

The vote comes in the midst of a legal battle by environmental groups, including the Santa Fe based-New Mexico Environmental Law Center, to stop a Texas company from mining for uranium in aquifers used by the towns of Church Rock and Crownpoint.

Similarly, *The Village Voice* provided the city's Muslim population with a much-needed sympathetic voice after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. That Muslim population was still under fire in 2011 when the *Voice* helped to break a story about a New York Police Department's anti-Muslim training video. In the Jan. 19, 2011, article "NYPD cops' training included an anti-Muslim horror flick," Tom Robbins wrote,

This month, when a group of New York City police officers showed up for their required counter-terrorism training, they got to watch a movie.

And not just some diddly 20-minute educational film, either. It was a full-length color feature, with more explosions than a *Transformers* sequel and more blood-splattered victims than an HBO World War II series.

The bad news was that it was a spectacularly offensive smear of American Muslims. The film is called *The Third Jihad*. It is 2 minutes of gruesome footage of bombing carnage, frenzied crowds, burning American flags, flaming churches, and seething mullahs. All of this is sandwiched between a collection of somber talking heads informing us that, while we were sleeping, the international Islamist Jihad that wrought these horrors has set up shop here and is quietly going about its deadly business. This is the final drive in a 1,400-year-old bid for Muslim world domination, we're informed. And while we may think there are some perfectly reasonable Muslim leaders and organizers here in the U.S., that is just more sucker bait sent our way.

Gender coverage similarly was diverse. The underground press' coverage of gender issues often focused on feminist topics such as access to abortion and depictions of female bodies in advertising. Abortion was still a topic covered by the alternative newsweekly press. For example, Alexa Schirtzinger, in the Jan. 20, 2010, *Santa Fe Reporter* article "Conversation starter," wrote,

This isn't your momma's abortion debate—or is it?

A few weeks ago, a group of pro-choice women got together at the Cowgirl BBQ in Santa Fe to talk about, among other things, the state of abortion rights in America.

"Somebody thought to ask the women who were there how many of us had had abortions, and it was eight out of 10," Janet Gotkin, a petite woman with close-cropped hair and bright, greenish-brown eyes, says.

The remainder of the article focuses on the mobilization of the Santa Fe chapter of the women's rights organization the National Organization for Women, a chapter that only began organizing after a Congressional hearing on abortion.

Although there was some coverage of long-standing issues, the majority of articles relating to gender focused on newer legal issues or women entering into previously male dominated fields. For example, Aina Hunter, writing in the March 8, 2005, *Village Voice* article "Cops talk dirty to young girls," reported on changing treatment of teenage prostitutes. Hunter wrote,

In Judge Mary O'Donoghue's courtroom in King's County Family Court in Brooklyn, 16-year-old "Krystal Simmons," with round cheeks, glasses, and a tight little ponytail, seems an unlikely defendant in a prostitution case. Her

mother sits next to her, wincing as the undercover cop describes how he says he tricked Krystal and her friend into believing he was a john....

Courtroom scenes like this could soon be a thing of the past. Next week Democratic Assemblyman William Scarborough from Queens will propose legislation that could change the way law enforcement treats minors accused of prostitution. Instead of being arrested for criminal behavior, teenagers would be treated as victims of sexual abuse.

Steph Greeger's article "Chicks dig tattoos," which ran in the Dec. 2, 2010, issue of *The Other Paper*, highlighted a growing trend in the tattoo business. Greeger wrote,

The proverbial glass ceiling has been cracking for years, and in Columbus, it recently spread to what years ago was primarily a bastion of masculinity—the tattoo parlor.

On Nov. 1, Evolved Tattoo opened its third location, and this one is unique—the first all female-staffed tattoo studio in the city.

"Sometimes you want to get away from the boys and the fart jokes," said manager Lindsay Hearts of Evolved Tattoo's new location at 1644 N. High St.

Both articles illustrate individual cases, and there seems to be no attempt on the part of the journalists or publications to connect those stories to a larger community or social movement. Articles about changes in law enforcement regarding teenage prostitutes and women running businesses in typically male-dominated fields highlight stories that often are uncovered or undercovered. However, such articles

focus on novelty if the journalists do not connect them to larger issues or social movements.

Two of the three newspapers analyzed consistently covered LGBT issues. The one exception was the *Santa Fe Reporter*. *The Other Paper* and *Village Voice* coverage should not be a surprise because Columbus has a large LGBT population and because the LGBT rights movement began New York's Greenwich Village. However, even the *Voice's* coverage was inconsistent. Steven Thrasher, in the Nov. 17, 2009, article "Who do we have to blow to get gay marriage in New York," wrote,

In Europe, Gay Pride parades are held each year on the occasion known as "Christopher Street Day"—a nod to the New York street that gave birth to the worldwide gay rights movement with the Stonewall riots.

But if this city once signified the leading edge of that movement, what does it say that in those European countries celebrating our fair city, there's gay marriage equality, but here, where the struggle for rights began, New York still can't get it right?

Thrasher's lament to a lack of same-sex marriage rights in New York actually could be seen as a lament to the lack of a national dialog on the issue. Thrasher wrote that European countries celebrate New York on "Christopher Street Day" but then focuses on New York City instead of broadening his point to why America "still can't get it right" in regards to gay marriage equality.

Positive portrayals and coverage of the movement and its issues were mixed with negative portrayals and stereotypes. For example, in the June 22, 2010, *Village Voice* article "The Guido ideal goes on the down-low in Jersey," Tony Phillips wrote,

The 20 miles of shoreline starting at Belmar, just south of Asbury Park, and ending in Seaside Heights has long been known as the “Guido Riviera,” and now MTV’s surprise hit *The Jersey Shore* has made Seaside Heights notorious. Central to the show’s success is The Situation & Co.’s blend of the homophobic and homoerotic, mixed together like a potent Long Island Iced Tea. Ronnie’s “fucking faggot” boardwalk rants, The Situation’s gay-for-pay media plays, and Pauly D’s shirtless photos...have all shaken the cocktail. But long before Snooki and her housemates, homosex has been alive and well on the Jersey Shore. Each summer, itinerant Guidos decamp for Seaside, bringing their horndog, down-low sexuality with them.

The Other Paper covered a range of LGBT issues, from the election of Mary Jo Hudson, the first openly lesbian woman to serve on city council, to the gruesome murder of a female impersonator by a rival entertainer. In the May 12, 2011, article “Stop censoring,” Steph Greegor chronicled efforts to stop Columbus Public Schools from blocking LGBT websites from its computers. Greegor wrote,

The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio sent a letter to Columbus Public Schools May 3 requesting that it remove the LGBT filter on school computers saying it violates students’ First Amendment rights....

In addition to warning students to not arrange meetings with persons they don’t know using school Internet access, and reminding them that selling drugs using school computers is illegal, the policy also says that, in terms of appropriate material, “You will not use the Columbus Public Schools’ network to access or reproduce material that is profane or obscene

(pornography), that advocates illegal acts, or that advocates violence or discrimination towards other people (hate literature).”

There is no specific mention of LGBT issues anywhere in the policy, which also contains language that protects students from harassment for any number of reasons, including sexual orientation.

[ACLU of Ohio spokesman Mike] Brickner, whose office received an LGBT censorship tip in late April from a Columbus Public student as part of the ACLU’s “Don’t Filter Me” program, said he believes the content is being marked inappropriate because of a sexually explicit filter that Websense software uses.

Harassment by government and quasi-government institutions was a staple of underground press coverage. Such issues were not present in the three alternative newsweekly publications analyzed. The lack of harassment was a major change between the underground press and the alternative newsweekly press. Underground papers were seen by the government and other establishment bodies as extremely radical and potentially dangerous. Harassment by these institutions, therefore, might have been an attempt to silence the radical voices of these publications. Alternative newsweeklies, however, possibly were seen as less radical and less threatening. Indeed, *The Other Paper* was honored by a quasi-government body (“Central Ohio Crime Stoppers honors *The Other Paper*, Oct. 29, 2009) for its willingness to publish a weekly “Most Wanted” list as well as a series of stories highlighting unsolved murder cases. Further, many government power brokers in the 2000s grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, making alternative publications

something that they possibly lived with most of their lives. This familiarity also would make these publications seem less threatening. If alternative newsweeklies were seen as non-threatening by the establishment, then the need to silence the voices of alternative journalists would be lessened.

The use of sources

Many underground newspapers used first-person accounts. Therefore, the use of traditional sources often was scarce. That was not the case with the alternative newsweeklies analyzed. Articles were sourced heavily, and the voices heard often were non-official. For example, Maria Luisa profiled a self-taught legal advocate in the June 25, 2002, *Santa Fe Reporter* article “Frenemy of the state,” writing that Tony Gutierrez

has begun a weekly constitutional study group at the Main Library. More than 30 students have been attending for lessons on topics such as: how to interrogate a police officer who asks you to turn your music down and how to represent yourself in a divorce and run your ex into the ground with legal fees. Gutierrez has also formed the Free Citizens Fellowship, an educational group to empower “those being attacked by agencies of the state and federal government.”

Previous researchers have suggested that alternative newsweekly journalists rarely call for radical change, instead providing favorable coverage to those who do call for such change (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). Luisa was not calling for radical change, but she was highlighting a Santa Fe

citizen who could be considered offbeat or countercultural. The *Santa Fe Reporter* ran many such articles, including a weekly series where a reporter interviewed an interesting member of the community, such as a professor of the Navajo language at Northern Arizona University (“Native tongue,” no byline, Sept. 24, 2008), and a movie distributor specializing in independent Asian films (“Turning Japanese,” by Rani Molla, July 14, 2010).

There are times when non-government sources could be considered most appropriate for a story. For example, the Aug. 25, 2005, *The Other Paper* article “Ken Stone spent his life ‘Getting music to the people’” was an obituary or life story of the man credited with starting the first used-record business catering to Ohio State students. Reporter Rick Allen interviewed similar used record-store owners, most of whom had worked previously for Stone, such as Dan Dow, Ron House, John Petric, Marty Cole, and Jack Lefton. House and Cole previously had written for *The Other Paper*, while Petric is a current music critic at the paper. This suggests that some alternative newsweekly journalists do not just write about a community, but that they also are active members of the community.

However, there were many instances of official government sources used exclusively in stories. For example, Elizabeth Dwoskin profiled Noach Dear in the June 10, 2009, *Village Voice* article “An unlikely rescuer from the jaws of debt.” Dear is a Brooklyn debt court judge whom Dwoskin described as “beloved and fair.” However, while Dwoskin included court records as well as first-person observations from the courtroom, Dear was the only source directly quoted in her article. There was no indication that Dwoskin even attempted to interview a defendant or lawyer.

Similarly, Debbie Briner, in the May 5, 2011, *The Other Paper* story “Under new management,” wrote,

A proposed trigger policy in [Gov. John] Kasich’s biennial state budget plan outlines a petition option that allows at least 50 percent of a troubled school’s parents to decide if, for instance, the school should be converted to a charter school.

And it now appears Columbus City Schools will get the opportunity to pilot the parent trigger plan, just as Superintendent Gene Harris requested.

Harris told state legislators at a budget committee hearing last month that if Ohio adopts Kasich’s parent trigger policy, “I would like to see Columbus host a demonstration site” to begin to measure the effectiveness. On Tuesday, the House finance committee approved an amendment that allows that to happen, with the full House vote expected today.

In the article, Briner quoted Harris, Mike Wiles (a member of the Columbus Board of Education), Rhonda Johnson (president of the Columbus Education Association), Rob Nichols (a Kasich spokesman), and Debbie Phillips (an Ohio state representative). However, she did not speak to a teacher, parent, or student—three constituent groups that would be affected directly by the proposed plan. This runs counter to previous literature. Mainstream journalists tend to quote official, authoritative voices, while alternative journalists tend to provide media access to non-official sources. Here, however, the alternative journalist was quoting official, authoritative voices while neglecting non-official sources.

Tone

One major difference between the underground press and the alternative newsweekly press was the use of four-letter words, or, more specifically, the lack of four-letter words in the alternative press analyzed. Underground journalists used expletives words to shock the authority structure, but alternative newsweekly journalists in the three papers analyzed were less apt to use such language in their writing.

While the use of expletives words decreased, reportage of sex and drugs continued. A major issue in the pages of the underground press was advocating for the legalization of marijuana, and marijuana coverage continued in the alternative newsweekly press. For example, Jennifer Gonnerman's Dec. 7, 2004, *Village Voice* article "Seven years on the sidewalk" profiled Randy Credico, an anti-drug-law activist trying to repeal the drug laws of New York state. In addition to tone, this story is another example of an alternative newsweekly providing favorable coverage to those calling for radical change (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981).

There, of course, was a major difference in the marijuana drug laws in the 1960s and the 2000s: Medical marijuana was legal in certain states. The New Mexico legislature attempted to legalize medical marijuana in 2003, but the measure did not pass. Maria Luisa reported the story in the March 18, 2003, *Santa Fe Reporter* article "Smoke on this," writing,

Hank Tafoya, an HIV-positive AIDS educator, swallows a handful of pills each day to delay crippling illness. The daily drug cocktail extinguishes

his appetite and sometimes brings on waves of nausea. The only surefire way to ease his nausea and re-ignite his appetite, says Tafoya, is to smoke a joint.

Tafoya's hope that his marijuana use would finally become legal was shot down March 6, when HB242, a medical marijuana bill for New Mexicans suffering from cancer, AIDS and other serious illnesses, was shot down 46 to 20 by the state House of Representatives.

"What I do to stay alive is against the law, and that's crazy when cigarettes kill 4,000 people every day," says Tafoya.

There was a difference between the marijuana coverage in the underground press and the alternative press. The *Santa Fe Reporter* and *Village Voice* articles do not seem designed to "shock the authority structure" but to inform and educate the papers' readers about drug laws and the movement to legalize marijuana for medical use.

