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Alternative vs. Traditional News:
A Content Analysis of News Coverage of the 10th Anniversary of Sept. 11

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Communications
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master of Arts in Professional Communication

by
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May 2012

Dr. Robert Andrew Dunn, Committee Chair

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Keywords: alternative, traditional, media, Sept. 11, profanity, financial, framing, routine,
mainstream, Afghanistan, war, speech, journalism

ABSTRACT

Alternative vs. Traditional News:

A Content Analysis of News Coverage of the 10th Anniversary of Sept. 11

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Rex Edward Barber, Jr.

The researcher sought to understand the differences in framing used by alternative media outlets and traditional or mainstream media outlets. A sampling of articles about the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks was used from alternative and traditional media publications to conduct this study. These articles were analyzed by a software program to determine themes and concepts within both data sets. The analysis revealed traditional media was less varied in themes than was alternative media, with the latter clearly showing an effort to be. Traditional media was found to provide routine coverage of commemorative services and very little critical analysis. Further highlighting the differences in the 2 media paradigms was the use of profanity in alternative media, which was discovered by using the “find” function available with word processing software.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Alternative News Media Research

Research on alternative or independent media coverage of news events is plainly lacking, despite a rather vibrant and organized alternative media in America and around the world. Given the ease with which people today can publish information online, the present research was designed to analyze the two separate paradigms of traditional and alternative media for news coverage of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11. The researcher's work is an attempt to better understand the types of news readers are getting in today's interconnected, digital world, where access to anything is only limited by access to the Internet.

Numerous media outlets around the globe recorded the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Television, newspaper, radio, and online reporters all rushed to get as much information as possible, even in news markets far away from the carnage of that day. Therefore, there was a wealth of information about the event available to researchers to see how one single event was reported, how it was framed, and how audiences perceived reports of the attacks. Many aspects of the coverage have been analyzed, including on follow-up stories years removed from the actual event. Researchers have even studied how American news coverage changed as a whole post-Sept. 11. The scope of Sept. 11 coverage is likely unprecedented. That universal coverage is still happening 10 years later, making the subject a good resource for communication research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Framing Theory

Framing theory was used as the basis for this research. Framing theory states that communication, be it news articles, movies, documentaries, or pamphlets, is presented in a particular way and in support of a certain overall message. The frame of a news article can help the reader understand what is being said and can influence national dialogue. Entman (1993) argued that frames in the news are influenced by the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. This means reporters hold a certain belief system that influences the words they publish, and that belief system may or may not be identified by the readers who are influenced in their beliefs by a particular culture. Journalists highlight certain aspects of a story to make them more salient, or identifiable, to the reader, Entman argued. Entman's explanation here is important, because it provides a good argument for why it would be reasonable to think alternative and traditional media would frame stories differently; in fact, it predicts it. Other researchers have supported Entman by arguing that frames can unify information and can be based in culture (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). This macro-level framing is important because as Tewksbury and Scheufele argue, social constructs serve to help citizens process information and also to influence decisions. That function of helping inform citizens has long been one of the primary arguments for a free and open press in a healthy democracy. If this is indeed the case, understanding how alternative media and traditional media frame topics is important.

However, audiences may not even be aware that frames are being used in the material to which they are being exposed (Tewksbury, Jones, Peske, Raymond, & Vig, 2000). The

sociological approach to framing operates under the assumption people are seeking to constantly understand and interpret the world and events occurring in the world (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). This is where journalists would help in framing stories the masses could consume and interpret. Interpretation though could be slanted one particular way or toward one particular industry, which gives that thing more power and legitimacy in the public eye, especially when slanted by national media (Entman, 2007).

The Routine

The notion of routinization of news also helps to ground this research. The frames used by journalists in the traditional media could sometimes be affected by the nature of the job that creates a routine procedure for gathering and reporting the news. As Tuchman (1972) argued, reporters, specifically newspaper reporters, work under conditions that create pressures for libel suits, reprimands, and criticisms, and this reality leads to the claim that reporters are being objective in their reporting. The claim of objectivity by reporters creates a defense against the aforementioned pressures, Tuchman argued. This strategy helps establish a routine process for news stories. Shoemaker and Reece (1996) pointed out that the routine of the inverted pyramid helps newspaper stories be edited to fit in the corresponding space in newsprint. The inverted pyramid is a style of newswriting that emphasizes the most important parts or facts in the story early, leaving extraneous material toward the end that can be cut out by the editor without removing critical information from the story. This method or routine helps journalists know how to write a story and to some extent helps determine what a story focus should be. Shoemaker and Reece also supported the notion that objectivity is a practical routine of journalism that serves as a defense mechanism for journalists. Additionally, Shoemaker and Reece pointed out that media are generally owned by large corporations that seek to satisfy the largest segment of

the audience. Routines help do this. In fact, the Associated Press was credited by Shoemaker and Reece in helping strengthen the objectivity routine for newspapers.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before studying the coverage of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11, it is important to see how researchers studied the coverage of the attacks at the time. Most of the framing studies done about the coverage of Sept. 11 investigated print and television mediums. Television is mentioned because some television networks could be considered elite or mainstream media, and while not the focus of this research, television could be used to further determine how traditional media paradigms provide coverage. One content analysis of coverage by Li and Izard (2003) compared the way broadcast and print media responded to the news of Sept. 11 and was found both mediums relied on facts rather than conjecture in their reporting, but frames used in constructing stories differed, as did the journalistic sources used for information that day. By looking at major national newspapers, Li and Izard found that business topics related to Sept. 11 were the most prominent followed by air traffic and safety stories and then stories on the World Trade Center, terrorism and criminal activity, presidential activity, and finally the American public. In contrast, television news focused coverage on the World Trade Center followed by presidential and government activity, then terrorism and criminal activity, then the Pentagon, and finally safety and air traffic stories.

It was in the other categories of stories where the two mediums differed in coverage framing. One interesting aspect of the coverage provided that day was in the sources used by both mediums. According to Li and Izard (2003) television networks used more government officials while newspapers used more experts to understand what was going on. Both forms of media relied more on government sources to explain the news of the attacks, though. Political

and disaster frames were the top two frames used by newspapers, but many stories used were framed as economic stories and stories of human interest. Because television had to provide immediate coverage for the public to view, the majority of the stories from the time the first plane hit until about 11 a.m. that day were framed in terms of the disaster itself and how it was being handled and what the immediate response would be.

One difference in how television and newspapers handled coverage of Sept. 11 was in that broadcasters fulfilled a need to get people information immediately, while newspapers offered reassurance during the crisis (Stempel & Hargrove, 2003). Analyzing a survey done shortly after the terrorist attacks, Stempel and Hargrove said newspapers would play an increasingly important role in telling the larger story of Sept. 11 and the war on terrorism that is still being conducted. This assumption was one reason to analyze newspapers in this study, because based on the results it may be that the traditional newspaper industry is not telling the larger story of Sept. 11 and letting that duty fall to the alternative media.

One aspect of a discussion about the coverage of Sept. 11 should include the images of the carnage wrought on New York City. Some of the more disturbing images are of people jumping from the World Trade Center towers as flames and smoke enveloped them. Many newspapers ran these images in their Sept. 12 editions and many television stations showed the jumpers on live television. How were these decisions made, and what do they say about framing? One qualitative study by Kratzer and Kratzer (2003) analyzed why editors of 22 publications chose to print or not print images of people falling to their deaths on Sept. 11. The findings indicate three themes determined whether to use horrific photos: the kind of response it would elicit from readers, privacy rights, and how accurately the pictures told the story.

Eighteen of the 22 photo editors interviewed by Kratzer and Kratzer used jumper pictures, indicating a disaster framework for telling the story of Sept. 11.

Lasorsa (2003) documented more than a dozen false rumors reported about Sept. 11 in the week following the attacks, but traditional corporate media reported very few of those erroneous stories. A limit of Lasorsa's study was that it did not include alternative publications or online news media to see if those outlets circulated rumors that abounded after Sept. 11 or ignored them as did traditional outlets. Given that limitation of Lasorsa's study, it seems appropriate to analyze content from both traditional and alternative media for differences in framing. In fact, missing from all the above analyses is the role of independent or alternative media in telling the narrative of Sept. 11, 2001.

Defining Traditional Media

Helping define mainstream media is Bagdikian (2004), who identified five corporations that own most of the media in the world, including newspapers, television stations, book publishers, and radio stations. These conglomerates are Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation, Viacom, and Bertelsmann. Bagdikian said these entities set the tone for the public discourse as the majority of Americans claim to get their news from them. But the five conglomerates compete in a limited fashion, Bagdikian said, because they all share assets when it is mutually beneficial. This environment leads to many news outlets carrying the same content. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that much of the content carried by traditional media regarding the Sept. 11 anniversary would be framed in the same manner. Using this argument, one way to determine a mainstream or traditional newspaper would be to see if it used Associated Press content, which is widely disseminated to newspapers across the

country. It would also be logical to presume, based on Bagdikian's findings, that a corporate structure would be indicative of mainstream media. According to Chomsky (1997) elite media set the framework within which other media around the nation operate. Chomsky argued that the Associated Press takes its queues from the elite media, which would be the *New York Times* or other similar large newspapers or news outlets. Each day, Chomsky said, editors of small newspapers around the nation get stories from the Associated Press that have been approved by the elite media as important stories for the public to read. Herman and Chomsky (1988) argued that dominant media outlets are for-profit organizations that must acquiesce to the demands of owners and advertisers. Advertising provides the majority of income for corporate media outlets. This is important, Herman and Chomsky argue, because it leads to routine sources being used to disseminate information, the implication being that if the routine sources of information are snubbed, the information stops. When the information stops, the readership decreases and so do the profits. By this logic, it could be said traditional media tend to operate in a corporate, structure.