Sex, like drugs, remained a major topic in the alternative press. However, also like drugs, the coverage seemed designed to be less shocking and more informative. Many underground publications had a tone that suggested that casual sex was healthy and fun. This could have been a result of writing youth-centered publications during the 1960s sexual revolution. The alternative newsweekly journalists, however, rarely wrote about casual sex. Instead, these journalists concentrated on issues surrounding sex and sexual politics. For example, in the Jan. 15, 2002, *Santa Fe Reporter* story "Jailbait: A new feature examining the letter of the law; city naked," an unnamed reporter attempted to clarify the city's public-nudity laws:

If Santa Feans want to institute Mardi-Gras-esque, bosom-baring traditions at next year's Zozobra celebration, we have good news. According to city code, flashing bare breasts or buttocks is legal.

Or, to be more precise, it isn't illegal. City indecent exposure code states: "It is unlawful for a person knowingly and intentionally to expose his or her primary genital area."

As for what this "primary genital area" refers to, the code is specific, so try to recall your sixth grade health class vocab: mons, pubis, penis, testicles, mons veneris, and vulva.

Similarly, *The Other Paper* reporter Erik Johns, in the Feb. 2, 2006, issue, informed readers of a possibly outdated Ohio State policy in the article "OSU considers a ban on student-teacher sex":

There's a new front-runner for the "Holy crap, they still allow that?" award. Ohio State University does not prohibit faculty members from having sexual relationships with students. A teacher is even allowed to sleep with a student in his or her class, as long as someone else grades that student's work.

But a group of faculty from the university has submitted a proposal to keep professors from living out one of our culture's most clichéd fantasies. If the school adopts the rules change, such relationships would be forbidden.

Not all coverage of sex and sexuality, however, was truly informative.

Previous researchers have distinguished between the underground press and the alternative newsweekly on the basis that the latter is less concerned with being

radical and more concerned with maximizing a profit from matching upscale readers with niche-market products (Gibbs, 2003; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). This can be seen in Elizabeth Zimmer's March 11, 2003, *Village Voice* article "Doing laps; Products derived from toys bring the pelvic region alive." Zimmer provided a guide to consumer products such as an exercising office chair and a waterproof personal massager that also could be used as a sexual aid. This again could be perceived as a result of the cultural shift away from casual sex and toward issues surrounding sex and sexual politics.

Efforts at community building

Community building in the alternative newsweekly press exists in a much different form than the community-building function of the underground press. Community building was seen at both the local and national levels in the underground press (McMillan, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). In contrast, alternative newsweeklies tended to be heavily community and geographically centered, focusing on one city or region without trying to connect to a larger counterculture community. Underground papers also encouraged two-way patterns of communication between writers and readers, as well as an engaged and open discourse (McMillan, 2011; Atton, 2002; Kessler, 1984; Armstrong, 1981). The alternative newsweeklies analyzed tended to mirror their mainstream counterparts by focusing on a one-way pattern of communication. User-generated content and calls for user contributions were virtually nonexistent. Instead, there were bylines from established staff and freelance journalists. Communication from readers was

limited to letters to the editor. These letters were almost exclusively about articles that had previously appeared in the paper, meaning that the publications' staffs controlled the topics that would be discussed in the papers.

Some efforts at community building, however, did exist in the alternative newsweekly press. For example, in the July 16, 2002, *Village Voice* article "War of the gardeners," Geoffrey Gray reported on efforts by activist gardeners to save New York City's 380 remaining unprotected community gardens from developers' wrecking crews. This was another example of alternative newsweekly journalists providing favorable coverage to those who call for radical change. The radical change here, or more precisely radical conservation, was the preservation of a long-standing tradition of community gardening in New York. This article also was an example of community building because Gray highlighted the actions of part of the population that might receive sympathy and support from likeminded citizens in their efforts to preserve the city's remaining community gardens.

Fringe or subculture groups often were showcased in the publications analyzed. Santa Fe skateboarders were the subjects of the June 15, 2005, *Santa Fe Reporter* article "Lords of Santa Fe." The unnamed reporter highlighted a prominent issue for area skateboarders, writing,

Fred Berman has skateboarded intermittently for the past three decades. He grew up in the late 1970s and early 1980s just 20 miles from Dogtown—the Los Angeles 'hood immortalized by pioneering skateboarders such as Tony Alva. But after moving to Santa Fe six years ago, Berman, now 39, fears the City Different will never spawn skateboarders as talented as

members of Alva's legendary Zephyr Team—the subject of current film release *Lords of Dogtown*.

According to Berman and others, Santa Fe is unfriendly to skaters. Street skating is largely out of the question. And the City's two skateboard parks, unusable in inclement weather, are situated in unsafe areas and poorly maintained.

Culture is political because culture is ordinary. Here, the *Santa Fe Reporter* is showcasing an issue that could resonate with many of its readers: The need for a place where skateboarders can ride without fear of police harassment or arrest. Community building by underground papers at times was as simple as posting an announcement that someone was going to play rare Bob Dylan tapes. Skateboarding and its culture was as important to subculture communities in the 2010s as Dylan was to the Hippies in the 1960s. The *Santa Fe Reporter*, then, is attempting to build and maintain its community through articles that appeal to and speak for its readers.

Similarly, *The Other Paper* eulogized a campus-area bar popular with professors, graduate students, musicians, artists, and poets in the Jan. 1, 2009, "Best of 2008 Nightlife" column. Kitty McConnell wrote,

Following a great deal of message-board chatter, longtime regulars of Larry's came to believe their beloved hangout was doomed. The rumors came to pass on Saturday. Larry's, the bar of choice for Ohio State humanities majors and grad students, closed its doors, ending some 80 years at 2040 N. High St.

Larry's was known primarily for three things: poetry readings, an excellent jukebox and its consistent dive-bar atmosphere.

The closing of a campus bar might not seem like major news. However, by showcasing the closing of *this* bar, McConnell was forming a sense of community. She was writing that Larry's was important to a certain segment of the community, a segment that also read *The Other Paper*.

Alternative newsweekly publications also used community building as a way to differentiate the community of their generation with the community that grew up reading the underground press. For example, *Village Voice* reporter Steve Weinstein wrote about generational differences in the LGBT community in his article "In praise of promiscuity." The article's subhead—"As gay marriage becomes the norm, oldsters ask, when did gay life morph into a Jane Austen novel?"—summed up the generational difference. Weinstein reported on a generational shift in the way gay men see their sex lives and relationships. Older gay men were more focused on marriage and children instead of "rampant sex." However, younger gay men said that flirting and hooking up has moved from a bar-based and street-based sexual culture to online sites such as ManHunt.com and mobile applications such as Grindr. Sites such as ManHunt and Grindr could be an example of the type of information that is moving online. Culture might no longer be ordinary. Instead, culture now might be niche. The point is that the community is different, and Weinstein was trying to illustrate that difference to his readers.

Oppositional relationship to mainstream media

One role for alternative newsweeklies is to watch the watchdog, to monitor traditional media outlets (Lewes, 2000). This watchdog role can be seen as an extension of the Christians et al. (2009) conceptualization of monitorial role. The media watchdog role arose out of the underground press, which sought a rebellion against both the national establishment and its mainstream media. The best of the underground papers “did a capable job of criticizing both and of breathing new life into the dead-center American social and political scene of the 1960s” (Emery & Emery, 1988, pg. 481). That tradition continued in the alternative newsweekly press, which provided needed context to news stories, providing differing frames and views, critiquing the mainstream press’ coverage of certain issues, and poking fun at the mainstream press when it began to take itself a little too seriously.

The coverage of mainstream media by the three alternative newsweeklies analyzed fell into two categories. The first was serious critiques of mainstream news organizations. The *Village Voice* and *Santa Fe Reporter* tended toward this category. The second was poking fun at the expense of mainstream news outlets. *The Other Paper* tended toward this category.

The serious critiques typically focused not on mainstream news coverage but on political and economic corporate activity of mainstream news organizations. The fact that the alternative newsweeklies were willing to report critically about money is important. For example, in the June 18, 2002, *Village Voice* article “The paper of wreckage,” Paul Moses reported on a “sweetheart deal” brokered between New York State and the *New York Times*. Moses wrote,

Under the deal Governor George Pataki announced December 13, the state-controlled Empire State Development Corporation will use its power of condemnation to take the property from its unwilling private owners and turn it over to the *Times* for a 52-story corporate headquarters along Eighth Avenue between 40th and 41st streets.

Thanks to a deal with the Pataki and Giuliani administrations, The New York Times Company is in line to get a choice midtown property at tens of millions of dollars below market value—and city taxpayers will foot the difference, newly disclosed records show.

The *Voice* did not just monitor the *Times*, however. It also monitored other mainstream news outlets in New York. Syndey H. Schanberg wrote about a newspaper grudge match in the June 7, 2005, article “Paper trained?” Schanberg wrote,

Two of the four large-circulation newspapers left in New York City—the *Daily News* and the *New York Post*—are having another peeing match. More accurately, the *Post* seems to be going for the *News*’ throat.

Their circulation wars are of course nothing new, but the latest chapter seems especially personal. And it would be laughable, too, if either of these two papers were doing a good job of covering the innards of New York City. The other two papers in Gotham are also weak in this regard—*The New York Times*, because it has always been reluctant to attempt a true warts-and-all picture of the city’s ruling classes, and *Newsday*, based on Long Island, because ever since its then owners shut down its *New York Newsday*

offspring in 1995 for reasons of greed, it has limited its city coverage largely to the borough of Queens.

The *Santa Fe Reporter's* coverage of its daily counterpart included an article that directly affected the alternative newsweekly. The Oct. 7, 2003, issue included the article "Read all about it?" about a proposed change in the distribution of Santa Fe publications. The unnamed reporter wrote,

The Santa Fe New Mexican has initiated a plan to work with the City of Santa Fe to install new newspaper racks along the Plaza and Canyon Road, a plan that could allow one newspaper to control distribution of other local periodicals.

A Sept. 16 letter sent to SFR describes the proposal as a plan to "beautify the historic downtown Santa Fe area" by installing modular newspaper racks in eight locations. According to the letter, other publications would put their newspapers in the racks and pay \$120 per year per location to The New Mexican. The money would pay for maintenance fees and any remainder would be donated to a charity.

Such a move could have a tremendous impact on alternative publications such as the *Santa Fe Reporter*. In essence, by placing their newspapers in *New Mexican*-controlled newspaper racks and paying a yearly fee to the mainstream paper, the other publications could be subservient to the needs and whims of the larger, daily paper, which would, in part, control distribution of other local publications.

Alternative newsweeklies did not just cover print news, however. Broadcast news organizations also were monitored. For example, the Nov. 22, 2006, *Santa Fe*

Reporter article “Pulling the plug” reported on the sale of a local radio station.

Nathan Dinsdale wrote,

If an independent radio station falls in a forest of corporate airwaves and everybody is around to hear it, does it still make a sound?

Yes. But that doesn’t necessarily mean anybody can do anything about it. Which is why uproar over the impending sale of Santa Fe radio station KBAC 98.1 FM has thus far fallen on deaf ears.

It’s unlikely that “Radio Free Santa Fe” supporters can prevent the sale by parent company Clear Channel—in the process of being bought out itself—to EMF Broadcasting, a California-based Christian broadcasting company. But it’s not for a lack of effort.

Similarly, the bulk of *The Other Paper’s* news coverage focused on broadcast media. Unlike the *Village Voice* and *Santa Fe Reporter*, however, *The Other Paper* often focused on the foibles of mainstream media. For example, in the Oct. 3, 2002, Media Morsels article “Rain falls, and 28 enters crisis mode,” an unnamed reporter (Media Morsels always published without a byline) wrote,

Someday the Fox 28 *NewsCenter* team will sit around and swap war stories about the Great Flood Watch of Aught-Two.

For anyone associated with Fox’s 10 p.m. news show, Sept. 26, 2002, will be long remembered as a night when it looked like it could have rained pretty darn hard.

Last Thursday, tropical storm Isidore was demoted to a tropical depression on its way to Ohio. But as the clouds trudged northward from the

Gulf of Mexico, the kids at *NewsCenter* held out hope that they would drown every man, woman and dachshund in Central Ohio—which would be, like, a really cool story.

The article ran with an accompanying photo of a stern looking reporter standing outside in a rain slicker under the banner “Tracking the Storm.” The photo was captioned “A seriousness usually reserved for discussing pedophiles: Tram Mai in her Yellow Slicker of Credibility.”

In addition to poking fun at entire news organizations, *The Other Paper* reporters often ridiculed individual mainstream journalists. For example, Erik Johns reported about a pageant-winning broadcast news reporter in the Dec. 6, 2007, story “Queen 4 a Day” (with the “4” referencing network affiliate NBC4). Johns wrote,

It seems that just about every beauty pageant contestant aspires to a job in television news. Channel 4’s Monica Day went the opposite direction. As of Saturday night, she’s your new Miss Ohio USA.

Already an on-air reporter, Day was crowned in Portsmouth on Saturday and will go on to compete in the Miss USA pageant, owned and promoted by Donald Trump, early next year.

Day, who handles traffic reports and entertainment news for NBC4, said this week that she hasn’t really considered the irony of going from newscaster to pageant queen. Indeed, irony doesn’t appear to be part of Day’s life.

Previous researchers suggested that alternative newsweeklies lost a lot of what made the underground press radical. The three alternative newsweeklies analyzed in this study did calm the rhetoric of the underground press (McMillian, 2011; Peck, 1998), and were less likely to call for radical change while giving favorable coverage to others who called for such change (McMillian, 2011; Atton & Hamilton, 2008; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). However, these three alternative newsweeklies did exhibit many similarities with their underground ancestors: unique content and story selection, use of non-official sources, tone, efforts at community building (albeit a different sort of community building), and an oppositional relationship with the mainstream media.