Abrahamian (2003) argued in an essay that mainstream media in the United States framed Sept. 11 in terms of civilization and cultural differences playing out in the extreme. He used a governmental paradigm put forth in the early 1990s by Samuel Huntington, who argued that states and nations were no longer determining the course of international politics as much as historic regional paradigms did. Abrahamian pointed to article headlines that appeared in national media outlets as evidence of the framing used by U.S. news media that radical Islam had attacked America on Sept. 11. These articles were constructed in the months after the attacks as an attempt to explain the event. It is relevant now to bring up how follow-up articles were

framed because analyzing the 10th anniversary coverage of Sept. 11 will involve articles written with a retrospective lens, as this research has done.

While weblogs may be different from a professional media site that operates outside the mainstream, these outlets may still be an influence on news reported through traditional outlets and because of that are worth mentioning here. Today, most newspapers have staff writers who operate blogs. In fact, many of the examples used in this research were called blogs by both traditional and alternative media; therefore, research on blogs is worth mentioning here. Much research conducted about blogs focuses on credibility and not framing. Moreover, that research has shown that established news organization websites rated highest among credible online options, with personal websites rating lowest in terms of credibility (Flanagin & Metzger, 2007). This means that the *New York Times* website could be seen as a reliable news source, whereas a random person's blog may not. Contradicting that study was one by Johnson, Kay, Bichard, and Wong (2007) that indicated blogs, which are essentially personal websites, rated more credible than mainstream media among politically interested web users. This research is essentially supportive of an argument that online information is gathered, whereas television news, for instance, is passively obtained.

The motivation qualifier for seeking online information is not unique to the Internet, but the Internet certainly allows for more polarizing content and greater access to it, provided the user is experienced at surfing the web. Johnson et al. (2007) argued it was imperative to understand motivations as they related to credibility. In fact, Johnson and Kaye (2004) found that blogs might be perceived as having limited credibility among new users because this medium was not arranged as traditional media was arranged and was even written in a personal opinionated style much different from the typical newsprint style of delivery using the inverted

pyramid scheme and adherence to Associated Press standards. However, this new style of news delivery made possible by blogging has the potential to change traditional news and make it more accountable (Gunter, Campbell, & Touri, 2009).

How does that change make news more accountable? Drezner and Farrell (2004) argued that blogs can influence mainstream media by framing a particular story or event that forces coverage in the mainstream. Drezner and Farrell indicated four reasons the mainstream media pick up on blog topics: “material incentives, personal network ties, expertise, and speed,” (p. 15). This suggested a link between nontraditional media and traditional corporate media models. In fact, recent research suggests that journalists who blog as part of their duties are in fact carrying their routines with them into the blogosphere (Cassidy, 2006; Singer, 2005). Though this influence may cut both ways, as other research shows that journalists will break with their routines depending on a myriad of factors, including news topics (Dunn, 2011). Though blogging and traditional media may be linked, whether the framing is different remains to be investigated thoroughly.

That blogs have a reputation for being able to hold mainstream media to a certain standard for framing is interesting, as research has shown many journalists do not count bloggers among their counterparts. In fact, there seems to be a divide among journalists as to the validity and credibility of news sources in print and online. Cassidy (2007) found that, overall, journalists rated online news as moderately credible; however, online journalists believed their work was highly credible. This seems logical, as it is unlikely that anyone would want to admit his or her job was not credible or useful or relevant. As newspapers and television news continue to develop online presences, though, this kind of bias could diminish. Indeed, there are few journalists today who are solely print or solely television journalists; convergence is more

and more common. And this convergence of media is not without merit, as Nilsson, Nulden, and Olsson (2001) argued that people do want fast news; however, the news must be reliable. For if the news received from sources, even traditional sources, in new ways is not reliable, it is discarded. Thus there seems to be a balancing act of sorts with providing up-to-date news and ensuring it is accurate. That could be tough when time is of the essence.

Time was certainly of the essence for reporters on Sept. 11. However, at that time, online news was not as prominent, nor was it used that day as a primary source of information (Kanihan & Gale, 2003). In a study analyzing how people learned about the attacks, Kanihan and Gale found that, among surveyed college students, almost half learned of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks from television and radio coverage, and slightly more learned about the attacks from other people. In analyzing a similar-scope event today, it would be likely that people, especially college students, would get news from a cell phone as a terrorist attack would be pushed out via social media that did not exist in 2001, and on smart phones that were nonexistent at the time. People would then go to a news site of their choice for more information, probably one whose Twitter account they follow or Facebook page of which they are a fan. In some instances this may be a traditional news outlet's website, but in other instances it could very well be a site operated by independent media. Given the prominence of news-generating social media and what seems like an increasing number of professionally-operated independent media websites today, it seems useful to analyze online content for framing themes. Because Sept. 11 was such a large event and the subsequent anniversary coverage was so widespread in who covered it, it seems appropriate to attempt to apply a sociological approach to analyzing how it was framed.

Defining Alternative Media

In order to conduct research about differences in framing between traditional and alternative (nontraditional) media, it is important to define the latter. According to Kessler (1984) alternatives to mainstream media have been present throughout American history, but the majority of underground or alternative publications grew out of the social turmoil of the 1960s. One of the most common reasons for the publication of an alternative newspaper was the stifling of ideas contrary to that of the status quo, which the mainstream media tend to support, Kessler argued. This would include abolitionists in the early and middle 1800s, suffragettes, and socialists. The mainstream media had refused to entertain ideas of these so-called fringe groups, so alternative publications and journals were begun by people who thought differently to get their messages out to the masses. Today, it is much easier for a fringe group to do this because the Internet allows anyone with a computer to begin a blog at no cost. So one item used to define nontraditional media is to claim it operates counter to the perceived status quo in order to provide access to alternate ideas; however, defining exactly what the status quo is could be largely subjective, depending upon the alternative publication's editorial viewpoint. This was often the case in the underground publication movement of the 1960s.

In Glessing's (1970) *The Underground Press in America*, several common themes of alternative media that operate outside the mainstream press were provided. Beginning in the middle 1960s, the cost of producing an alternative newspaper dropped significantly due to changes in technology that allowed mass production of paper materials. But this did not mean the underground publications necessarily made money. According to Glessing, it was often a sort of badge of dishonor to realize a profit from publishing alternative newspapers or magazines. Often, these underground news outlets would be unable to pay bills and eventually

fold. However, it was more than just a sense of unprofessionalism, in a business sense, that characterized Civil Rights era nontraditional media; the content of these publications was by and large subjective in nature, as opposed to the mainstream media that were objective in their reporting, according to Glessing. Indeed, many of the excerpts Glessing takes from various underground papers of the late 1960s include references to sexual freedom, drug use, anarchy, personal diatribe, and topics chosen based on interest to a niche readership. In addition, the language used in these publications often was of a nature not acceptable in mainstream newspapers. “Gutter language became gut journalism and the new expression found its voice in the first columns of the experimental press,” (p. 115).

The use of profanity within a particular group, in this case alternative media, could be the basis for differentiating it from other groups. Phillipsen (1997) laid out an argument that where there is a distinct culture, there is a distinct speech code. Part of that code could be the use of profanity. Phillipsen continued his argument with another tenet of his speech code by arguing that “the artful use of a shared speech code is a sufficient condition for predicting, explaining, and controlling the form of discourse about the intelligibility, prudence, and morality of communicative conduct,” (p. 147). This implies that a way of speaking or communicating has a bearing on the message perceived. This works with the inclusion of profanity and the purposeful omission of it. Part of the researcher’s interest in the use of profanity, or the omission of it, centered around the notion that to remove it from the narrative of a story seems to be editing and altering reality. To not include words like “shit” or “fuck,” is to imply that no one said those things in relation to a terrorist attack that killed nearly 3,000 people.