There were two major differences between the underground press and alternative newsweekly press. First, the alternative newsweekly publications engaged in a one-way pattern of communication with their readers, whereas the underground press was more likely to engage in a two-way pattern of communication. Second, the alternative newsweeklies studied were more likely to have assimilated into the mainstream in terms of language, a more objective tone, and the use of sources. The use of official sources was surprising because it mirrored sourcing in the mainstream newspapers instead of sourcing in underground publications. The alternative newsweekly press would be expected to open media access to dissidents and protest groups on their terms. Instead, the people, groups, and institutions that already had media access in mainstream publications were given even more media access in alternative newsweekly publications, while those who were shut out of the mainstream media often were

also shut out of the alternative newsweekly press. Consequently, there was a less hostile relationship between the alternative newsweeklies and government and quasi-government officials. There was no evidence of harassment by government officials, and *The Other Paper* even received an award from a government organization. The conclusion is that, as Peck (1998) and Armstrong (1981) suggested, the alternative newsweekly press moved closer to the mainstream by incorporating viewpoints that were reformist without being radical or revolutionary and by adopting many of the commercial practices of its mainstream counterparts. The underground press was started and driven by the “sex, drugs and rock ‘n’ roll revolution” of the 1960s, but alternative newsweeklies are now helping to define the culture (McAuliffe, 1999, pg. 40). Today’s alternative newsweeklies often attempt to be far enough to the left to be edgy but not so far as to alienate the average reader.

There was a major change in terms of role between the underground and alternative newsweekly press. The underground press tended to cover broad social movements. Alternative newsweeklies moved away from covering social movements to the specific, local issues. Further, alternative newsweeklies cover local issues without reference to social movements. This shift represents a change in role from fostering a sense of nationwide community to monitoring local concerns. This shift also might show something broader about media coverage of social movements.

Similarly, there was a major change in terms of community between the underground and alternative newsweekly press. The underground papers attempted to build local communities, and then tie those local communities together

to form a larger, national movement. The alternative newsweekly press, however, cut those ties by bringing everything down to the local level. The heavily local focus has implications for the institutional role of the alternative press. Indeed, it suggests that there might not be a single institutional role. Instead, there might be levels of role.

An alternative press has existed alongside the mainstream media throughout American history. If the alternative newsweekly press has moved toward the mainstream, then another form of alternative press might have risen to perform the radical role. McMillian (2011) and Streitmatter (2001) argued that an online alternative press might be fulfilling that role. They theorize that elements once found in the underground press are now being seen in certain segments of the Internet. The next chapter will explore whether the online press in New York, Columbus, and Santa Fe is performing the roles once provided by the underground press and the alternative newsweekly press.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE NORMATIVE ROLES OF THE ONLINE ALTERNATIVE PRESS

This section of the textual analysis will focus on a six-month sample of political and cultural articles from *Gothamist* and *Gawker* in New York, *Columbus Underground* and *Columbus Free Press* in Columbus, and *The Light of New Mexico* in Santa Fe from October 1, 2011 to April 1, 2012 (Riffe, et al., 1998). The five websites were chosen after consultation with people in each of the three cities about online alternative publications. By looking at a six-month period, the researcher can begin to see how the online alternative press has evolved from the underground and alternative newsweekly press and whether the online alternative press has changed from these roots. Ultimately, the researcher hopes to understand how certain conventions and norms of writing and story selection in the alternative press contribute to alternative ideas of politics and culture.

Like the historical research and the textual analysis of alternative newsweeklies, this textual analysis focused on several aspects of the alternative press found in the literature. Specifically, the researcher focused on the use of sources, framing, partisanship or a lack of objectivity, tone, content or story selection, efforts at community building, and providing an oppositional voice to the mainstream media. While coding themes and patterns, the researcher isolated things “(a) that happens a number of times and (b) that consistently happens in a specific way” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, pg. 215). The goal of the textual analysis

was to determine the similarities and differences in the underground press, alternative newsweekly press, and online alternative press.

Content and story selection

The two Columbus and one Santa Fe online alternative news sites analyzed in this study tended to cover local and statewide elections with much more frequency than they covered national elections. Much of the election coverage focused less on actual campaigns and more on the inner-workings of state legislatures that can help shape campaigns. For example, in the March 1, 2012, *The Light of New Mexico* article “Republicans still win House redistricting battle,” Heath Haussamen wrote,

While the new map isn’t as GOP leaning as the map Judge James Hall initially approved, it’s much better for Republicans than the plan the Democratic-controlled Legislature approved.

The best anecdotal evidence of which political party benefits most from the House redistricting map finalized Wednesday is Republican Rep. Conrad James’ decision to defend a contested House seat rather than run for an open Senate seat and Democratic Rep. Bill O’Neill’s decision to do the opposite.

Though there’s no certainty it will happen, the new map gives Republicans a fighting chance of taking control of the House sometime in the next decade. Faced with that possibility, James is staying to fight it out rather than becoming the likely anointed candidate for a relatively safe Republican Senate seat.

O'Neill, on the other hand, decided to risk a tough Senate primary rather than a tough House general election. Either way he would face the possibility of losing, but in the Senate he's much more likely to be serving with a Democratic majority if he wins.

Similarly, in the Oct. 5, 2011, *Columbus Free Press* article "Ohioans say no to voter suppression," Bruce Bostick wrote,

On September 29 workers with the huge We Are Ohio coalition turned in 318,460 signatures on referendum petitions to place HR 194, Ohio's voter suppression bill, on the November ballot. Ohio requires 3% of the number voting in the previous election in 44 of Ohio's 88 counties to sign referendum petitions to place the issue on the ballot. In this case 231,000 signatures were required. Not only did the coalition get more than enough signatures, the signatures obtained came from over 5% of Ohio voters in 68 of Ohio's counties. The coalition will still have another two weeks to continue getting signatures in order to supplement the total turned in.

"This corporate administration has opened an all out attack on working families, the middle class and all Ohioans who are not millionaires," stated Petie Tallie, Vice President of the Ohio AFL-CIO & coordinator for organized labor in the anti-HR 194 campaign. "HR 194 would disenfranchise millions of voters in our state, especially seniors, youth and minorities. People have fought too hard for too long and took too many casualties to allow our rights to be rolled back," said Tallie. "We are not going to allow this administration to take away the rights we've fought and won!"

HR 194, also called the voter suppression act in Ohio, would require voters to show an ID to vote. However, the bill disallows student IDs or military IDs and would require those not having a driver's license to purchase a new special Ohio Voter ID for this purpose. Early voting, which was initiated during the previous Democratic, Strickland administration, would be severely limited by HR 194. Absentee ballots will no longer be mailed to voters automatically under the new law.

Voting rights are a major issue in Ohio. Early voting and automatically mailed absentee ballots were two measures introduced after the 2004 presidential election, where some voters stood in lines at polling stations for nearly 10 hours. Christians et al. (2009) argued that the monitorial role serves to define the boundaries of public space and the actors, issues, and events that lie within these boundaries and on which public opinion forms and collective decisions are taken (Christians et al., 2009). Here, Bostick is defining one issue, the attempted suppression of voting rights, to persuade public opinion against a bill that would require voters to show identification to vote.

The nature of the Internet could allow for expansive coverage. Newspapers and broadcast outlets are limited by space, but that is not necessarily a concern online. The *Columbus Underground* published a series of in-depth interviews with City Council candidates Mat Ferris, Andrew Ginther, Hearcel Craig, Robert Bridges, Mark Noble, Zach Klein, Michelle Mills, and Daryl Henessy between Oct. 17 and Oct. 20, 2011. Due to space constraints, a newspaper might have highlighted incumbents or likely winners. However, *Columbus Underground* writer Walker Evans could

interview each candidate in-depth on a wide range of topics. This type of coverage is important because it educates voters on issues and candidates. The question-and-answer format of the series also helps voters because it allows candidates to speak to them without their messages being framed or distorted by a news organization (Selnow, 2000).

While the *Columbus Underground*, *Columbus Free Press*, and *The Light of New Mexico* tended to focus on local and statewide elections, *Gawker* and *Gothamist* tended to focus more on national elections. For example, in the Jan. 24, 2012, *Gawker* article “Your Guide to Mitt Romney’s Obscene Tax Situation,” Jim Newell wrote,

Mitt Romney’s tax returns are out, and so we’ve learned the truth: Mitt Romney is a rich person. Hadn’t you always suspected? And because the first thing you want to be reading this Tuesday in January is a description of tax forms, here’s your guide to Romney, his taxes, and the political effects thereof.

The remainder of the article probes the intricacies and politics of Romney’s tax returns. For example, under the subhead “Why this became an issue,” Newell wrote,

When Mitt Romney was ahead of Newt Gingrich, Rick Santorum, Ron Paul, and whatever other losers have come and gone by 20 percentage points in New Hampshire, South Carolina, and national primary polls, nuanced attacks were not going to be effective enough to slow his momentum. So everyone pulled out a popular stock item from the list of traditional desperate political attacks: Show us your tax returns, Rich Man.

The differences in election coverage between the New York websites and the Columbus and Santa Fe websites might be connected to business models and intended audience. *The Light of New Mexico* declares that its focus is “state and local politics” while both the *Columbus Underground* and *Columbus Free Press* state that they are hyperlocal and community-driven. The articles presented in all three websites conform to their intended target audiences and communities. *Gothamist* claims that its focus is on “New York City and everything that happens in it.” However, many articles have no or little connection to New York. This could be because *Gothamist* has a more national or world focus than it claims, or it could be because New York is a national and international city in a way that Columbus and Santa Fe are not, meaning that national news such as a presidential election really is part of what happens in New York City.

The majority of election coverage in *Gothamist* and *Gawker* was dedicated to the Republican contenders. This most likely was because Barack Obama was running unopposed while many Republicans were vying for their party’s nomination. While Republicans received the most coverage, that coverage was almost always negative. For example, in the Dec. 27, 2011, *Gawker* article “Follow the Ron Paul Newsletter Twitter for 140-Character Bursts of Horrific Racism,” Max Read wrote,

If you’ve been too busy celebrating the holidays to keep track of the doings of internet blimp magnate Ron Paul, you might have missed the 50 scans of Paul’s various, unbelievably hateful newsletters, published on Mr. Destructo last week. But as pleased as that made us, we’re even more pleased

to discover @RP_Newsletter, an enterprising new Twitter account that's re-Tweeting the best of those newsletters, 140 characters at a time!

...Standard Ron Paul disclaimer: he didn't actually write any of this himself, by most accounts! He simply allowed it to be published, in his name, as political strategy, and then continued to employ the newsletters' author, Lew Rockwell, as a trusted advisor.

In any event: What better way to remind yourself of the atrocious bigotry of the Internet's Favorite Candidate than in the Internet's Preferred Mode of Speech, 140-character snippets of near-nonsense text?

Political coverage, however, was not just limited to elections. The online alternative press published a considerable number of articles about the day-to-day workings of government institutions and elected officials. For example, in the March 17, 2012, *The Light of New Mexico* article "Fundamental Disrespect," Emanuele Corso wrote,

The latest example of disrespect for the legislative process and public education to drop from the governor's office was the announcement that a teacher evaluation process would be implemented in the face of legislative disapproval. Let's face it, the secretary-designate and the governor have nothing to lose and nothing to fear. So what if the Legislature fails to take up the unqualified Secretary of Education candidate's appointment to office? Skandera, nonetheless, remains the Secretary-designate and has the power to pursue her relentless ALEC agenda to destroy public education with the ambitious governor's full support. The Legislature has, it believes, made itself

blameless in not taking up the appointment, but in reality they have enabled the governor's war against the legislators themselves, teachers, students and public education. This is what I call the Pontius Pilate delusion—my hands are clean!

Walker Evans, in the Feb. 23, 2012, *Columbus Underground* article "200 Homes to be Demolished in Columbus," reported on a government program to reduce vacant housing throughout the city. Evans wrote,

Mayor Michael B. Coleman kicked off a new initiative today to combat vacant housing in Columbus. The city has identified 900 of the 6,200 vacant homes in Columbus as dangerous and uninhabitable, and will be razing the buildings over the next four years.

"Despite the efforts we have made in the past, the scourge of vacant and abandoned housing continues to rein blight upon our neighborhoods," Coleman said at today's announcement event. "We did not create this problem, but together, we will address it."

Coleman was joined today by City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr., Councilmember Zach M. Klein and other neighborhood leaders.

Previous efforts to combat vacant housing, such as the Home Again program, have addressed issues with 2,000 vacant properties, either renovating or demolishing them. The new initiative kicked off today will create a "Vacant and Abandoned Property unit" (VAP) that consists of representatives from the City Attorney's Office, Code Enforcement and Building and Zoning Services. The collaborative effort is being created to

focus on the enforcement and management of all 6,200 vacant and abandoned homes in the City of Columbus. The group will be publicly publishing the name of negligent property owners who fail to take action on these problematic houses.

“Our office has been aggressive in addressing the challenge of vacant and abandoned properties, from taking legal action against irresponsible landlords to proposing legislative remedies to helping raise public awareness of neighborhood blight,” said City Attorney Pfeiffer. “So we applaud Mayor Coleman for his efforts and look forward to working with him on this new initiative.”

On the surface, Evans’ article is about a program to demolish vacant homes.

However, there is a second story below the surface: urban poverty and the negligent property owners who caused this plight. Evans, then, really might be trying to select stories that made multiple points.

Similarly, *Gothamist* reporter John Del Signore continued reportage on the New York Police Department’s use of an anti-Islamic video during its training sessions in the Jan. 24, 2012, article “NYPD caught lying about Ray Kelly’s role in Anti-Islam propaganda film.” *The Village Voice* helped break the story on Jan. 19, 2011. While mainstream news organizations at times have a short attention span, the alternative press here demonstrated a willingness to cover a story or issue for a long period of time. Del Signore wrote,

We don’t want to *alarm* anyone, but it appears that NYPD spokesman Paul Browne has been caught in a fib. Or, as the NY Times generously puts it,

Browne suddenly “remembered” on Tuesday that what he remembered on Monday was not specifically too true! This blow to Browne’s sterling reputation for transparency came after the producer of an Islamophobic propaganda documentary proved that Commissioner Ray Kelly knowingly sat for an interview. This directly contradicts Browne’s earlier claim that Kelly’s appearance in the movie, called *The Third Jihad*, was culled from old interviews without the NYPD’s permission. So sorry to disillusion you.

Browne was questioned by the Times on Monday after The Brennan Center for Justice used the Freedom of Information Law to obtain documents related to the NYPD’s use of *The Third Jihad*. The movie first came to light in January 2011 after investigative reporter Tom Robbins published an expose about it in *The Village Voice*—at that time Paul Browne dismissed it as just a “wacky movie” that had only been shown “a couple of times when officers were filling out paperwork before the actual coursework began.” However, documents obtained by The Brennan Center show the film was screened for 68 lieutenants, 159 sergeants, 31 detectives and 1,231 patrol officers.

Such coverage performs the monitorial role in two ways. First, *Gothamist* and *The Village Voice* served the watchdog function by reporting about disturbing practices by the New York Police Department. Second, *Gothamist* was watching the watchdog by continuing to report the story long after its initial news cycle concluded. Tone also is important in this article. Del Signore called Browne’s words a “fib” while a *New York Times* writer simply stated that Browne had mis-“remembered.” Del Signore is critiquing a power structure in which the mainstream paper quotes a

government official verbatim without any critical analysis—in essence, serving as a stenographer instead of a watchdog.

The online alternative press publications often continued reporting and writing articles after the mainstream press had moved on to the next topic. The NYPD screening of an anti-Islam film is one example. Another example is the story of Terry Thompson, who released his exotic animals before committing suicide Oct. 18, 2011, on his farm near Zanesville, Ohio. The story made national news. However, *Columbus Free Press* reporter Bruce Bostick, in the Oct. 25, 2011, article “Animal killing in Ohio highlights needs for regulations!” focused less on the events of that night and more on the need for new legislation to make owning such animals illegal. The *Columbus Free Press*, here, is covering government actions—or inactions.

Bostick wrote,

In the aftermath of this past week’s tragic killing of 49 exotic animals, including 18 rare Bengal Tigers, in Zanesville, Ohio, Republican Governor Kasich and conservatives are scrambling, trying every way possible to put a right-wing spin on this calamity. Endangered wolves & monkeys were among the animals killed after their troubled owner, Terry Thompson, took his own life and released the animals. Six leopards were saved and a monkey is still unaccounted for. Reality, however, will just not spin that way.

Although professionals in handling exotic animals have been pushing for years for stronger regulations regarding ownership of these animals, an alliance of conservatives, libertarians, Republicans & NRA types have successfully blocked them. Ohio remains one of only seven states that require

no permits & have next to no regulations for the private ownership of exotic animals. Previous Governor Strickland had issued an executive order banning the purchase or boarding of exotic animals by anyone who'd been convicted of animal cruelty. Even this relatively mild measure was immediately canceled by new right-wing Gov. Kasich.

“These animals do not belong in people’s backyards, bedrooms or basements,” stated Wayne Pacelle (CEO, US Humane Society). “Private individuals cannot provide adequate care or security for these animals or the public.”

Desperately trying to put a better face on the disaster, Kasich issued a new executive order putting in place a task force to “study” the problem. Animal advocates were not optimistic of progress, however, as it was learned that two of the groups appointed to the task force are part of the exotic animal ownership lobby; Ohio Association of Animal Owners (OAAO) & the misleadingly named Zoological Association of America, which “accredits” so-called roadside “zoos.”

In addition to coverage of elections and government actions, the online alternative press also covered arts extensively and expansively. However, there was a major difference between the online alternative press and the underground and alternative newsweekly press: the amount of coverage about food and dining. One reason for the shift in cultural news is that food has replaced music and other arts as the new culture. For example, the Nov. 25, 2011, *Gothamist* article “Pizza shocker: Grimaldi’s is being replaced by the original Grimaldi” chronicled an upcoming food

war featuring one of New York City's most iconic pizza makers. Garth Johnston wrote,

What could be a classic pizza war is about to start brewing down under the Manhattan Bridge overpass! Last week we learned that the legendary Grimaldi's was moving around the corner from its longtime DUMBO space after a rent dispute with its landlord. The next day the Post talked to the landlord, who revealed he was keeping the restaurant's coal oven and promised a "very popular pizza establishment" would be moving in. Damn but he wasn't lying! Turns out that no less than 80-year-old pizza king Patsy Grimaldi is returning to the Brooklyn pizzeria where he made his name!

Thankfully for easily confused pizza fans (if less so for litigious lawyers), the new place will be called neither Grimaldi's or Patsy's. Instead the new pizzeria, opening in March 2012, will be named Juliana's after Grimaldi's late mother. So far this morning we've been unable to reach anyone at the restaurant Grimaldi's for comment, but the news of Juliana's has to be something of a shock: In 1998 Patsy Grimaldi sold his pizzeria to its current owner Frank Ciolli and apparently really regretted it. "A year after I sold Grimaldi's, I was very sorry," the pizzaiolo told The Post. So when [landlord] Mr. Waxman called me and asked if I wanted to come back, I thought I was dreaming. I couldn't say 'yes' fast enough."

Gothamist featured news articles about food and dining. However, the food coverage in the *Columbus Underground* did not read like editorial copy at all. Again,

culture was no longer synonymous with music and arts. Instead, foodies were the new cultural zeitgeists in the online alternative press. However, food coverage typically focused on commercial aspects instead of critiques on methods of food production and sustainability. For example, the March 31, 2012, article “Treat to try: Belle’s Bread’s Cream Puff” was an advertisement masquerading as editorial. Anne Evans wrote,

Dreaming of a perfect cream puff? Try one at Belle’s Bread, a Japanese bakery and café. The Cream Puff consists of a soft bread exterior, with a generous cavern of creamy vanilla custard with fresh whipped cream in the very center. The whole outside is dusted with powdered sugar. At only \$1.75 each, you could probably eat a few. I only tried one, but would have happily eaten another! They are about the size of the palm of your hand. If you enjoy Beard Papa cream puffs, these are very similar in style. Vanilla is the only flavor Belle’s Bread currently makes.

While food and dining were covered extensively in the online alternative press, other arts traditionally covered by the underground and alternative newsweekly press also received coverage. These arts included music, film, and fine art. However, the coverage tended to be different in the online alternative press. For example, in the Oct. 21, 2011, *Gothamist* article “Confirmed: *The Dark Knight* will film near Zuccotti Park for two weeks,” reporter Jen Carlson focused more on the interplay between Hollywood and Occupy Wall Street than the film itself. She wrote,

It seems like Christopher Nolan *will* be taking 1 percenter Bruce Wayne down to Zuccotti Park next week during the filming of *The Dark Knight Rises*,

or at least some of the cast. Earlier this week we heard that the director might be using the Occupy Wall Street protest in his new flick, though it will provide background atmosphere. Now the NY Times reports that the production will definitely be filming on Wall Street, just two blocks from Zuccotti Park.

Coverage of music also often included a twist. For example, the Jan. 24, 2012, *Gothamist* article “How many times can we say goodbye to CBGB?” was not about music but about an art show celebrating the legendary New York punk-rock venue. Reporter Jen Carlson wrote,

CBGB closed in 2006, but the wound is still open, apparently...because people are *still* saying goodbye. Those old punks just can't let go! We received a press release from Clic Gallery in SoHo about their upcoming Bruno Hadjadj show, called “Bye Bye CBGB,” which opens on January 30th. Instead of looking back at the glory days, however, the show focuses on the final 48 hours at the club.

Both of these articles connected politics and culture in a symbolic way. Culture is part of the day-to-day existence of most people, so connecting that culture—whether it is Batman or a seminal punk-rock club—to the politics of Occupy Wall Street or historical preservation might be natural. However, the online alternative press typically did not connect food, which is a necessary part of one's day-to-day existence, to politics.

Coverage of fine art tended less toward reviews and more toward profiles of the artist. *Columbus Underground* included a regular question-and-answer profile

with a Columbus artist. For example, in the Dec. 9, 2011, article “Local Artist Spotlight: Heather Wirth,” Walker Evans spotlighted the Columbus painter. In the introduction to the interview, he wrote,

It’s tough to put a definition on what makes someone a professional artist, but I believe that Heather Wirth embodies that definition with everything that she does. Trained at the Columbus College of Art & Design, Heather’s artwork is executed through oil painting. But her professionalism comes into place with a large range of other projects that she juggles. Heather is the founder of the Columbus Artmobile, a mobile educational course that brings local artists together with children of all ages to help fill the gap where art funding has been cut in schools. She is also one of the pioneer tenants at 400 West Rich Street in Franklinton and is now also working as the leasing agent for the building. And when we recently spoke to Heather for an interview, we learned that she still has a few more projects planned for the near future.

The online alternative press continued to cover many of the same topics—elections, government, arts—as the underground and alternative newsweekly press. However, coverage of issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation was virtually nonexistent in the online alternative publications analyzed in this study. The coverage was a contrast to the underground and the alternative newsweekly press, both of which extensively covered topics important to non-white, non-male, and non-heterosexual audiences. The disappearance of diversity issues in the online alternative press could have happened for many reasons. Online journalists might feel that these topics were no longer an issue or debate, or they might be attempting

to avoid controversial issues. Further, there are specific sites such as Grindr or Jezebel that serve specific communities, so journalists at *Gothamist* or *The Light of New Mexico* might feel that there is no need to cover the same topics. Finally, there might be a sense that readers of the *Columbus Underground*, for example, do not want to read articles about diversity topics.

Previous alternative media extensively covered gender issues. However, the online alternative press, those few times when gender issues were covered at all, tended to focus only on abortion rights. The emphasis on one issue without the link to a broader social movement could mean that the online alternative press is less facilitative and community centered than its predecessors. For example, in the Jan. 24, 2012, *Columbus Free Press* article “Roe turns 30: Columbus protests,” writer Marley Greiner reported on an anti-abortion rally at the Ohio Statehouse. Greiner wrote,

Monday marked the 30th anniversary of Roe v Wade. While most local anti-abortion big shots were doing their annual March for Life in Washington with accompanying photo ops, Greater Columbus Right to Life held down the fort here with a 45 minute rally on the steps of the Statehouse with few photo ops.

Except for me, Channel 10 appeared to be the only local media covering the event, but there’s nothing on the station’s news site. With Occupy Columbus camped out on the corner of S. High and E. State, I was imagining interesting possibilities, but the occupiers, unlike their Washington DC counterparts who disrupted a “youth event” held by anti-

abortion moguls Brian Kemper, Patrick Mahoney, Lila Rose and friends, decided to sit this one out.

I've attended several of these January outdoor events in the last few years. Usually, within 10 minutes my fingers, even in two pairs of gloves, are ready to call it off. This year, however, the temperature was in the lower 50s and the crowd knew it. About 175 adults and a couple dozen small children celebrated as Grove City State Rep and keynoter Cheryl Grossman (R H23) ran off a list of abortion-curbing bills that either passed last year or are now in the hopper. Ohio ProLife Action's Heartbeat Bill (HB 125), which aims to ban virtually all abortion in the state, got special props. While Ohio Right to Life and ProLife Ohio duke it out in the press and in the lobby, over turf, GCRTL and Grossman gave big hugs to the state organization and the ProLife Ohio break-offs.

While gender coverage was limited to abortion rights, issues of race were almost completely nonexistent in the five online publications analyzed. Sexual orientation was covered more fully, at least in the New York and Columbus publications. However, even positive articles tended to focus less on substantive political matters such as marriage for same-sex partners and more on travel and consumer items. For example, Garth Johnston, in the March 9, 2012, *Gothamist* article "Inside the Out: New York's first gay hotel," focused less on the opening of the hotel and more on its amenities. Johnston wrote,

After years of planning, New York's first gay hotel opened its night club XL at the end of January—so with the calendar reading March it was

about time that The Out NYC actually started taking guests. And now that day has come. But first, let's take a quick tour of the self-described gay hotel and nightlife entertainment complex!

Basically, it looks like your basic fancy hotel but with amenities focused on its hoped-for clientele (though they emphasize regularly that they are straight-friendly). The gym is very nice—and has a sauna—the bar is dark and sparkly, and mirrors are everywhere. Some features are still getting finished up (including one of the courtyards and the restaurant) but so far, so gay.

The deluxe rooms, which have 40" flatscreens, wifi, mp3 docking stations and views of the courtyard are currently going for an average of \$219 a night.

Similarly, the Nov. 24, 2011, *Columbus Underground* article "Columbus Named Top Gay Travel Destination of 2011" read more like a travel brochure than a news story. Reporter Walker Evans wrote,

Columbus was named earlier this month as The NewNowNext Destination of 2011, beating out global competition including Istanbul and St. Petersburg. Columbus was cited as a great place to visit due to both the college town aesthetic from OSU as well as the local nightlife scene, hipster culture and other amenities that would make for a great weekend trip.

So, tell your friends to start booking their plane tickets and hotel rooms and come visit Columbus soon.

Despite the advertisement feel of the news story, it might provide insight into the editorial mind of Evans. He does not mention Columbus as being gay-friendly in either of the first two paragraphs. Instead, he highlights the “college town aesthetic,” “local nightlife scene,” and “hipster culture.” This suggests that Evans, and possibly many other writers in his generation, believes that the issue of LGBT rights has been accepted and is no longer an issue.

No pretense of objectivity

The alternative press is by definition partisan (Atton, 2002), and it makes no claim that it is objective (Lewes, 2000) or neutral (Christians et al., 2009). That lack of objectivity often could be seen by wording and framing choices used in the online alternative publications analyzed. For example, the March 12, 2012, Adrien Chen article published in *Gawker* is framed by the headline “How the Stupid Idea of Using Homeless People as WiFi Hotspots Conquered South by Southwest.” Chen has framed the issue by the use of the words “stupid” and “conquered.” Chen continues to influence readers’ perceptions throughout the story by word choices such as “demon-spawn,” “app-addled SXSW-goers,” “outraged,” and “dumb.” Chen wrote,

As the awful demon-spawn of TED and a tech trade show, the South By Southwest Interactive Festival fetishizes good ideas—or at least what passes for ideas on Twitter. But the idea here that has attracted more attention than anything spouted by the many digital gurus and celebrity entrepreneurs on the mainstages has been a dumb one: Turning homeless people into wireless hotspots.