Most of the underground papers from the turbulent 1960s ceased publication in the 1970s. Glessing (1970) referred frequently to the Underground Press Syndicate, an organization

of alternative papers formed in 1966 that included more than 140 publications from around the nation and world by 1971 (Lewis, 1972). Spates (1976) cited Glessing's book as one source that helped define the underground press in a content analysis that looked at counterculture values. Incidentally, Spates found the overall message of the counterculture publications was lost by the middle 1970s and had no influence upon the mainstream, an interesting finding for what seemed like a vibrant alternative publication movement. UPS ultimately failed but in 1978 the Association of Alternative Newsmedia formed and could be considered UPS's successor. The AAN is still operating with 130 member publications from across North America. According to the bylaws section of the AAN website, "Independence from media conglomerates or other entities deemed detrimental to the interest of the alternative press and the maintenance of media diversity," (Association of Alternative Newsmedia, 2011) is one of the tenets of membership in the organization. Further defining the medium of alternative news media is the following taken directly from the AAN website: (2011)

There are a wide range of publications in AAN. What ties them together are a strong focus on local news, culture and the arts; an informal and sometimes profane style; an emphasis on point-of-view reporting and narrative journalism; a tolerance for individual freedoms and social differences; and an eagerness to report on issues and communities that many mainstream media outlets ignore (para. 3).

There are many more alternative publications than the 130 currently in the AAN ranks. In *Annotations: The Alternative Press Center's Guide to the Independent Critical Press* (Jones, M., 2004) there appear 385 publications that are generally described as operating to put forth a viewpoint that is not usually considered by the mainstream media. Once again, the theme of operating counter to the status quo appears in *Annotations*. In fact, a common theme in

alternative media seems to be the notion that the truth is being withheld by the few who control the mainstream media and it is the alternatives' job to disseminate that truth. The Independent Media Center (IMC) is similar to the AAN in its goals and purpose, claiming on its website that it is for people who "who continue to work for a better world, despite corporate media's distortions and unwillingness to cover the efforts to free humanity" (Independent Media Center, 2011, para. 1). Established in 1999 in Seattle in response to the World Trade Organization meeting there that year, the IMC has grown significantly over the years to include contributors from all over the world (Kidd, 2003). The IMC also functions by the efforts of volunteers and donations. Researchers have analyzed alternative media in the past. Lewes (2000), in a study that looked at how alternative media in the 1960s perceived its audience, argued that by and large the underground press, as he called it, were largely community newspapers that operated counter to the conventions of the mainstream media.

Sometimes, researchers defined nontraditional media as another format of publication or broadcast. Some, but not many, studies have been done on nontraditional media in this sense. In one such study, Johnson, Braima, and Sothirajah (1999) analyzed the use of nontraditional media outlets in comparison to traditional outlets in the 1996 United States presidential campaign. Though this research focused on the differences in the type of medium (radio, talk shows, MTV) as opposed to intention of publication, or strategy, as this project did by looking at alternative publications, some information about effect can be gleaned to further define alternative or nontraditional media. For instance, Johnson et al.'s research focused on the medium as a predictor of political knowledge. The premise of this study was that people exposed to politics through mediums that meshed with their interests would give them access to a greater base of knowledge about the 1996 election. This implies a tenet of nontraditional media as something

that offers viewpoints outside the mainstream. Johnson et al. even said venues such as MTV posed questions to candidates or their emissaries that were not common for mainstream outlets like the *New York Times*.

Mainstream media was not clearly defined by the AAN, but a definition can be inferred by what was excluded in the organization's requirements for inclusion in its ranks. For instance, the AAN supports a style of writing or reporting that can be profane (Association of Alternative Newsmedia, 2011). Profanity is often forbidden by newspapers and other media outlets considered mainstream. The AAN also presumes to take the responsibility of reporting on issues and subjects the mainstream media does not. Therefore, it seems likely the AAN would report on the anniversary of Sept. 11 from an angle either not reported on widely or completely ignored by their definition of the mainstream media.

CHAPTER 4

HYPOTHESES

Based on the review of the literature regarding alternative media and its history, four hypotheses were proposed.

Glessing's (1970) work highlighted the fact that underground press publications sought to challenge the status quo, as did Kessler (1984). Though not included in the data set for alternative publications, the Independent Media Center's similarity to the AAN and its assertion that it is for people who recognize what it called "corporate media distortions" (para. 1), further adding to the argument that alternative media will be critical. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1: Alternative media coverage of the anniversary of Sept. 11 will be more critical of the U.S. government than will traditional media.

Li and Izard (2003) discovered business or financial coverage in relation to the Sept. 11 attacks by major national newspapers and television stations, which would fall under the definition of traditional media for this research project. That finding, coupled with information from Glessing that alternative publications of the past were not too concerned with finances, led to the following hypothesis:

H2: Traditional media will emphasize the financial facets of the Sept. 11 anniversary than will alternative media.

Glessing highlighted the fact that alternative publications contained profane language, as did the AAN website. This was deemed important, because profanity is forbidden in most traditional

media outlets. Additionally, Phillipson (1997) argued that unique groups will offer unique speech codes, which could be the use of irreverent or profane language in the case of alternative media. Therefore, the following hypothesis regarding profanity was formed:

H3: Alternative media will be more likely to use profanity in its articles on the Sept. 11 anniversary than will traditional media.

Based on Kessler's work that claimed alternative publications grew out of a desire to highlight issues, news, and topics the mainstream media ignored and by the AAN's statement that its member publications seek to provide content outside the scope of the mainstream media and Chomsky's (1997) assertion that the mainstream media sets the tone for most of the nation's news outlets, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H4: There will be a significant difference between the manner in which alternative media and traditional media cover the Sept. 11 anniversary.

CHAPTER 5

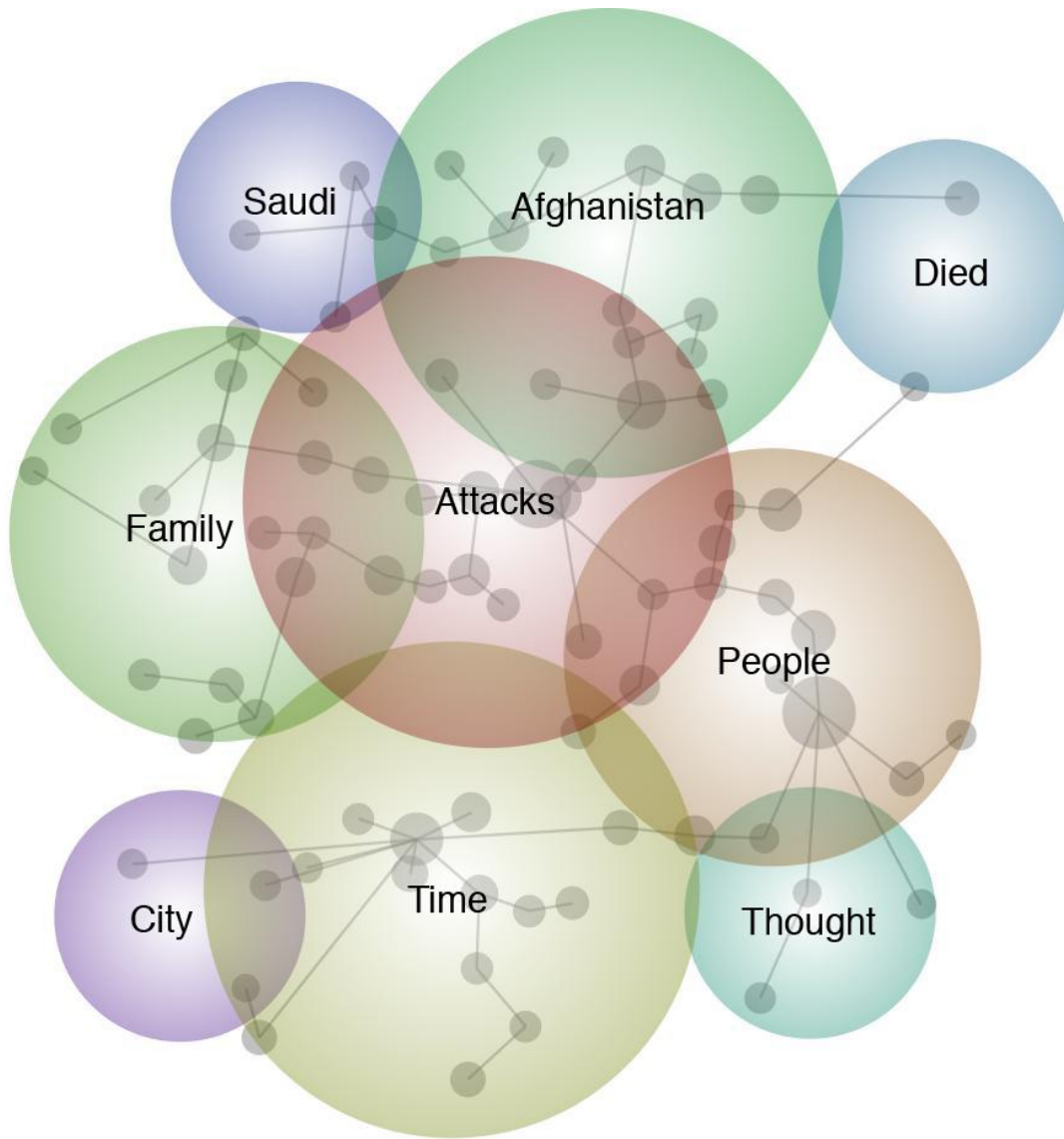
METHODOLOGY

This study was a content analysis of the text-based coverage of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 as done by traditional media outlets and independent or alternative media outlets to determine differences used in framing that story. Because of the universal appeal of covering the anniversary and the attacks' impact on this country, the topic was deemed suitable to yield a large enough data sample. For alternative media, the publications listed in the AAN website were scoured for articles pertaining to Sept. 11 anniversary coverage between the dates of Aug. 25 and Sept. 30. The same date range was used for traditional media, which was obtained by running a Lexis Nexis search for newspapers. This date range was thought to be suitable to capture enough stories leading up to the anniversary and to account for weekly publications that may have published after the anniversary date.

The AAN's member publication websites were searched for Sept. 11 articles by using the search terms of "Sept. 11 anniversary," "Twin Towers," and "Ground Zero." The same search terms were used to search Lexis Nexis for Sept. 11 anniversary-related articles. These terms were thought suitable enough to yield sufficient data. Hundreds of articles were provided for each data set using this method. To further identify and differentiate the traditional media, a search for Associated Press content was done on each newspaper website pulled by the Lexis Nexis database. The inclusion of Associated Press content was determined to be indicative of the mainstream traditional media, as argued by Chomsky (1997). Each newspaper website published Associated Press content; therefore, the data set was determined to be valid for this research. Additionally, traditionally accepted elite media newspapers were included in the

traditional data set. These included newspapers that appeared in Herman and Chomsky's (1988) work and also those publications identified by Li and Izard (2003). Newspapers found to be published and distributed by the same corporation were also considered to be mainstream. The alternative set was considered alternative because the news publications included in the set were defined as such by their inclusion in the AAN regardless of whether or not they published Associated Press content. Incidentally, a survey of the alternative media sites revealed mention of the Associated Press usually only as a means to provide a counter angle to a particular story.

The researcher's search yielded 143 separate articles for the traditional data set and 234 articles for the alternative data set. The two data sets were analyzed by the content analysis program Leximancer, which identified major themes and concepts within the text. Leximancer groups concepts into clusters that it refers to as themes and demonstrates how those themes are connected by providing a visual map of the concept clusters (see Figures 1 & 2, pp. 23, 24). These themes were also ranked by how often the concepts within them were identified by the software (see Tables 1 & 2, pp. 25, 26). The software also provided name-like concepts that were proper nouns that kept recurring throughout a data set. Leximancer also ranked these by the number of times each word appeared and by relevance to the overall data set (see Tables 3 & 4, pp. 27, 28). The software also provided word-like concepts that were common words that appeared often.



Alternative Theme Map

Figure 1. Theme map of Sept. 11 anniversary coverage by alternative media

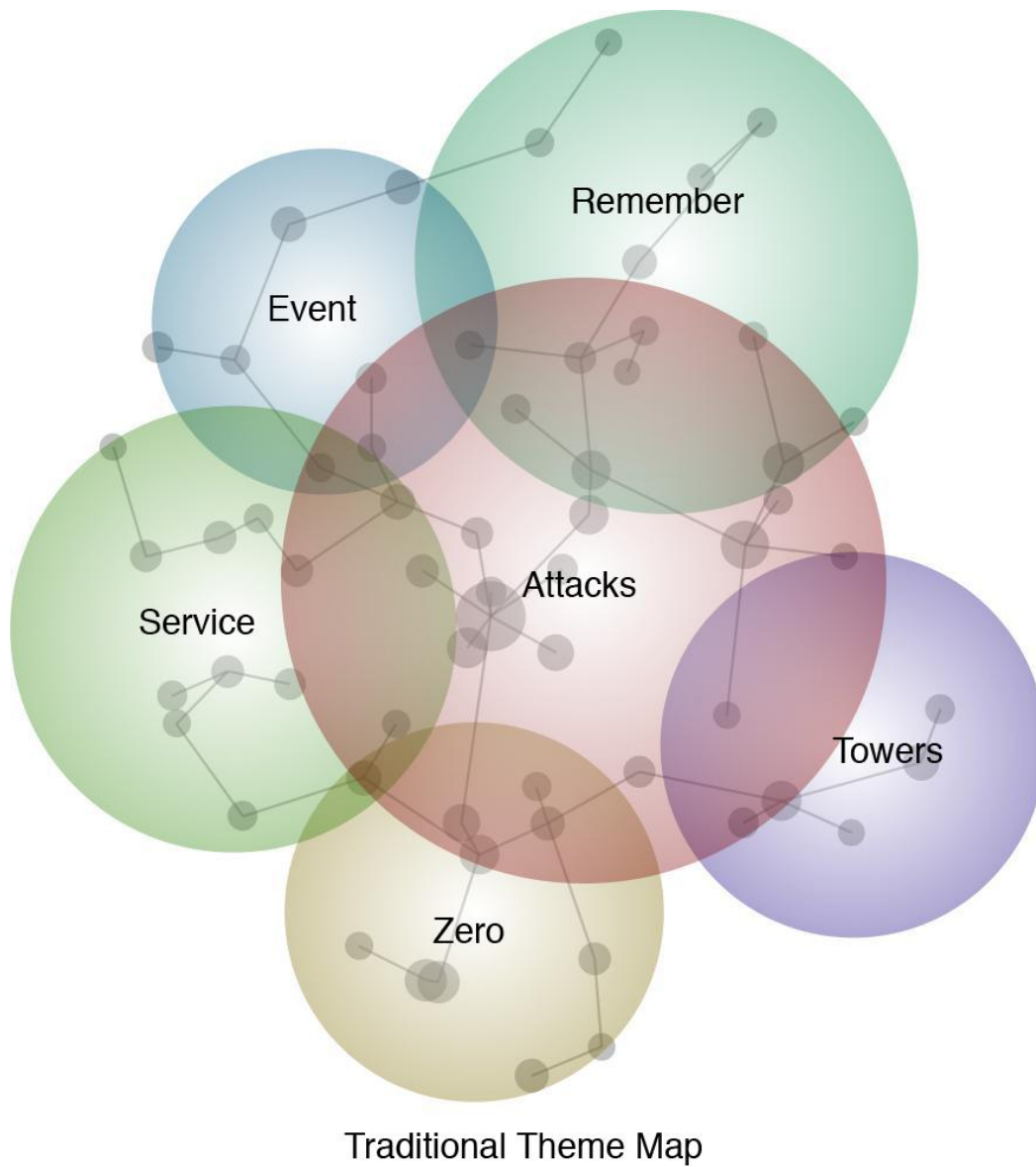


Figure 2. Theme map of Sept. 11 anniversary coverage by traditional media

Table 1

Alternative Theme Summary

Theme	Connectivity Relevance Percentage
Attacks	100
People	80
Time	74
Family	64
Afghanistan	59
Thought	12
Died	07
Saudi	06
City	05

Table 2

Traditional Theme Summary

Theme	Connectivity Relevance Percentage
Attacks	100
Zero	55
Service	36
Remember	29
Event	28
Towers	18

Table 3

Concepts for Traditional Media Data Set

Name-like Concepts	Count	Relevance Percentage
World Trade Center	132	40
Ground Zero	121	37
New York	109	33
Twin Towers	72	22
New York City	62	19
American	61	19
Pentagon	59	18

Table 4

Concepts for Alternative Media Data Set

Name-like Concepts	Count	Relevance Percentage
American	190	38
World Trade Center	150	30
Afghanistan	140	28
New York	128	26
Iraq	122	24
America	109	22
Americans	109	22
Muslim	67	13
Saudi	65	13

To simplify the following discussion of the results, the researcher refers only concepts within themes. As of 2012, Leximancer's content analysis software has been used in 655 academic publications. Therefore, its use across multiple disciplines has been well-established and has been considered consistently valid by academia. Papers published using this software include Campbell, Leyland, Parent, and Berthen (2011), Zhu and McKenna (2007), and Junco, Elavsky, and Heiberger (2012).

To test H3, a simple "find" search was done on the text for each data set for profanities identified by George Carlin (1972) in his Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television skit. These words were "cocksucker," "cunt," "fuck," "motherfucker," "piss," "shit," and "tits." Other common profane words were also used. These were "ass," "bitch," "hell," "damn," and "goddamn."

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

The analysis software yielded stark differences in the overall themes that appeared in traditional media and alternative media. For traditional media, the software identified the overall themes of “attacks,” “zero,” “service,” “remember,” “event,” and “towers.” The alternative data set yielded the themes of “attacks,” “people,” “time,” “family,” “Afghanistan,” “thought,” “died,” “Saudi,” and “city.” To begin with, the alternative data set provided more and varied themes, whereas the traditional data set provided fewer overall themes that were more closely related. Based on these themes, it could be argued that traditional media were providing coverage by journaling the Sept. 11 anniversary as suggested by the themes of “remember,” “event,” and “service.” Traditional media, it seemed, were content to record observances and remembrances. Conversely, the alternative media seemed to be using the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 as an opportunity to give critical analysis, which was suggested by the “Afghanistan” theme and “Saudi” theme. Another interesting point about the alternative media data set was that the theme of “people” appears as the second largest theme, which means that word was mentioned many times throughout the data set. In fact, the theme of people had an 80% connectivity relevance, according to the software, suggesting a heavy focus on people as a way to tell the narrative of Sept. 11.