From the BBC to CNN and the LA Times, to every blog including this one, the entire internet is talking about how, as a “a charitable experiment,” New York ad agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty enlisted more than a dozen homeless Austin residents to carry wireless 4G hotspots, onto which app-addled SXSW-goers can log in and check into their esoteric social networks for a recommended donation of \$2 per 15 minutes, which goes directly to the ‘hotspot’ they’re using.

Many outraged commentators have pointed out, rightly, that Homeless Hotspots is a dumb gimmick that turns humans into walking pieces of hardware in the service of promoting BBH’s digital creative services—like a social media Bum Fights.

Even *New York Times* tech editor David Gallagher offered that the idea was “a little dystopian,” in the post that seems to have set off the whole controversy last night on a *Times*’ Tumblr dedicated to how fun SXSW is. The only thing I haven’t seen criticized about the Homeless Hotspots project is the download speeds.

Gawker again exhibited a lack of objectivity in the Feb. 14, 2012, article “McDonald’s Kindly Decides to Torture Mama Pigs Less (At Some Point).” Reporter Hamilton Nolan wrote,

Food simulacra purveyor McDonald’s has announced that it will “take actions” to “phase out” the use of gestational crates—tiny little pens for pregnant pigs that don’t allow the pregnant pigs to turn around for four months, fucking them up in all sorts of ways—among the company’s pork

suppliers. “There are alternatives that we think are better for the welfare of sows,” a McDonald’s executive said in a statement that was probably a real chuckle for pregnant pigs. “I’ll say!” said the tortured pigs with a good-natured laugh.

One expert tells the NYT that “no easy alternative to sow stalls existed because feeding pigs is complicated by their hierarchical nature.” False. You can stop eating pigs.

On February 13, 2012, the world’s best restaurant decided to maybe stop torturing mom pigs at some point in the future.

The article again is framed through word and phrase choices such as “torture,” “mama,” and “fucking them up.” Nolan does not even refer to McDonald’s as a restaurant, instead writing that it is a “Food simulacra purveyor.” Nolan’s article also is another example of food replacing arts as the dominant means of culture. His story also serves as the only example of a critique on methods of food production and sustainability.

Columbus Free Press reporter Albert A. Gabel also framed his Oct. 11, 2011, article through the use of words and phrases. The headline “Draconian Issue 3 would harm every Ohioan because of its intended and unintended consequences” framed the story as one of “draconian” measures that would “harm every Ohioan.” Gabel, however, did not stop there. He wrote,

The U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the Affordable Care Act will trump Issue 3 an Ohio Constitutional Amendment. So, Issue 3 will have no final effect. However, if you read the text of Issue 3 and the handout notes for my

seminars, you will see that Issue 3 would immediately harm every citizen of Ohio by preventing the improvement of the delivery, and increasing costs of health care. It is so ambiguous and broadly framed that it would result in much litigation which would be paid for by the tax payers.

The immediate devastating effect would be to invalidate needed laws and regulations passed since March 19, 2010, including the cost saving ones passed by the Kasich administration. Any needed in the future would also not go into effect. It would keep 1.5 million Ohioans, 135,325 of them children, from having medical insurance or health care until the U. S. Supreme Court ruling is made, and the provisions of the Affordable Care Act from going into effect as scheduled. It would interfere with the use of new vaccines, prevent the keeping and sharing records of new diseases, licensing changes of care givers and cause many other problems.

Word choices such as “immediately harm,” “preventing the improvement,” “ambiguous and broadly framed,” “devastating,” “interfere,” and “prevent” are used as a signal to readers that they should not support this piece of legislation.

Partisanship also was demonstrated by an encouragement of social participation. For example, in the Nov. 10, 2011, *Columbus Free Press* article “Building on Defeating Issue 2,” reporter Robert A. Letcher wrote,

Chalk one up for everyday people. By defeating Issue 2, we beat back Governor Kasich’s Koch-funded massive attack on social and labor relations. It’s a major win, worthy of celebrating, but only for a couple days. Then, we MUST go back to organizing.

That's because of three facts of political life. One is, power cannot be bottled for later use: Use it, or lose it. Another is, Koch's inherited billions can be saved for later use: That's what banks and accountants are for. Finally, as the late US Senator, Everett Dirksen memorably observed: "A billion here and a billion there, and pretty soon you've got BIG MONEY."

Finally, a lack of objectivity was demonstrated, at least by one publication, by editorial advertisers for major sponsors. *Gothamist* published a weekly post titled "Thanks to This Week's Advertisers." For example, the March 16, 2012, issue featured a list of advertisers including:

BBC America No Kitchen Required. Series premiere - April 3 @ 10 p.m.

NYC Quits. Nicotine Patch and Gum Giveaway until March 16.

You the Man. Drinking and driving don't mix. Be the man - be the designated driver.

NY Art Expo. March 22-26 @ Pier 92.

How About We, for people who understand that you don't date online.

American Apparel, with 25 stores in NYC, you can look your best at anytime.

Alternative publications, like their mainstream counterparts, do face economic and commercial pressures. Many underground newspapers ignored advertisers or were ignored by them. Alternative newsweeklies tended to have a more commercial motive, with publishers attempting to match upscale readers with niche-market products (Gibbs, 2003; Peck, 1998; Armstrong, 1981). The online alternative press, at least in the case of *Gothamist*, has taken this commercial motive to a new level, thanking its advertisers in editorial copy.

The use of sources

Sourcing by online publications took one of two forms. The first was the exclusive use of official sources. For example, the Dec. 22, 2011, *Columbus Underground* article “Columbus Historical Society Moving Into COSI,” was about one cultural institution, the historical society, moving into and sharing space with another cultural institution, the science center. *Columbus Underground* writer Anne Evans only interviewed two people: Jeffrey H. Lafever, the executive director of the Columbus Historical Society, and David E. Chesebrough, the president and CEO of COSI. Evans did not interview any employees or patrons who would be affected by the move.

The other type of sourcing was for a publication to allocate space on its website to a dissident group. For example, on Dec. 17, 2011, *The Light of Santa Fe* published a position paper by the Occupy Santa Fe movement. Under the headline “Occupy Santa Fe Takes Step into Politics With Position Paper,” *The Light of Santa Fe* published the position paper. It read, in part,

This paper specifies that “money is not speech” and calls for the end to legal bribery of elected officials. The Position Paper calls for a Constitutional Amendment or legislation, specifying that, “Corporations and Business Associations are prohibited from donating...to any elected or selected officials...or anyone running for such office.” Occupy Santa Fe calls on Occupy Albuquerque, Occupy Los Cruces and Occupy Taos and all other Occupy movements in New Mexico to adopt this or an equivalent position and pressure their elected officials to pass legislation to “take the money out of

politics” on both the state and federal level.

The Round House Working Group of Occupy Santa Fe supports a statewide campaign to implement the position taken by the Occupy Santa Fe General Assembly on Dec. 9. On the state level, Occupy Santa Fe calls for Representative Brian F. Egolf to reintroduce House Bill 154 from the 2011 Legislature or introduce an equivalent bill, which would not allow corporations “to expend money to influence the outcome of any state, county or local election.” Alan Hoffman, an Occupy Santa Fe participant, said, “Momentum is building with the actions of Los Angeles, Albany, Cleveland and others cities to limit the rights of corporations and return democracy to the people.”

The Occupy article is one example where an online alternative publication developed or opened access of a media space to a dissident group. However, such examples were extremely rare. Official sources were quoted with much more frequency in the online alternative press than in the underground or alternative newsweekly press. This use of official sources suggests that the online alternative press typically was not attempting to give media access to dissident groups but instead was following the “objective” norms of the mainstream media.

Tone

Articles about sex and drugs were virtually nonexistent in the online alternative press. This was a major departure from both the underground press and the alternative newsweekly press, both of which spent considerable space on sex

and drugs. However, in the few instances where drug-related issues were covered, the online alternative press—like the underground and alternative press—framed the issue with a pro-drug, or at least anti-drug-enforcement, angle. For example, in the Feb. 2, 2012, *Gothamist* article “Drug-planting cop cries at sentencing, avoids jail,” Ben Yakas wrote,

The Brooklyn South narcotics detective who was convicted of planting drugs on a woman and her boyfriend was sentenced to five years’ probation and 300 hours of community service. Former cop Jason Arbeeney, a 14-year NYPD veteran, was previously found guilty of eight counts of falsifying records and official misconduct for planting drugs on innocent suspects—a crime he claimed he did in order to reach quotas. Arbeeney broke down in tears at his sentencing today: “I can’t look at myself in the mirror anymore,” Arbeeney told Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Gustin Reichbach. “Sir, I am begging you, please don’t send me to jail.”

Arbeeney tearfully apologized to his victims: “My oath went down the window, my pride went out the window,” he said. And Reichbach was moved by his tears: “I came into court this morning determined that the nature of this crime requires some jail time,” he said. “I frankly didn’t expect the defendant, at the 11th hour, to be making these claims.” Arbeeney, who mentioned that his young son is in therapy after threatening suicide over his father’s fate, was facing up to four years in prison.

Arbeeney had been found guilty of “flaking”—planting a twist of crack under a car seat during a Coney Island bust in January 2007—and for

doctoring paperwork to make the arrest last. Altogether, “flaking” has reportedly cost the city \$1.2 million to settle cases of false arrests.

Sex and drugs were a major component of both the underground and the alternative newsweekly press. Both were used as a way to differentiate the alternative from the mainstream, both in terms of journalism and audience. However, the online alternative press barely reported on issues surrounding sex or drugs. This lack of coverage could mean that the online reporters are less likely than underground or alternative newsweekly journalists to cover controversial topics, or it could mean that sex and drugs are now so commonplace that both are considered mainstream, thus needing less attention in the online alternative press.

Efforts at community building

Community building in the online alternative press was almost exclusively at the niche or interest level. For example, in the Feb. 22, 2012, *Columbus Underground* article “Is Community Supported Agriculture, a CSA, for me,” writer Anne Evans reported on a way for people in the community to eat locally without going to a weekly farmer’s market. The article also serves as another example of food becoming dominant in culture, replacing music and arts. Evans wrote,

If you enjoy eating local produce, but don’t necessarily like the hustle and bustle at Farmer’s Markets, you may consider signing up for a CSA. A CSA is a program many local farms throughout Ohio offer to the community.

Essentially you are buying a share in the farm and providing the farmers with money to get their crops going, or their animals bred. You pick up your share

at designated pick up locations, or you may have your share delivered to your home.

When you sign up for a CSA, you are signing into the risks that all small farmers face—bad weather or insect damage, as well as the rewards—plentiful harvests and bumper crops. You may even have the option of helping out with the farm work.

There are many CSAs that service the Columbus area. Most are vegetable shares, some offer flowers, meats, eggs, and fruit. Some even offer delivery of coffee beans, Snowville milk products, soaps, syrups, and jams.

Similarly, the Feb. 14, 2012, *Columbus Free Press* article “Ohio Students Form Student Association, Call on Others to Organize” is written for a local audience. Stuart McIntyre wrote,

Higher education is changing. University administrations are budget cutting, privatizing, power consolidating, and tuition hiking. In Ohio, we’re facing the prospect of charterization of our public colleges through the enterprise university plan, and a larger trend of corporatization of our public educational institutions.

The university is a point of struggle: the future will be decided here. If we want a free, fair, democratic society, then our universities must reflect that. Right now, universities mirror broader society, and reflect the inequality, injustice, and concentration of power that threatens our democracy. If we don’t come together as students, and demand not just a voice, but an instrumental role in shaping the institutions we live in and pay

for, then business will continue as usual, and 4-year public education will become 4-year corporate job-training. If the last 30 years have taught us anything, it's that policy change requires people power. To make higher education more accessible and diverse, more inclusive and democratic; to make it affordable, and to lift the crushing burden of debt off of our shoulders: we need student power.

Higher education and affordable, healthy food are two issues that could bridge communities. Underground press writers often tried to communicate with each other through the underground press, creating a sense of a national community of like-minded, countercultural individuals who were doing the same types of things (McMillian, 2011; Armstrong, 1981). However, there was no indication in the online alternative publications analyzed that the writers were trying to communicate with each other or trying to connect with a nationwide community.

This lack of nationwide communication was true even when there was a national movement such as Occupy Wall Street that galvanized a counterculture community. The online alternative press extensively covered Occupy movements, but there was little to no connection between the movements from city to city. For example, the Jan. 26, 2012, *The Light of New Mexico* article "An open letter to Occupy Santa Fe" made no mention of Occupy movements in other cities (although the website did publish a Dec. 17, 2011 position paper from Occupy Santa Fe, and that position paper did call on other New Mexican Occupy movements to create similar documents). The unnamed journalist wrote,

The Internet has several reports tonight on the incident last night in the bar and restaurant at the Eldorado Hotel.... I was not there, and I may not know the full story. But even if some legislators and hotel security got physical with videographer Lisa Law or other protesters or photographers, I think the net result is a black eye (pun intended, but not with good humor) for Occupy Santa Fe. Provoking violence, throwing things, and injuring an innocent person from irresponsible civil disobedience are exactly the fodder that the forces on the right and the mainstream media are waiting for to discredit the movement; these individuals played right into their hands.

Similarly, in the Oct. 20, 2011, *Gothamist* article "Occupy Wall Street wants you to bring your kids to Zuccotti Park for a sleepover tomorrow," Ben Yakas does not mention similar events that were happening around the United States. Yakas wrote,

Occupy Wall Street protesters have been hard at work trying to capture the hearts and minds of the middle class, Middle America, and mid-level talk show hosts. But now it seems they're turning their attentions toward a block with slightly less voting power: children. Tomorrow, there will be a Family Sleepover at Zuccotti Park for the sake of "our children's futures."

The event, hosted by Parents For Occupy Wall Street, will take place from 4 p.m., Friday until 11 a.m. the following Saturday morning. It was supposed to happen last Friday, except a little stand-off with the NYPD and a last minute cleaning cram got in the way.

Yakas mentions Middle America, yet he does not try to make a connection between Occupy Wall Street and other Occupy movements throughout the country. The underground press attempted to build local counterculture communities, and then link those local communities into a larger, national movement. The alternative newsweekly press also attempted community building, although the focus was local with little effort to link the local communities into a national movement. Here, *Gothamist* is reporting on a community-building effort but is not engaging in community building itself. A possible explanation why is that the niche nature of online publications bonds niche communities without any effort to bring together disparate members of the community (Norris, 2002).

Oppositional relationship to mainstream media

The coverage of local and national media figures and organizations by the online alternative press was more biting and scathing, even in comparison to similar coverage by the underground press and the alternative newsweekly press. For example, in the March 27, 2012, *Gawker* article “Geraldo Rivera non-apologizes, still blames ‘Gangsta Hoodie’ for Trayvon’s death,” Leah Beckmann reported on the television host’s Twitter apology to “anyone he may have offended.” Beckmann wrote,

Geraldo Rivera has issued an apology for his insane yammerings on how the hooded sweatshirt Trayvon Martin was wearing “is as much responsible for [his] death as George Zimmerman was.” Responding to the

firestorm reaction his comments elicited, Rivera apologized last night via Twitter—in the worst, infuriatingly half-assed way a person can apologize....

Rivera again extended his “heartfelt apology” to anyone he may have offended in his “crusade to warn minority families of the danger to their young sons inherent in gangsta style clothing; like hoodies.” LIKE HOODIES.

The dreaded gangsta hoodie that is still, apparently, to blame for the tragedy. This article actually serves many purposes. In addition to voicing an oppositional voice to national broadcast journalists such as Rivera, Beckmann also highlights the issue of race—one of the rare instances when a race issue was broached in the online alternative press—in a way that was not being covered fully by other media organizations. She also presents an in-group versus out-group dynamic, with the in-group being those who find Rivera and his statements more offensive and inflammatory than heartfelt and apologetic.

Similarly, *Columbus Free Press* reporter Marley Greiner wrote about a Columbus appearance by former Fox pundit Glenn Beck in the Nov. 5, 2011, article “Hangin’ with Glenn Beck so you don’t have to: More Ohio Right to Life escapades.” Greiner wrote,

When he was at Fox, Beck had time constrictions. With a live performance, anything goes. Obviously orchestrated and staged with chalkboard, Beck nevertheless gave the appearance of running on pen-ended stream of consciousness boosted by a couple hits of Adderall.

Beck came out the gate running, telling the crowd of about 2,400 that he is not political. “I’ve gone so far beyond politics,” he assured us with

evangelical vigor. The audience responded with excessive applause.

Beck implored us to “follow where your heart is.” To find our “complete life.” Instead of following our hearts, though, for the next hour and a half we followed Pilgrim Beck’s dark heart through a murky maze of clichés, platitudes, and God talk between monologues on early 20th century progressivism, collectivism, eugenics, history, and a short apology for his former life as a drunk.

Despite Beck’s promise that he’s “beyond politics,” he vented on everything from the Arab Spring (bad) to Israel (good). He told us that he’d “dragged” his wife on three trips to Israel this year. One jaunt included a side trip to Auschwitz. He gave us his firsthand but foggy account of gas chambers, ovens, and a life-changing experience that had something to do with God and the United States.

Major television personalities were not the only people in the crosshairs of the online alternative press. *Gothamist* writer Jen Chung reported on media mogul, and mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg in the March 5, 2012, article “Bloomberg not on Bloomberg’s Millionaires Index!” Chung wrote,

Bloomberg News published its first Bloomberg Billionaires Index—and its founder, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, is nowhere to be found! Probably because his net worth is estimated to be in the \$20 billion range. The biggest billionaire is Carlos Slim, the Mexican mobile phone mogul (and NY Times lender), whose net worth is \$68.5 billion; number two on the list is Bill Gates (\$62.4 billion) and Warren Buffett (\$43.8 billion). And the richest European?

Ingvar Kamprad, whose IKEA empire has given him a fortune of over \$40 billion.

In the Oct. 23, 2011, *Gawker* article “*New York Times* Issues First ‘Angry Birds’-Related Correction,” reporter Seth Abramovitch wrote,

In her *New York Times Sunday Book Review* critique of the hottest book on the planet, Walter Isaacson’s 630-page biography, *Steve Jobs*, Janet Maslin quotes a passage in which the author extolls the triumph that is the iPad, as well as the tens of thousands of apps that can run on it. “One that he mentions,” Maslin writes, “which will be as quaint as ‘Pong’ some day, features the use of a slingshot to shoot down angry birds.”

A correction appeared later on the *New York Times* website:

Correction: October 22, 2011: An earlier version of this article incorrectly stated the premise of “Angry Birds,” a popular iPhone game. In the game, slingshots are used to launch birds to destroy pigs and their fortresses, not to shoot down the birds.

Ohhh. That “Angry Birds.” Yes, it no doubt will be one day compared to “Pong,” a primitive video game in which a large ape knocks airplanes out of the sky with empty rum barrels.

The joke, of course, was that a large ape knocking airplanes out of the sky with empty rum barrels was not the premise of “Pong.” Maslin’s attempt to use a pop-culture reference, Abramovitch suggests, fell flat because she is not cool enough to understand what she is talking about in terms of today’s youth culture. This is another example of in-group versus out-group dynamics. The out-group here were

those such as Maslin who are not hip enough to know the basics of the game “Angry Birds.”

Positive coverage of other media was limited almost exclusively to other forms of alternative publications. For example, in the Oct. 1, 2011, *The Light of Santa Fe* article “New ‘stand up’ newspaper debuts,” an unnamed writer reports on a new cooperative newspaper premiering in Santa Fe. The reporter wrote,

A new “stand up” newspaper, New Mexico Broadside, made its first appearance in Santa Fe today. A limited number of laminated copies will initially be placed in locations such as coffee houses and bookstores. They will be tethered to a stand where readers can read them in place.

With a tag line of “News that hits you right between the eyes,” “Editor and Anchor” Judith Lawson described it in an editorial as follows:

“We the people have founded The Broadside as a co-operative, as a very old/very new form of newspaper directly descended from The Declaration of Independence, as a newspaper with the lightest of carbon footprints and the strongest of voices. The Fearless Five — Joni Arends, David Bacon, Judith Lawson, Mark Sardella and Robin Seydel — have done this with the slimmest of budgets and with no intention of soliciting commercial advertising. The Broadside will live or die by your generosity and your backing, issue by issue, twice a month. Contact us for information at nmbroadside.wordpress.com.

“This is a ‘stand up’ newspaper. We hope you will read it in the vertical posture of readiness for action because that is our whole aim: to

motivate you to act in your own interests and thus in the interest of all that is sacred and alive. Make no mistake — you are needed! The Broadside is tethered for a reason. We want you to leave it for a lot of other readers. Go to our website for the longer stories, for deep-gullet investigative reporting and for links to our kindred-spirit websites.”

Here, *The Light of Santa Fe* is highlighting a community-building newspaper that is trying to supply yet another alternative voice to the mainstream Santa Fe media.

The five online publications analyzed for this study had many similarities, as well as many differences, with the underground and alternative newsweekly publications in their respective cities. The Columbus and Santa Fe websites covered local and statewide politics with more of an emphasis on the legislative actions that helped shape campaigns than on the campaigns themselves. The New York websites, in contrast, focused more on national elections than on local or statewide elections. Despite differences in scope, each of the online publications was performing the monitorial role by seeking out and retransmitting material that could aid readers in election decisions. Further, each online news site was not limited to the space constraints of its underground and alternative newsweekly predecessors. For example, the *Columbus Underground* ran a series of in-depth interviews with eight City Council candidates, something that would have been very difficult to do in newsprint. Here, the *Columbus Underground* might have been performing a facilitative role by sparking dialog between potential voters. In addition to election coverage, the five websites also monitored the day-to-day workings of government and elected officials. For example, *Gothamist* continued to report on the New York

Police Department's anti-Islamic training video. *Gothamist* was performing the monitorial role, watching both the police department and the mainstream press, which had broke the original story but did not continue following it one year later.

Arts coverage was a major component of both the underground and alternative newsweekly press. Culture is a part of a person's everyday life. However, the culture had changed in the online alternative press toward food and dining coverage and away from music and arts. When music and arts were covered (such as the Batman and CBGB articles), they often were symbolically connected to politics. The coverage of race, gender, and sexual orientation also has changed. Diversity issues were once covered extensively in the underground and alternative newsweekly press, but such coverage was virtually nonexistent in the online press. This lack of coverage might be because these topics were considered no longer an issue or debate by the online journalists, these journalists might have attempted to sidestep or ignore controversial issues, these websites did not need to cover such material because niche audiences were having their informational needs served by other websites, or there might be a feeling that online audiences did not care to read about diversity issues. Similarly, the tone of the online alternative press was much different than that of the underground and alternative newsweekly press. The use of expletives, as well as references to sex and drugs, were almost nonexistent. One reason might be that the online alternative press is less likely than its predecessors to cover controversial topics. However, a second reason might be the sex, drugs, and four-letter words are now mainstream, unable to shock the authority structure

while gaining more mainstream coverage and thus needing less coverage in the alternative press.

A lack of objectivity continued in the online alternative press. This could be seen in the provocative word choices used to frame articles. For example, the words “stupid,” “app-addled,” and “demon-spawn” were used in the *Gawker* article “How the Stupid Idea of Using Homeless People as WiFi Hotspots Conquered South by Southwest.” This also could be seen in encouragement toward social participation, such as the *Columbus Free Press* article “Building on Defeating Issue 2.” Finally, there was a lack in objectivity in editorial copy serving as advertisements for sponsors, such as *Gothamist’s* weekly “Thanks to This Week’s Advertisers” post. The first two examples could be seen as a continuation of the editorial stances of the alternative newsweekly and, especially, underground press. The latter, however, is a continuation away from the radical roots of the underground press and toward extreme commercialization. The use of sources was at times radical and at other times consistent with the mainstream press. Some articles exclusively relied on official sources. Such use is inconsistent with previous literature, which suggested that one major aim of a radical press is to provide media space for dissident groups. The use of official sources also could be seen as an attempt to adhere to objectivity (Mindich, 1998) because audiences see these sources as more authoritative and credible. However, at times, an online publication would allot space on its website to a dissident group, such as when *The Light of New Mexico* published a position paper by Occupy Santa Fe.

Efforts at community building was the biggest difference between the online alternative press and its predecessors. The underground press attempted to build local communities and then connect those communities to a larger, national movement. The alternative newsweekly press abandoned the national movement and instead focused heavily on building local communities. The online alternative press, however, attempted to bond individuals with similar interests without trying to bridge those communities at a national or even local level. Instead, members of niche groups such as sustainable agriculture or the local Occupy movement could communicate to each other without finding like-minded, countercultural individuals doing the same types—although not necessarily the *exact* same types—of things.

CONCLUSIONS: A GOOD NEWSPAPER, I SUPPOSE,
IS A NATION TALKING TO ITSELF¹

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of the role of the alternative press and to inquire about whether such a press was moving online. Specifically, the researcher sought to further the understanding of the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the predominant roles of the alternative press in U.S. history with a particular emphasis on recent U.S. history?

RQ2: How is the alignment between the alternative press and mainstream press balanced?

RQ3: What conventions and norms of writing and story selection in the alternative press contribute to an alternative idea of politics and culture?

And, finally, how does all of this allow scholars to understand the evolution of role in a particular segment of the American media landscape?

Political coverage in the alternative press remained fairly consistent through the evolution from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press to the online alternative press. However, the coverage of culture changed significantly between the three eras. To gain a better understanding of these similarities and differences, it is important to see the narrative arc from the underground press to the alternative newsweekly press to the online alternative press.

¹ Arthur Miller, *The Observer*, Nov. 26, 1961.

Politically, underground journalists and publications performed the radical, monitorial, facilitative, and collaborative roles of the press. The key component of the underground press was the attempt to connect counterculture communities spread throughout the United State into a national counterculture movement that could radically rebuild society. Content and story selection demonstrated the monitorial role by focusing on election coverage, government and quasi-government activities, diversity issues, and arts. The underground press was trying to accomplish radical change, and these attempts were recognized and reinforced by government attempts to harass or shut down publications. In addition to monitoring power, the underground press also monitored the mainstream press, the supposed watchdog of power. Underground journalists did not conform to journalistic norms such as objectivity, and often criticized the mainstream press for its adherence to the concept. Previous researchers defined objectivity as a process, the opposite of partisanship, or a belief that one can and should separate facts from values. In the alternative press, however, objectivity was defined as the search for truth, with the understanding that is impossible, as well as morally and politically wrong, to separate objective facts from values. The use of expletives, as well as references to sex and drugs, were used to differentiate the counterculture and its press from the mainstream and its media. The tone and non-objective reporting of underground journalists and publications point toward a collaborative role with counterculture communities at the institutional level. Underground journalists were not removed from their stories. Instead, there was an attempt for journalists to collaborate with

dissidents—both individually and collectively—attempting to reconstruct American society in the image of the 1960s counterculture movements.

There were three major differences between the underground and alternative newsweekly papers analyzed. The first was a calming of rhetoric in the alternative newsweekly press. Alternative newsweekly journalists were unlikely, or at least less likely, to call for a radical transformation of society and societal norms than their underground predecessors. A change in rhetoric was necessary for the alternative newsweekly press to be taken seriously by mainstream culture, and, thus, to spread the alternative counterculture's message to a larger audience. Underground press journalists called for a radical transformation of society, but this message quite possibly was lost because journalists were writing to their in-group instead of attempting to deliver their message to the larger out-group. The reticence of alternative newsweekly journalists to call for radical social change could be seen both in the selection and the reporting of stories. Second, the alternative newsweekly publications engaged in a one-way pattern of communication with their readers, whereas the underground press was more likely to engage in a two-way pattern of communication. Third, the alternative newsweeklies studied were more mainstream in terms of sources, language, and a more objective tone. The consistent use of official sources was surprising because it mirrored sourcing in the mainstream newspapers to a large larger extent than anticipated. Such sourcing is problematic because the alternative newsweekly press, as a component of the radical media, would be expected to open media access to dissidents and protest groups on their terms. Instead, the people, groups, and institutions that already had

media access in mainstream publications were given even more media access in alternative newsweekly publications, while those who were shut out of the mainstream media often were also shut out of the alternative newsweekly press. This mainstreaming of the alternative newsweekly press meant that there was a less hostile relationship between the alternative newsweeklies and government and quasi-government officials. These three alternative newsweeklies, however, did share many similarities with the underground press, such as unique content and story selection, use of non-official sources, tone, efforts at community building on the local if not national level, and an oppositional relationship with the mainstream media.