That “attacks” was the first theme to appear in both data sets is not surprising, given the fact that the premise of news coverage was terrorist attacks in New York City and at the Pentagon. Every theme in both sets of data seemed to be closely tied to the “attacks” theme. A visual analysis of the maps for each set of data provided interesting inferences (See Figures 1 &

2, pp. 23, 24). For instance, the map for traditional media contained the five theme spheres identified for this data set arranged rather neatly around the core theme of “attacks.” The concept words within these theme spheres were all connected clearly back to the “attacks” theme. Alternative media seemed to have more of a scattered concept word branching. While everything did tie back in to the “attacks” theme, some of the smaller themes like “city,” “died,” and “thought” were clearly farther from the core “attacks” theme. In any case, the theme maps indicate a rather well-planned message on the part of the traditional media and no central organized effort on the part of the alternative media. This seems to support Chomsky’s (1997) argument that traditional media set a tone for the national dialogue. The maps also give support to the claim from the alternative media organization that it is different from traditional media.

The software also generated name-like concepts and word-like concepts for each set of data. The traditional data set yielded the following name-like concepts: “World Trade Center,” “Ground Zero,” “New York,” “Twin Towers,” “New York City,” “American,” and “Pentagon.” It is clear the most common proper nouns that appeared in traditional media were of the places that were attacked on Sept. 11, 2001. The name-like concept of “America” is the only reference to a place that was not specific that was attacked; however, the argument could be made that the nation was attacked. Therefore, it seems clear that traditional media were focusing on the actual attacks themselves in the coverage of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11. A similar list was generated for the alternative media data set and included the name-like concepts of “American,” “World Trade Center,” “Afghanistan,” “New York,” “Iraq,” “America,” “Americans,” “Muslim,” and “Saudi.” The only clear reference to places that were attacked on Sept. 11 in this grouping of words was “World Trade Center” and “New York.” Once again, the argument could be made that “America” was a place that was attacked. The interesting point

about these alternative name-like concepts is that included are places where the American military fought, or attacked, after Sept. 11 in the name-like concepts of “Iraq” and “Afghanistan.” Also interesting is the inclusion of the name-like concepts that are basically identifiers with “American,” “Americans,” “Muslim,” and “Saudi.” The contextual meaning behind these concepts for both data is analyzed shortly, but the argument can be made that alternative media were providing coverage based on the nation and the world while traditional media focused mainly on the nation, specifically New York City.

The Attacks Theme

As has been stated, the first theme for each data set was “attacks.” For traditional media, the concepts identified in this theme were “attacks,” “people,” “time,” “terrorist,” “World Trade Center,” “lost,” “lives,” “died,” “honor,” “members,” “victims,” “Pentagon,” “morning,” “attack,” “others,” and “family.” For alternative media the concepts identified in the “attacks” theme were “attacks,” “American,” “terrorist,” “lost,” “lives,” “community,” “event,” “victims,” “attack,” “during,” “public,” “history,” “others,” “terrorism,” “former,” and “Muslim.” Some of the concepts within this theme were the same for each data set, but the way they appeared in print was oftentimes different. For example, the first example cited by the software in the traditional data set for the “attacks” concept was about schoolchildren. “Middle-schoolers make paper quilt to commemorate Sept. 11 attacks” was the actual headline pulled out by the software, (Migdail-Smith, 2011). This was a headline for an article about a teacher who thought to make her seventh and eighth grade students create a square of paper about what Sept. 11 meant to them. The squares were then arranged together. Some examples of what the children wrote on these squares were included in the article, which was written the week after the anniversary. Another traditional example pulled from the software detailed several remembrance

ceremonies held on the day of the anniversary. “Everyone here remembers where they were that day. Everyone has a story to tell about what occurred then, and in the attacks’ aftermath,” state Rep. Alex Atwood said in describing his account of a friend who responded in the months that followed the attacks” (Hall, 2011). This direct quote taken from the article was identified by the software. This software provided evidence of traditional media largely covering events, and this article is an example of event coverage at a local school. In fact, many of the articles in the traditional data set deal with what schoolchildren were doing to learn about Sept. 11. Another example pulled by the software for the traditional “attacks” concept, was a story where a student told a reporter “the attacks played a big role in her decision to enlist in the National Guard and ROTC” (Bowen, 2011). The article continued in the following manner, “ROTC cadet and UI sophomore Esmeralda Herrera, who was helping oversee the children's activities, said this weekend held special significance for her. Sunday was the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington, D. C. Herrera, who was 9 years old at the time, said Sept. 11 was ‘quite a significant day in my life.’ ”

Traditional media continued in this vein, providing feature articles that were not extremely informative or providing analysis that was not too analytical. One example article from the traditional data pulled out by the software for the “attacks” concept covered the anniversary coverage.

Many anniversary stories assessed how that one day changed something: international relations, domestic politics, warfare, air travel, architecture, movies. Others asked American Muslims how the years since the attacks have affected them. A few stories (like this one) covered the coverage. More than a few (including in Sunday's Post) concluded that ‘everything’ had changed.” (Farhi, 2011)

An angle picked up by the *New York Times* revealed that, despite the massive coverage given to the anniversary on television networks, some stations were opting to not mention the event. The following quote concerns sports programming and was identified by the software in this story for the “attacks” concept:

Asked if any of the networks carrying the games on Sunday (they include CBS as well as Fox and NBC) had expressed any discomfort about broadcasting football on the 10th anniversary of the attacks, Mr. McCarthy said: ‘They viewed it as something that would be positive. They understand the role that sport, and the N. F.L. especially, play as a unifying force.’ (Hale, 2011)

Perhaps, though, the example that best sums up the “attacks” concept for traditional media is the following headline taken from the *Victoria Advocate*: “Community gathers to commemorate 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 attacks” (Miles, 2011). The software identified this headline for the “attacks” concept. This particular article was indicative of the general coverage from traditional media of commemorative events throughout the nation held around the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11. One person was quoted in this article in the following way: "On occasions like this, I suggest that we remember that the perpetrators of this evil act didn't simply attack America," he said. "They attacked the very idea of America itself. And all we stand for and represent in the world was attacked." Another person said: "It's something we shouldn't forget."

In sharp contrast to this tone of solemn remembrance and network coverage analysis found in traditional media are the following data identified by the software for the alternative

data set's "attacks" concept. This first example concerned network television documentaries scheduled to air the weekend of the anniversary.

Are we going to learn something new about the 9/11 attacks this weekend that we don't already know or think we know? Are any of the so-called "truthers" who think the attacks were carried out by the U. S. government going to watch footage of the towers collapsing one more time and think, 'You know, now that I think of it, maybe the towers collapsed because al-Qaeda operatives crashed those planes into them. I owe an apology to all those people I've been pestering with my bullshit email forwards since October 2001.

(Nourae, 2011)

This quote identified by the software is interesting for several reasons. First, the author is criticizing what he saw as an abundance of Sept. 11 anniversary documentaries to commemorate the occasion, which is a wholly different kind of analysis of the same phenomenon identified by traditional media. Second, the example contains a profanity, which is something predicted based on the review of literature regarding alternative media. This same article was found by the researcher to be highly critical of the government's response to Sept. 11 by saying one more television documentary on the attacks would make little difference in the long run.

If you're the sort of person who thinks the War On Terror has been a good thing for the country, but that health care reform, labor unions and Clinton-era top marginal income tax rates are bad for us, there's nothing anyone is going to say to you that's going to wake you from your $2+2=5$ dream world. How about a TV special devoted simply to figuring out how many Iraqi noncombatants died as a result of the U. S. invasion? Is it 122,000, as the website Iraq Body Count suggests, or is it more than 600,000, as the British medical

journal the Lancet contends. I don't know the answer, but that's point. I'd like to watch a 9/11 show that teaches me something. (Nourae, 2011)

This article is obviously highly critical of the mass media, pointing out everything the author thought should be discussed instead of pandering television that was supposedly uninformative. Many articles in the alternative data set had this same kind of tone.

Another example pulled out by the software for the “attacks” theme in the alternative data set was in a story about who financed the Sept. 11 attacks. The following explains a bit about a law firm that was helping file a lawsuit against people allegedly involved in the attacks: “But Motley’s most ambitious, challenging, and politically charged endeavor is still yet to be decided—a \$1 trillion lawsuit against the alleged financiers of the Sept. 11 attacks,” (Gore, 2011). Motley is a reference to a law firm. This story appears several more times throughout several themes in the alternative data set. It is one of what appeared to be only a handful of stories regarding Saudi Arabia and is likely largely responsible for the “Saudi” theme. This story also includes information of a financial nature regarding Sept. 11, though it is certainly not the only one in the data set to do so. This aspect is discussed later in more detail but is worth mentioning now.