There was a major change in terms of role between the underground and alternative newsweekly press. The alternative newsweeklies were more likely to cover local issues than broad social movements. There also was a major change in terms of community between the underground and alternative newsweekly press. The underground papers attempted to build local communities, and then tie those local communities together to form a larger, national movement. The alternative newsweekly press, however, cut those national ties by concentrating coverage at the local level with little to no effort at connecting those local communities to a national social movement.

The online alternative publications continued to perform the monitorial role, especially in terms of election and government coverage. However, there was an inconsistency in terms of scope. The New York websites tended to cover national politics while the Columbus and Santa Fe websites almost exclusively covered local

and statewide politics. The online alternative publications also could have been performing the facilitative role by sparking dialog between candidates and potential voters. This was especially true when the *Columbus Underground* ran a series of in-depth candidate interviews. The question-and-answer format allowed the candidates to speak to voters with very little media framing. However, the series was not a real dialog because there the actual communication was between the reporter and the candidates, not the candidates and the public. The online alternative publications also continued to monitor the mainstream press. For example, *Gothamist* continued to report on the New York Police Department's anti-Islamic training video long after most news organizations had stopped following the story. The monitorial role, however, often was accompanied by a lack of objectivity. This lack of objectivity could be seen in the provocative word choices used to frame articles, and in the encouragement toward social participation. Both word choice and encouragement of social movement is consistent with the underground and alternative newsweekly press. However, the online alternative press also tended to be more commercialized than the underground and alternative newsweekly press. For example, *Gothamist* thanked its advertisers each week with editorial copy serving as advertisements for sponsors. This was a far cry from the relationship between the underground press and its advertisers. Rita Mae Brown wrote in the Feb. 9, 1970 issue of *Rat* that women were more than sexual objects. Only 42 years later, *Gothamist* is thanking American Apparel, a company that promotes its "alternative" clothing in highly suggestive ads featuring barely dressed young women.

Diversity issues were once covered extensively in the underground and alternative newsweekly press. However, coverage of race, gender, and sexual orientation was virtually nonexistent in the online alternative press. Similarly, the use of expletives, as well as references to sex and drugs, was virtually nonexistent in the online alternative press, a major change from the underground and alternative newsweekly press. Alternative publications historically have written about the issues and movements that the mainstream media have ignored. However, the online alternative press is ignoring issues that could be pertinent to its non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual readers. Real discussions about race, gender, and sexual orientation need to occur, but the online alternative press is failing to spark those discussions. The use of sources in the online alternative press was inconsistent. Some articles exclusively relied on the official sources, while, at other times, an online publication would allot space on its website to a dissident group. The space allocation to dissident groups does fulfill a need in the news ecology. However, the heavy reliance on official sources does not. The mainstream press does an adequate job of providing media access to official sources. The alternative press, in contrast, best performs its role by providing media access to other voices, and that access largely is not being provided by the online alternative press.

The two biggest differences between the online alternative press and its predecessors were efforts at community building and coverage of culture events. The underground press attempted to build local communities and then connect those communities to a national social movement. The alternative newsweekly press focused almost exclusively on building local communities without attempting

to build a national movement. The online alternative press attempted to bond individuals based on similar interests instead of building communities at the local or national level. The online alternative press would best fulfill its community-building function by bridging groups of disparate members of the community, but it largely only reinforces established bonded groups of people who share similar backgrounds and beliefs (Norris, 2002). Segmentation allowed members of niche groups to communicate with one another through the online alternative press without forming local or national communities. Community building through facilitation and collaboration was a major role conceptualization in the underground and alternative newsweekly press. However, that community-building role was a major failure in the online alternative press.

Cultural coverage also changed in the online alternative press. The underground press covered then-controversial arts such as rock and roll, and often provided a differing voice in reviews such as *Kramer vs. Kramer* and *Deer Hunter*. Culture, here, became part of an alternative vision. The alternative newsweekly press also extensively covered music, art, and film. However, the online alternative press covered largely steered away from music and arts and toward food and dining. This coverage, though, tended to focus on commercial aspects of food instead of issues such as food production and sustainability.

To summarize, the underground press conceived of community of two levels. The first was local, where like-minded, typically counterculture individuals could communicate with each other. The second was national, where these local communities could interact and form a broad social movement aimed at radically

rebuilding society. The alternative newsweekly press abandoned attempts to form such a national social movement. Instead, the concentration was on the local level, with coverage of local politics and culture. The online alternative press went further, abandoning, to a large extent, both the national and local community-building initiatives. Instead, these websites attempted to bond individuals based on similar niche interests with little to no effort given to connecting these niche groups into a local or national community.

The underground, alternative newsweekly, and online alternative press consistently covered politics. The underground press focused on election coverage, government and quasi-government activities, and issues involving race, gender, and sexual orientation. The alternative newsweekly press covered the same topics and issues, but with a less radical rhetorical style. The online alternative press also covered elections and government activities, both at the local and national level, depending on location. However, there was not as much emphasis on diversity issues.

Cultural coverage was vastly different in the three media. The music coverage in the underground press tended to focus on new artists or genres, whether that was rock and roll in the 1960s or hip-hop in the 1980s. This coverage also addressed diversity issues, such as the rise of hip-hop in predominantly black communities and the plight of women rockers. Movie coverage tended to add a different voice or frame to the discussion about a film. The alternative press tended to cover the same types of arts as the underground press. Music, nightlife and the bar scene, arts, books, and movies dominated coverage. The major shift occurred in

the online alternative press. Its coverage largely focused on food and dining instead of music and arts. Culture is political because it is ordinary. Food is political because it is essential. However, the online alternative press focused less on the politics of food production and sustainability and more on commercialization and consumerism. Such a focus certainly would negate the radical role.

The story of the alternative press is one of both change and consistency. Political coverage has remained relatively consistent, with the underground, alternative newsweekly, and online alternative press monitoring the day-to-day activities of government institutions, as well as local, state, and national elections. Cultural coverage has changed dramatically. The underground and alternative newsweekly press covered music and arts extensively, while the online alternative press focused more on arts and dining. Further, arts coverage tended also to serve political ends in the underground and alternative newsweekly press, while food coverage was more commercial and less political in the online alternative press. Community building was very different in the three eras. The underground press attempted to build both local and national social movements. The alternative newsweekly press focused on local issues with no larger, national connections. The online alternative press segmented audiences into interest areas with little to no attempt to connect those communities.

The alternative press in these three eras does offer a different rhetorical vision than that presented by the mainstream press. This vision is more radical, while also maintaining the monitorial, facilitative, and collaborative roles of the media. The alternative media has changed and evolved throughout the past 50

years. However, by looking longitudinally, one can see an alternative vision that stretches beyond the individual eras.

Dicken-Garcia (1989) suggested that the alternative press historically has been ahead of its times. The findings could then have practical applications for mainstream journalists. These journalists might gain a better understanding that they simultaneously perform the monitorial, facilitative, collaborative, and even radical roles. Further, mainstream journalists might gain a better understanding of the significance of culture in community and politics.

This research has three limitations.

First, the study was focused on the underground press, alternative newsweekly press, and online alternative press in three cities. A broader and larger sample size in the study would be necessary to determine if the results could be generalized to the entire current and historical alternative press. The alternative press is intensely geographically based. The concerns in Iowa or Georgia are very different than the concerns in New York, Ohio, and New Mexico, and each publication reflects its community. However, the alternative publications in New York, Columbus, and Santa Fe are similar to the other alternative media in most respects exclusive of geography, although regional differences might be quite large.

Second, characteristics of the alternative press were expressed in the literature, and the researcher sought publications that contained these characteristics. Such defining and then seeking especially was true in the online alternative press. This could be problematic because, as researchers, decisions about what to look for might determine what data ultimately is found. However, the

limitation also could be seen as an advantage. Finding differences between the online alternative publications analyzed and their underground and alternative newsweekly predecessors could be seen as even more pronounced because the researcher was attempting to find online publications that were characteristically similar to other forms of alternative media in their cities.

Third, the study, especially the underground press historical analysis, might have been hampered by an incompleteness of available data. For example, the researcher analyzed 74 underground publications in New York, five in Columbus, and two in Santa Fe. These 81 publications most likely were just an abridged sample of the breadth and depth of underground publications published in those cities from the 1960s-1980s. Further, many titles only included one or two issues of a paper that published for several years. While all available publications were analyzed, many underground papers have been lost to history due to a lack of preservation. Unfortunately, the same thing is happening again with some alternative newsweeklies. For example, *The Other Paper* archives are housed in hard-copy form in the paper's offices. A fire or other property damage could mean that the history of a longstanding alternative voice in Columbus politics and culture could be lost forever. The online alternative analysis also could suffer from an incompleteness of data. The online world is large and diverse. While the researcher consulted with people in all three cities to determine the most appropriate websites to analyze, several other online publications could have been considered for inclusion. Many of the online publications considered, however, did not maintain active archives, so there would have been no way to analyze past articles.

In addition to the two limitations mentioned, there is an inherent limitation to qualitative research. Three factors can detract from the credibility of qualitative research: completeness of the data, selective perception, and reactivity (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983). This study's credibility and validity were improved through the use of low-inference descriptors and reflexivity. Low-inference descriptors are the use of description closely phrased to the participants' accounts and researchers' notes (Johnson, 1997). Reflexivity is the researchers' use of self-awareness and critical self-reflection on potential biases and predispositions that may affect the research process and conclusions (Johnson, 1997).

Contributions to normative theory

Normative theory traditionally has been conceptualized in terms of politics and political discourse (Christians et al., 2009; Nerone, 1995; Dewey, 1954). Several scholars have theorized that the primary role of the media is to supply the information needed for citizens to make informed voting decisions and to monitor the activities of government institutions (Dewey, 1954). Indeed, one critique of the commercialized nature of the mainstream media is that a press beholden to corporate interests cannot and does not serve the informational needs that a public must have to participate fully in a democracy (McChesney, 1999). So, readers are left with noncontroversial news such as celebrity gossip instead of substantial news relating to their elected and nonelected leaders and the day-to-day functioning of government bodies.

The media also normatively seek to facilitate discussion among constituent groups (Christians et al., 2009). Even this discussion—whether it occurs in neighborhoods, churches, or other non-state organizations—in normative theory is centered on political discourse. The media’s role in this discussion is to provide the information necessary for this rational-critical debate (Habermas, 1991; Dewey, 1954). The media control information and information dissemination, so the media can, at least to a degree, influence or control some behaviors. The media could attempt to control the flow of information. For example, the voices of dissident or radical groups systematically have been left out of the debate by the mainstream media (Kessler, 1984). The media also could be influenced by state or economic concerns to limit the flow of information.

Politics and political coverage, however, are not the only types of information that contribute to democracy and democratic discourse. Culture also is an important component of a community and democracy. Culture helps build those communities that are a necessary component of democratic action. Indeed, culture might help build communities in a way that politics could not or does not. Traditionally, politics has been the lynchpin of normative theory. The argument here is that, while politics are an important component of normative theory, they are not the only component. The evidence in this analysis suggests that culture also is an important and possibly even necessary component of democratic and political action. Scholars, then, should begin to rethink normative theory to include a cultural component. While a radical rethinking of normative theory is not necessary, the inclusion of culture is a needed

and necessary addition. What follows are three components of culture that scholars could use as they begin incorporating culture into normative theory.

Culture helps create a worldview because it is part of a person's everyday life and experience. Culture, therefore, can contribute to a sense of togetherness and a vision of community. For example, sports are culturally important because 50,000 people in one stadium could be rooting for the Missouri Tigers to beat the Colorado Buffalos. Those 50,000 have a sense of community, of shared purpose, at least for the length of a ballgame. Similarly, the Hippies in the 1960s were not just advocating for the end of the Vietnam War, and rights for blacks, women, and gay men. They also were building a community on a shared love of rock and roll and other forms on then-controversial arts. That bond, or common experience, could help foster a sense of community, and that community could then, together with similar communities in other parts of the country, begin to form a larger social movement.

Culture also is often directly political. For example, *Hips Voice* published a short note on "Our Brothers and Sisters" killed at Kent State in its May 13, 1970 edition. Neil Young also wrote an eulogy to the four students killed by Ohio National Guard members in his song "Ohio." Similarly, Public Enemy's "911 Is a Joke" and N.W.A.'s "Fuck Da Police" critique police actions in traditionally black neighborhoods in a much more effective way than a news story could ever hope to do. Coverage of culture and cultural issues, therefore, can be political, or at least aid political discourse. Cultural spaces also might foster political discussion. For example, *The Other Paper's* coverage of the closing of Larry's Bar on the surface might seem like a routine nightlife story. However, bars such as Larry's largely have

replaced the coffeehouses envisioned by Habermas as the meeting space for the engagement of rational-critical debate. Any conceptualization of normative theory ought to make this necessary connection clear.

Culture can invert the power structure—thus fulfilling part of the radical role—both in a political sense and also in the meanings created by artists, the subjects they consider, and the way they express those subjects artistically. Artists from Woody Guthrie to N.W.A. have expressed the monitorial role in cultural terms with their politically themed art. Collaboration could be seen historically in mass gatherings such as the 1972 Wattstax concert, which simultaneously was artistic and political. People came to the concert not only to hear Isaac Hayes, the Bar-Kays, and the Staple Singers, but also to continue to rebuild the Watts community following riots seven years earlier. Culture, finally, can be facilitative. The True/False Film Festival in Columbia every year features a wealth of documentary films. However, the messages in those films are furthered by question-and-answer sessions between the audience and the filmmakers or subjects, as well as continued discussions between festival attendees throughout the weekend.

Traditional normative theory also might be conceptualized as being too narrowly conceived or overly simplistic. Previous scholars (see Christians et al., 2009; Nerone, 1995) have acknowledged that role conceptualizations are abstractions, and that performance of roles might overlap. There are longstanding debates about the role of the media, and a correct version of media role would allow for the possibility that media often perform various roles simultaneously. For example, a traditional conceptualization of the underground, alternative

newsweekly, and online alternative press most likely would place each under the category of radical role.

However, alternative media perform more than just the radical role. Indeed, each of the three components of the alternative press performed the monitorial role by covering government and quasi-government institutions, as well as political campaigns and candidates. Further, the alternative press expanded the monitorial function by watching the watchdog, the mainstream press, to ensure that it was performing its monitorial role adequately.

The alternative press also consistently performed the collaborative role. The conceptualization of the collaborative role in the alternative press extends the normative idea of collaboration. Traditionally, the collaboration is between the press and the state. However, the alternative press collaborates with constituent groups by being a change agent instead of collaborating to maintain the status quo. For example, the goal of the underground press, at the institutional level, was to connect various radically minded communities into a national counterculture movement that could end the war in Vietnam and reshape the politics and culture in America.

Alternative media also perform the facilitative role of the press by opening the public sphere to radical, dissident, or oppositional voices. Traditionally, we define this in terms of political debate, but it also could be applied equally well to culture. Normatively, the media should promote and facilitate dialog among their readers. However, the mainstream press limits this dialog by only including voices speaking in certain ways about a narrow range of topics—voices that do not upset

the commercial advertisers that fund the media. The alternative press serves, and was initially created by, those whose voices were shunned from the conversation.

Any news organization, mainstream or alternative, in the news ecology most likely plays more than one role, and plays each of these roles simultaneously. The performance of these roles can be complementary at times, and contradictory at other times. Regardless, a conceptualization of normative theories that does not account for the complexity of simultaneous role performance is too narrow and overly simplistic.

Future research could expand the study to include more publications geographically. This would enable the results to be better generalized. The aim of this research project was to gain a broad understanding of the alternative press. New York is a major city on the East Coast. Columbus is a mid-market city in the Midwest. Santa Fe is a small-market city in the Southwest. By comparing the three cities, the researcher hoped to understand better how the alternative press has been practiced at a national level. The next step is to focus in depth on a specific state or region to better understand geographical differences in how the alternative press is practiced.

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APPENDIX A: LISTS OF UNDERGROUND NEWSPAPERS STUDIED

New York City underground newspapers:

The Alternative Journalism Review (1976)
Alternative Media (1977-1983)
The Alternative Press Revue (1973)
American Avatar (1969)
Anarchos (1968-1969)
Appleseed (1972)
Appleseed Weekly Bulletin (1971)
Avatar (1968)
Blimp (1969)
Bond (1968-1974)
Broadside (1970-1971)
Corpus (1969-1970)
East Village Eye (1979-1983)
East Village Other (1967-1972)
The Floating Bear (1969)
Food Monitor (1979-1983)
Free Ranger Intertribal News Service (1970)
Free Student (1965-1966)
La Gaceta Chibcha (1969)
Gothic Blimp Works (1969)
Granpa (1968)
Guardian (1968-1983)
Harbinger (1983)
The Hard Core (1968)
High School Independent Press (1968)
High Times (1971-1983)
Image (1977)
Informed Source (1978)
Inner City Light (1981)
Israel Horizons (1982-1983)
Leviathan (1969-1970)
Liberated Guardian (1970-1973)
Liberation (1956-1977)
MDS/Movement for a Democratic Society/News (1968-1969)
Majority Reports (1974-1979)
Max (1969)
The Militant (1969)
National Underground Review (1968)
National Weed (1976)
The Needle (1968)
New City Free Press (1970)

New York City Star (1973-1976)
N.Y. Daily Planet (1977)
New York Free Press (1968-1969)
New York High School Free Press (1968-1969)
New York News Service (1973)
New York Review of Sex and Politics (1969)
Nomad (1971-1976)
Observation Post (1968)
Other Scenes (1967-1976)
Overthrow 1979-1983)
Pac-O-Lies (1969)
Partisan (1965-1969)
Pax (1969)
Questionable Cartoons (1981)
Rat (1968-1970)
Realist (1967-1972)
Reliable Source (1977)
Sansculottes (1968)
The Son of Jabberwock (1968)
The Student Mobilizer (1967-1970)
Thorn (1969)
UPS News Service (1971-1972)
UR (1975)
Underground Digest (1967)
University Review (1973-1974)
Urban Underground (1969)
Village Voice (1973)
Win (1967-1983)
Witzend (1967-1973)
Women's Liberation (1971)
Yipster Times (1973-1978)
Young Socialist (1969-1973)
Youth and Nation (1968-1980)

Columbus underground newspapers:

Columbus Free Press (1971-1983)
Faculty Peace News (1968)
Subversive Scholastic (1978-1980)
Testube (1979-1983)
Times Change (1978-1979)

Santa Fe underground newspapers:

The Hips Voice (1970-1971)
The Supplement (1969)

APPENDIX B: LIST OF NEWS ARTICLES CITED

Columbus Free Press (Columbus, Ohio)

- Stuart McIntyre, "Ohio Students Form Student Union, Call on Others to Organize," Feb. 14, 2012
- Marley Greiner, "Roe turns 30: Columbus protests," Jan. 24, 2012
- Robert A. Letcher, "Building on Defeating Issue 2," Nov. 10, 2011
- Marley Greiner, "Hangin' with Glenn Beck so you don't have to: More Ohio Right to Life escapades," Nov. 5, 2011
- Bruce Bostick, "Animal killing in Ohio highlights needs for regulations!" Oct. 25, 2011
- Albert A. Gabel, "Draconian Issue 3 would harm every Ohioan because of its intended and unintended consequences," Oct. 11, 2011
- Bruce Bostick, "Ohioans say no to voter suppression," Oct. 5, 2011

Columbus Underground (Columbus, Ohio)

- Anne Evans, "Treat to try: Belle's Bread's Cream Puff," March 13, 2012
- Walker Evans, "200 Homes to be Demolished in Columbus," Feb. 23, 2012
- Anne Evans, "Is Community Supported Agriculture, a CSA, for me," Feb. 22, 2012
- Anne Evans, "Columbus Historical Society Moving Into COSI," Dec. 22, 2011
- Walker Evans, "Local Artist Spotlight: Heather Wirth," Dec. 9, 2011
- Walker Evans, "Columbus Named Top Gay Travel Destination of 2011," Nov. 24, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Mat Ferris," Oct. 20, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Andrew Ginther," Oct. 20, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Hearcel Craig," Oct. 19, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Robert Bridges," Oct. 19, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Mark Noble," Oct. 18, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Zack Klein," Oct. 18, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Michelle Mills," Oct. 17, 2011
- Walker Evans, "City Council Election 2011: Interview with Daryl Hennessy," Oct. 17, 2011

Gawker (New York, New York)

- Leah Beckmann, "Geraldo Rivera non-apologizes, still blames 'Gangsta Hoodie' for Trayvon's death," March 27, 2012
- Adrien Chen, "How the Stupid Idea of Using Homeless People as WiFi Hotspots Conquered South by Southwest," March 12, 2012
- Hamilton Nolan, "McDonald's Kindly Decides to Torture Mama Pigs Less (At Some

Point),” Feb. 14, 2012
Jim Newwell, “Your Guide to Mitt Romney’s Obscene Tax Situation,” Jan. 24, 2012
Max Read, “Follow the Ron Paul Newsletter Twitter for 140-Character Bursts of
Horrorific Racism,” Dec. 27, 2011
Seth Abramovitch, “*New York Times* Issues First ‘Angry Birds’-Related Correction,”
Oct. 23, 2011

***Gothamist* (New York, New York)**

No byline, “Thanks to This Week’s Advertisers,” March 16, 2012
Garth Johnston, “Inside the Out: New York’s first gay hotel,” March 9, 2012
Jen Chung, “Bloomberg not on Bloomberg’s Millionaires Index!” March 5, 2012
Ben Yakas, “Drug-planting cop cries at sentencing, avoids jail,” Feb. 2, 2012
John Del Signore, “NYPD caught lying about Ray Kelly’s role in Anti-Islam
propaganda film,” Jan. 24, 2012
Jen Carlson, “How many times can we say goodbye to CBGB?” Jan. 24, 2012
Garth Johnston, “Pizza shocker: Grimaldi’s is being replaced by the original
Grimaldi,” Nov. 25, 2011
Jen Carlson, “Confirmed: *The Dark Knight* will film near Zuccotti Park for two
weeks,” Oct. 21, 2011
Ban Yakas, “Occupy Wall Street wants you to bring your kids to Zuccotti Park for a
sleepover tomorrow,” Oct. 20, 2011

***The Light of New Mexico* (Santa Fe, New Mexico)**

Emanuele Corso, “Fundamental Disrespect,” March 17, 2012
Heath Haussamen, “Republicans still win House redistricting battle,” March 1, 2012
No byline, “An open letter to Occupy Santa Fe,” Jan. 26, 2012
No byline, “Occupy Santa Fe Takes Step into Politics with Position Paper,”
Dec. 17, 2011
No byline, “New ‘stand up’ newspaper debuts,” Oct. 1, 2011

***The Other Paper* (Columbus, Ohio)**

Steph Greigor, “Stop censoring,” May 12, 2011
Debbie Briner, “Under new management,” May 5, 2011
Lyndsey Teter, “A womb divided,” Feb. 10, 2011
Wes Flexner, “Wex shows film banned from Smithsonian exhibit,” Dec. 16, 2010
Steph Greigor, “Chicks dig tattoos,” Dec. 2, 2010
No byline, “Central Ohio Crime Stoppers honors *The Other Paper*,” Oct. 29, 2009
Richard Ades, “What’s in a name?” Aug. 27, 2009
Kitty McConnell, “Best of 2008 Nightlife,” Jan. 1, 2009
Erik Johns, “Queen 4 a Day,” Dec. 6, 2007
Erik Johns, “OSU considers a ban on student-teacher sex,” Feb. 2, 2006
Rick Allen, “Ken Stone spent his life ‘Getting music to the people,’” Aug. 25, 2005
Dan Williamson, “Blackwell’s in the money,” July 28, 2005
Brian O’Neill, “I have no worries about that ever happening again,” March 24, 2005
Dan Williamson, “Democrats give free pass to embattled Republican,” July 22, 2004
Kristen Convery, “Moss isn’t likely to be ejected from meeting,” Feb. 13, 2003

Rob Harvilla, "Rock critic might be the dumbest profession ever," Jan. 2, 2003
No byline, "Media Morsels: Rain falls, and 28 enters crisis mode," Oct. 3, 2002
Jen DiMascio, "City Beat: The Somali vote," Jan. 3, 2002

Santa Fe Reporter (Santa Fe, New Mexico)

Zane Fischer, "Nationally guarded," Sept. 8, 2010
Rani Molla, "Turning Japanese," July 14, 2010
Alexa Schirtzinger, "Conversation starter," Jan. 20, 2010
No byline, "Native tongue," Sept. 24, 2008
Julia Goldberg, "Ready, set, caucus," Jan. 30, 2008
Nathan Dinsdale, "Pulling the plug," Nov. 22, 2006
No byline, "Lords of Santa Fe," June 15, 2005
No byline, "Native land not for sale," April 27, 2005
No byline, "Election 2005: School Board picks," Jan. 26, 2005
No byline, "Standing in O'Keefee's shadow," Feb. 3, 2004
No byline, "Read all about it?" Oct. 7, 2003
Maria Luisa, "Smoke on this," March 18, 2003
Maria Luisa, "Frenemy of the state," June 25, 2002
No byline, "Jailbait: A new feature examining the letter of the law; city naked,"
Jan. 15, 2002

Village Voice (New York, New York)

Tom Robbins, "NYPD cops' training included an anti-Muslim horror flick,"
Jan. 19, 2011
Tony Phillips, "The Guido ideal goes on the down-low in Jersey," June 22, 2010
Steven Thrasher, "Who do we have to blow to get gay marriage in New York,"
Nov. 17, 2009
Elizabeth Dwoskin, "An unlikely rescuer from the jaws of debt," June 10, 2009
Graham Rayman, "Boy soldier of fortune," March 18, 2008
Tom Robbins, "Benchwarmers," July 17, 2007
Syndey H. Schanberg, "Paper trained?" June 7, 2005
Aina Hunter, "Cops talk dirty to young girls," March 8, 2005
Jennifer Gonnerman, "Seven years on the sidewalk," Dec. 7, 2004
Tom Robbins, "City goes judge shopping," Sept. 21, 2004
Elizabeth Zimmer, "Doing laps; Products derived from toys bring pelvic region
alive," March 11, 2003
Geoffrey Gray, "War of the gardeners," July 16, 2002
Paul Moses, "The paper of wreckage," June 18, 2002
Tricia Romano, "Let's get this party started right," May 7, 2002
Sharon Lerner, "Rich man, poor people," Feb. 12, 2002

VITA

Chad Painter will be a visiting assistant professor at Eastern New Mexico University starting in August 2012. His research focuses on the areas of ethics, history, new media, and diversity studies. He has researched how non-traditional news sources such as *The Daily Show* hold traditional news organizations accountable to the public, ethical issues relating to aggregating websites such as the Huffington Post, and the impact of television shows such as *The Wire* and *Sports Night* on viewer perceptions of journalists.

His teaching focus is skills course such as news writing and editing for digital and print media, media ethics, media law, media history, and diversity studies. In addition, he can teach social media; mass media theory; qualitative methods; and legal, social, and economic controls of information. His professional experience is a mix of print and digital reporting and editing, and strategic communication. At JPMorgan Chase, he wrote and edited corporate and business news, features, and profiles for the in-house newspaper and intranet. Previously, he served as an arts editor and reporter for the Columbus, Ohio, alternative newsweekly *The Other Paper*. In addition, he has published freelance work in websites focusing on journalism and music, and city and national magazines. He also has experience in textbook publishing.