Because it was a good example of how the alternative media were critical and because it included many of the themes found throughout the alternative media data set, Gore’s (2011) article was analyzed further. Gore’s article followed a man named Bill Doyle, whose son died in the Sept. 11 attacks. The story, from the *Baltimore City Paper*, was about Doyle and others’ attempts to file a lawsuit (referenced above) against people they claim were responsible for Sept. 11 attacks, including Saudi Arabian princes. In the excerpt that follows, Doyle has a

conversation with President Barack Obama about the May 2011 killing of Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind behind the Sept. 11 attacks. In this conversation, Doyle asks for the president to provide 28 pages that had been redacted from a 2002 report on the attacks. Gore's article stated the report established the subject of those redacted pages was Saudi Arabia. Doyle believed the pages might contain more information about who was behind the Sept. 11 attacks, but without the pages, there is no proof was the implication of the Gore's article.

The article by Gore (2011) went on to detail how the majority of the Sept. 11 hijackers were of Saudi descent and it was likely that Saudis other than Bin Laden, who was also Saudi Arabian, helped finance terrorism. The article clearly showed a disagreement with the response of the government toward Afghanistan and Iraq in the wake of Sept. 11. The author was clearly building a case for Saudi Arabian involvement in the attacks. Gore wrote that in the months following the attacks, there was no retaliation of any kind against Saudi Arabia, rather the American military bombed Afghanistan, which he described as an impoverished nation, and Iraq, which had nothing do to with the attacks. Other articles from the traditional set had the same kind of critical tone, all of which lent support to the hypothesis that alternative media would be more critical of the government than traditional media. In fact, little to no evidence was found of traditional media criticism of the government regarding its response to the Sept. 11 attacks.

An article by Tom Hayden (2011) appeared in many alternative publications. This extremely long piece was created as an analytical reflective piece to run in conjunction with the anniversary of Sept. 11. Hayden was critical of many aspects of the government's response to Sept. 11 throughout the past decade. Because it was cited by at least one fifth of the alternative papers used for this content analysis, and because it covered so many topics relevant to alternative media coverage of the attacks, it was cited by the software many times. The

researcher cites it numerous times to illustrate how alternative media covered the anniversary. The following quote was pulled by the software for the alternative “attacks” concept in Hayden’s article:

It is clear that shadow wars lie ahead, but not expanding ground wars involving greater numbers of American troops. The emerging argument will be over the question of whether special operations and drone attacks are effective, moral and consistent with the standards of a constitutional democracy. And it is clear that the economic crisis finally is enabling more politicians to question the trillion dollar war spending. (Hayden, 2011)

Other alternative media writers took the anniversary as an opportunity to wax critical, too. For instance, the following was pulled by the software: “The attacks gave the United States a rare opportunity to reset its reputation. Even countries known for anti-Americanism offered their support. “We are all Americans,” ran the headline of the French newspaper *Le Monde*” (Rall, 2011). The gist of this article was a scathing criticism of the nation’s foreign policy. The next couple of paragraphs in the story read, “The century of U.S. foreign policy that led to 9/11 should and could have been put on hold and reassessed in the wake of 9/11. It wasn’t time to act. It was time to think, to lick our wounds and play the victim. It was time, for once, to take the high road.”

One example of how alternative media did some of the same things as traditional media was in the following example pulled by the software for the “attacks” concept: “The 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks will be marked in Little Rock with a 2 p. m. observance at the Capitol and an ecumenical (including those without religious beliefs) observance at the Clinton Presidential Center at 2:30 p. m.,” (Brantly, 2011). This is obviously an announcement of a

community remembrance event, but it includes a bit of editorial content with the qualifier that even people without religious beliefs could attend the event. The inclusion of this piece of editorial gave support to the hypothesis that alternative media would be fundamentally different from traditional media. Another article from an alternative paper was intended to highlight the fact that a terrorist threat had been received by the government during the days leading up to the anniversary. The following quote was pulled by the software for this story: “Update: Reports today revealed a credible, vehicle-based threat of anniversary attacks against bridges and tunnels in New York and Washington,” (Romero, 2011). Yet another example mentioned Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano urging people to be aware of suspicious activity heading into the anniversary weekend (Gross, 2011). Incidentally, these same kind of reports appeared in the traditional media data set. This can be interpreted as the media in both paradigms seeking to fulfill an informational role for readers. In this way, the two media were similar. Despite that similarity, it was clear that traditional media were not concerned with being analytical, whereas alternative media were not only a bit more analytical, but critical. This thread repeated across all themes for both data sets.

Sept. 11 Told Through People

The next concepts that appeared in the “attacks” theme for traditional and alternative media were “people” and “American,” respectively. It is important to note here that the next theme that appeared for the alternative data set was “people,” which meant the alternative media gave enough attention to people to cause that word to be identified with its own theme, whereas “people” was identified only as a concept word within a theme, in this case the “attacks” theme, for traditional media, according to the software. Many of the same concept words were

identified by the software for each data set, but these concepts were spread differently throughout the themes of each set.

The first example pulled out by the software for the “people” in the traditional media data set was in a story about how schoolchildren would study the attacks. “This is an opportunity, for the older grades, to learn and understand that the attacks on Sept. 11 weren’t representative of a culture or religion,” Trevarrow said. “That it’s important we respect all people” (Bray, 2011). This is a reference about encouraging respect among people. However, the next example of the “people” concept for traditional media was a simple fact that stated that around 3,000 people were killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks (Conley, 2011). This was a story about an upcoming memorial service planned for a town in North Carolina. Both these examples can actually be counted as representative of the overall finding that traditional media was busy reporting how the anniversary was being recognized. In fact, much of the data in the “people” concept had to do with television listings regarding the anniversary of Sept. 11.

The first example cited by the software for the alternative data set discussing for “people” was in an article already cited previously by the software and was mentioned repeatedly across many of the themes. The excerpt follows in part:

Of the 10 hijackers, including al-Shehri, who caused the death of 2,606 people in New York City, eight of them were Saudis. Flowers does not like to talk much about dollar amounts—a CNN report once misrepresented the legal action as a “\$116 trillion lawsuit,” and she acknowledges that the suit is about bankrupting the defendants, not enriching the plaintiffs, the majority of whom have already been compensated by the federal government’s compensation fund. “For some families, it has been therapeutic to seek

redress in a civil action,” Flowers says. “It’s not as if they can go out and hunt these people down themselves.” (Gore, 2011)

That was one of the more lengthy examples the software identified. “People” was only mentioned one time in this example but it referred to the deaths of the Sept. 11 victims, which was a recurring theme in the alternative data. In fact, “died” is a theme unto itself in this set. That was not the case with the traditional data set. This article by Gore was mentioned in many of the alternative data themes and is largely responsible for the “Saudi” theme, which is discussed in detail later. But first, more analysis of the alternative theme of “people” must be given.

Another example in the alternative theme of “people” dealt with a memories of the day of Sept. 11. This article provided analysis and its author told the reader that the “world is watching,” (D’Andrea, 2011). The software pulled out, “During 9/11, people who came from the Cold War generation, they tended to be much more judgmental about race,” he says. ”But millennials , though it impacts them, are still blind to those issues, and fear of Muslims.” This article told about a community panel discussion on the aftermath of Sept. 11. The article was interspersed with personal reflections. Personal remembrances were common between both traditional and alternative media, but the tone was sometimes different. One good example of how the two were different was in an article that quoted “truthers,” or people who believe that not all the facts have been presented regarding the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. One alternative paper highlighted the Northern California 9/11 Truth Alliance’s seventh annual 9/11 Truth Film Festival. The software pulled the following quote from this article: “There are some people who are strongly opposed to what we’re doing and some people who are deeply appreciative,” says Northern California 9/11 Truth Alliance cofounder... ” (Huet, 2011).

There were several more concepts in the “people” theme for alternative media, including the concept of “world.” The first story identified by the software for this concept was another personal reflection about how the author dealt with the attacks at the age of 13 (Bowers, 2011). An interesting aspect of this story was that Leximancer pulled one of President George W. Bush’s most famous quotes that left an impression on the author enough so that he put it in his story. The president’s quote was this: “I can hear you, the rest of the world hears you, and the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon.” Bush said this while touring the site in the days after the attacks in response to someone telling him they could not hear him while he was addressing a crowd of emergency responders and volunteers working at the site of the collapsed World Trade Center. The author went on to say that he was not impressed with that speech and that he had heard war mongering from pastors and hate speech from his high school and was unsure what the right thing is for America to do. This article is obviously critical, but introspective, too, not only of the author but of America, which seemed to be a common theme throughout personal reflective pieces contained in the alternative media set.

Therefore, whereas traditional media sought to simply journal the fact that people were killed on Sept. 11, the alternative media sought to use the opportunity to criticize the government. This criticism extended throughout many of the themes in the alternative data set, as can be seen below in the analysis of the “event” concept and theme.

The “attacks” theme for the traditional media included the concepts of “died” and “family,” among others. Because these concepts within the “attacks” theme of traditional media were considered outright themes in alternative media by the software, these will be given special analysis to determine how they differed between each set. Some examples of cutlines for photographs were pulled by the software for the “died” concept in traditional media. One such

outline appeared in the *Charleston Gazette* (2011) in a piece titled “Around the World” and explained how the picture was of a young girl who was making an impression of her father’s name on a piece of paper. His name was among the victims’ names inscribed at the World Trade Center memorial in New York City. The software also identified the next bit of information for the traditional media “died” concept:

The White House has issued detailed guidelines to U. S. government officials on how to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, with instructions to honor the memory of those who died on American soil but also to recall that Al Qaeda and other extremist groups have since carried out attacks elsewhere in the world, from Mumbai to Manila. (Shanker & Schmitt, 2011)

This was a lead paragraph on a story about how the Sept. 11 commemorations should be handled. Whether this was supportive of the government or if it was merely reporting facts is up for debate; however, it was clear the government wanted things to be handled a certain way and the traditional media made that known. Another example of the “died” concept gave numbers about first responders who died in the years following the attacks.

The World Trade Center Health Registry reports more than 54,000 first responders are enrolled in health programs, and 15,901 received treatment in the past year. The New York State Department of Health says 836 first responders have died since the attacks, though not all may have resulted from the rescue and recovery work. (Togneri, 2011)

Most of the rest of the data pulled by Leximancer for this concept referred to victims of the attacks and went no further.

Most of the alternative data for the “died” theme referred to many of the same things as the traditional set did, though there was no mention of how the White House wanted the commemorations to be handled. Still, those who died on Sept. 11 were mentioned many times but not just in this theme. References to the dead were included across all themes for each data set. However, the most common example pulled by the software for the alternative data set for the “died” theme was a database found online for the publication *Seattle Weekly* (2011) that listed soldiers who have been killed in Afghanistan from 2001 through 2011. This webpage database was titled “Afghanistan: 2001-2011. This database had briefs for each soldier that read like an obituary, including biographical information about the deceased. Oftentimes there would be some quotes from people who knew the soldier. This website resembled a database of sorts in that it included soldiers who died shortly after the Afghanistan campaign began in fall 2001 through the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11. There may be other such databases that exist, but these were not included in the traditional data set. It is likely that the inclusion of this database skewed the results and gave a completely separate theme for “died” for the alternative set. That said, this is certainly an important part of the alternative coverage of the anniversary of Sept. 11 in that it is attempting to show the human toll still being extracted a decade after the attacks.

The “family” concept for traditional media continued the personal reflections aspect of Sept. 11 coverage. This concept included anecdotes about how people’s families were affected or that the authors wanted to get back home to see their families on Sept. 11, 2001. Nothing very critical was identified in this concept. Conversely, in the alternative data set, the first example for the “family” theme pulled by the software was a critical story about how the government had charged a Muslim man in a terrorism plot (Smith, 2011). The crux of the story was about how the definition of terrorism had changed in the past 10 years. Another example pulled by

Leximancer for this theme was in the concept “place.” The first example in this concept was a story about Islam (Hodges, 2011). This story was about how it had become easier to be a Muslim in Charlotte, N.C. in the past 20 or so years. The concept of place within the theme of “family” seemed to be a reference to places to go worship or a place to go for a shared experience, like a memorial service. This is interesting because the first few examples pulled by the software for alternative media referenced religion, whereas the traditional media only really used “family” as a concept as a matter of explaining a story. This finding lends support to the hypothesis that traditional media and alternative media would be fundamentally different.

Finances

One interesting concept found in the alternative data set’s “family” theme was that of “money.” This was given particular attention because of the researcher’s hypothesis that financial facets of Sept. 11 would be more likely to be discussed by traditional than alternative media. The first example identified by Leximancer in the “money” concept referred to nonprofit organizations that formed in the wake of Sept. 11 in order to take advantage of funds that had become available (Raymond, 2011). Besides being critical of the government, this article contained numerous examples of financial data surrounding Sept. 11 charities. This article discussed scams and pointed out government agencies crafted programs aimed at combating terrorism, like the Drug Enforcement Agency, which established the notion of narco-terrorism. Another article discussed the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and was identified by the software for a portion that called politicians liars (Jones, R., 2011). One article identified by the software for the alternative set discussed how the events of Sept. 11 were connected to Oklahoma and in the process detailed money transfers from one of the terrorists. Examples of financial facets of Sept. 11 appeared elsewhere in the data for the

alternative set and are discussed, too. The traditional data set yielded no serious discussion regarding the financial facets of Sept. 11, neither identified by the software nor the researcher's observations. In fact, "money" appears neither as a concept nor a theme in the traditional data set.

A discussion regarding the "Saudi" theme in alternative media is merited at this point because it is closely tied to the financial aspect of this research. There were few stories cited by Leximancer for this theme; however, the researcher did consider this to be an important theme because it included much financial data and was also critical of the government, so it spoke to two hypotheses. The first example cited by the software for the "Saudi" theme was contained in Gore's (2011) article about the lawsuit against the alleged financiers of the Sept. 11 attacks in which a source for the article alleged that Saudi Arabia bankrolled the Sept. 11 attacks. In an addendum to his article (identified by the software), Gore (2011, a) wrote another piece promoting the next article identified by Leximancer. This other article by Gore included a promotion of a book written by another author who wrote about protection money paid to al-Qaida by Saudi Arabian princes. The point here was that this example pulled by the software had a clear financial angle to it. Another article cited by the software for this theme was written by Kamph (2011) and discussed a story reported on by another newspaper in the region regarding a Saudi Arabian family that lived in Broward County, Florida and that family's ties to the Sept. 11 attacks. One other article cited by the software for this theme was highly critical of President Bush and former Vice President Dick Cheney for enriching what was referred to as their class while making the American people supplicants of what the article called the corrupt Saudi Arabian monarchy. It was clear from the data that the alternative media were both critical

of the government and interested in reporting on or, at the very least, making claims about the finances surrounding Sept. 11.

The “event” concept first appeared near the end of the concept list for the “attacks” theme in alternative media, yet this word was considered a theme for the traditional media. It may seem like this concept would regard commemorative events, and it did, but it also referred to the actual event of Sept. 11. The first example in the traditional data set was a lead paragraph on a story about what children would be taught about Sept. 11, but it also referenced memories of the event: “Sept. 12 Kevin Alex was 3 1/2 years old when the Twin Towers were hit on Sept. 11, 2001, and he has little to no memory of the actual event,” (Bonnett, 2011). The article by Bonnett continued with what the student Alex and others his age would know about the attacks via public schools. One school referenced in the article had a class collect photos of soldiers and other information for a “wall of honor.” The reporter was simply recording what students were doing, but this reference to the military was certainly positive in tone. That was not the case with alternative media is seen shortly when the analysis for the alternative theme “Afghanistan” is reviewed. Another article in the traditional set identified for the “event” concept was of a personal reflection on Sept. 11 and what it meant to a reporter writing in a first-person perspective:

I can't imagine being a journalist on that tragic day. I am grateful for my youth, even if it was shattered by terrorists. As a college student, I felt caught in the middle between adolescence and adulthood. The event marked my college experience, stripping my senior year, and forever marking the day with tragedy. (Parsell, 2011)

The next concept in the “event” theme for traditional media was called “events,” which for purposes of this research is considered the same thing as the “event” concept. Generally, the same type of stories, with the same type of examples were, identified by the software for the “event” theme. Many of the stories were either about commemorative events planned for the anniversary or of personal memories of the terrorist event. One unusually lengthy example of a personal reflection identified by the software came from the *Tulsa World* and was authored by someone who lost a loved one on Sept. 11, 2001. Parts of that piece follow:

I have a job I love. Despite the events of 10 years ago, I feel very lucky. But I also feel conflicted. Every year on Sept. 11, and especially in the lead-up to this 10th anniversary, I am invited to events aimed at reflection and remembrance of that horrible day. ... But I cannot help but wonder if this is really the best way, now, to remember my mother and the thousands of others who died on Sept. 11, 2001. Yes, some family members and first responders are still living with illness, health problems and other horrors of Sept. 11, and for some, such events might help to heal their emotional wounds and soothe their physical pain. Here's the other side, though, for me anyway: Sometimes I feel I am asked to attend my mother's funeral again and again, year after year. I wonder what my mom, a clinical psychologist, would think of these memorials. Would she tell me to look back less and look ahead more? Would she remind me that the final stage of grief is acceptance and renewal? Or would she recommend that, next year on Sept. 11, we try to erect a different kind of memorial to those we lost, by participating in an event aimed at making the world more compassionate, safer and more equitable? What if we all spent the 11th anniversary of the attacks reflecting on what we admired most about our lost loved ones and trying to emulate those ideals? Or what if we spent time building not

another structure in memorial but, instead, building our relationships with others? Or raising money for our favorite charity? (Schofield, 2011)

This was written in a style that was not meant to inflame or cause anger but to offer a sort of constructive criticism, making this one of the few examples of the traditional media being critical of some aspect of Sept. 11, though not the government's response as the alternative media has already shown repeatedly, but of how people in general had chosen to remember and honor the event. Repeatedly, the alternative media can be seen giving critical analysis in a rather vehement manner and with what oftentimes seemed like intent to create an emotive response in the reader. The above excerpt was introspective in nature, no doubt, as was an earlier excerpt by Bowers (2011) in the analysis of the "people" theme. The difference was in the level of criticism. These two examples are also indicative of how the excerpts identified by the software can be compared across multiple themes.

Directly connected to the traditional media "event" theme were the themes of "remember" and "service," so these two were analyzed together. Throughout the discussion of the results this far it has become apparent that personal reflection, remembrances, and information regarding the time and place of commemorative events about Sept. 11 was frequently observed in the traditional data. That the above mentioned themes were identified by the software was testament to the fact that traditional media were heavily interested in reporting that there was an anniversary taking place the weekend of Sept. 11, 2011. The tone of what was being said, as has already been surmised, was somber and respectful, even when it was intended to give a critical scope, as evidenced by the example from Schofield (2011). The "service" theme in the traditional data set included the concepts of "service," "officials," "ceremony," "public," "during," "security," "fire," "military," "place," "flag," and "several." Some of these

words were found to not have too much meaning. For instance, “several” and “during” were merely words useful in describing an event. The concept of “military” will be used in a discussion regarding the “Afghanistan” theme that came from alternative media.

The first “service” theme and its concepts dealt mainly with remembrance or commemorative services that were to be held for the anniversary of Sept. 11. The next concept, “officials,” dealt mainly with the use of official sources for stories. One example in this traditional media theme was a personal story about a police officer and his wife who were taking images they had of the Sept. 11 cleanup on tour around the country (Spak, 2011). The couple began in Chicago and the police officer, who was a New York City police officer, was interviewed for the article. He recalled seeing the distinctive Chicago police hats worn by that city’s police as they helped in New York City in the days and weeks after the attack. “Officials” appears in this story as a way to describe how his and his wife’s collection of Sept. 11 photographs came to be on display. The concept “ceremony” revealed the following partial software example: “She turned 10 on that tragic date and will mark her 20th birthday on Sunday, participating in a Sept. 11 ceremony at Northwestern University, where she attends college,” (Ussery, 2011). The article was about how people whose birthdays fall on Sept. 11 will always have to deal with the attacks’ anniversary. This article included, once again, memories of the day of the attacks. The next concept of “public” had briefs about public remembrance services, articles about increasing security and editorials regarding the anniversary.

For the theme of “remember,” the software identified the following lead paragraph: “How will America remember Sept. 11, 2001, on Sept. 11, 2047?” (Roeper, 2011). This retrospective piece asks why anniversaries are so important to Americans. The author suggests that Sept. 11 will eventually be relegated to a brief in the decades to come. Another story

proclaims the media will not let anyone forget Sept. 11 happened (Farhi, 2011). The example pulled out by the software for this story was a paragraph that stated television, radio, print, online, and social media created a sort of group therapy that searched for meaning for everyone even remotely involved in the events of Sept. 11, 2001. This article was critical of the media coverage. Based on the analysis, this was the only kind of criticism offered by traditional media, and it was essentially criticism of itself.

The traditional themes of “service,” “event,” and “remember” were all essentially about the same thing, which was conveying that there was a milestone anniversary for the nation coming up or occurring, depending on when the article being discussed was written. This was an important finding because these themes make up half the major themes for the traditional media data set, according to the software. Based on the data analyzed, it appeared the traditional media considered the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 an important event that needed to be recorded, with only relatively minimal space devoted to critical analysis when compared to the space devoted to critical analysis across all themes for alternative media. Official memorial services, events, and anecdotal memories abounded in these three themes. It should be noted that alternative media included plenty of anecdotal memories, too. In fact, the researcher pulled out examples of each data set and found many entries in the alternative data set were listings for local commemorations of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11. Much of this kind of content could be considered news briefs and thus had no byline.

“City” appeared as the final theme in the alternative data set. The word city was identified as a concept in the “zero” theme for traditional media. For the traditional set’s use of the word “city,” the software pulled out a story about a photographer who had photographed Ground Zero and was going to display those pictures (Brudereck, 2011). The lead paragraph on

this story was identified by the software as an example of the “city” concept and referred to a man who had been called to help put the city back together in the days following the attacks. This man took photographs while he was at the site and was going to offer them for public display for the first time. Much of the story focused on his memories of Sept. 11 and the cleanup he was involved in for about 6 months afterward. Once again, the memories were central to the traditional media narrative of Sept. 11. One more example pulled out by the software was a story that solicited readers for their memories of Sept. 11 (Mitchell, 2011). This story quoted a man who said he was shocked at the horror he saw on the television that day and that he continued to pray for the victims and their families. The reference to “city” here was for the city of Florence, S.C. Another story also referenced the relief workers who came to New York City after the attacks (The Virginian-Pilot, 2011). This was more of an editorial titled “The next day” and did not give personal accounts, rather it told of how relief workers flocked to the site of the attacks in New York City and how the breadth and scope of volunteers was massive, of how the city was shut down because of the relief effort. The alternative data set’s “city” theme seemed to mainly a reference to New York City and memories people had of the attacks. In this way, both traditional and alternative media were similar. This theme was directly tied to the “time” theme.

The “time” theme for alternative media included many concepts referencing the places where the attacks took place and also of where people were when they heard news of the attacks, according to the data. However, analysis of the data revealed the software pulled interesting items from alternative stories for this theme. One example was from a story identified by the software for another theme, as well. This story quoted experts on the significance of Sept. 11 and the aftermath (Zinshteyn, 2011). The example pulled by the software for this story quoted

someone who said the war in Afghanistan costs 1% of the United States's GDP and that the Vietnam War took 9% of the nation's GDP. The article by Zinshteyn went on to say that despite perceived political unrest, the 10 years since Sept. 11 have been relatively peaceful and limited economic wealth. This story is interesting because it is another example that could be used to make the argument that the hypothesis regarding the reporting of financial aspects of Sept. 11 is not supported by the data. Another concept in the "time" theme was "World Trade Center." This concept included personal stories about Sept. 11 that were similar in nature to the same kind of personal stories from the traditional media data set. None of these examples identified by the software were overly critical of the government's response to the attacks, nor were they supportive. This was found to be the case with the traditional media examples of personal reflections identified by the software. It seemed that the only time personal reflections became critiques of the government was when the examples had been authored by staff writers or editors employed by the alternative publications, and most of those examples pulled by the software appeared in other themes. In the traditional set, the critiques cited were only moderately critical. Regardless, the other concepts in the alternative "time" theme were found to have examples from the software that were much the same as what has already been stated.

The alternative media theme of "thought" could have been renamed "speculation" or some other thought-provoking term because one of the first examples identified by the software for this theme was a story about whether the Sears Tower (now the Willis Tower) would have survived the same kind of attack on the World Trade Center (Miner, 2011). The specific example cited by Leximancer was a section that asked an engineer what he thought about the iconic Chicago tower surviving a similar attack. Another example identified by the software was in a personal reflection on how life had changed post-Sept. 11. The specific example highlighted

long airport lines for security and travel baggage restrictions marking a clear delineation between pre- and post-Sept. 11. Other examples in this theme were personal recollections of the attacks. One example cited by Leximancer was a story that contained a paragraph about scared parents picking up their children from a school on the day of the attacks (Cohen, 2011).

Another example cited by Leximancer for this particular alternative media concept was in an article that listed what the author decided were the best and worst songs about Sept. 11 (Gray, 2011). Leximancer's example was a paragraph that criticized a song about Sept. 11 that was too repetitive and did not have enough thought go into it, in the author's opinion. This was a unique piece of journalism that was written with an alternative flare, the researcher noted. For instance, the reviewer stated that he would likely mock people who were trying to do something serious. "Tough shit. You want a better review, put out a better product, especially when it has to do with something as serious and lasting as 9/11, which is still at the top of the news," Gray wrote in his introduction to the critique. This was also an example in support of the hypothesis that alternative media would use more profanity than traditional media. More profanity that would never make it into most newspapers was once again reported in alternative media. The following example was identified by the researcher:

Wu-Tang Clan's 'Rules,' however, may be the blue-ribbon choice for most angry mainstream pop song linked with 9/11. With vein-popping fury, Ghostface Killah fumes: 'Who the fuck knocked our buildings down?/ Who the man behind the World Trade massacres?/ Step up now/Where the four planes at, huh?/ Is you insane, bitch?/ Fly that shit over my hood and get blown to bits!' Yes, I don't believe anybody would wish to be on Ghostface's shit list. (Foley, 2011)

Other profanities identified by the researcher included the word “fucking,” which was mentioned in an article in the *Boston Phoenix* about an Iraqi rapper becoming the preeminent post-Sept. 11 artist (Faraone, 2011). Another example identified by the researcher included the word “shit” and was in an article in the *Boulder Weekly* that interestingly was not hostile toward the government’s response to the attacks of Sept. 11 but very supportive of the global war on terror. While this one example does not support the hypothesis that the alternative media were critical of the government, it is only one example and should be considered an outlier. The data do clearly reveal, however, that alternative media used profanity and traditional media did not.

War

Among the most interesting findings from the software was the theme of “Afghanistan” in the alternative media data set. This theme included the concepts of “Afghanistan,” “military,” “Iraq,” “war,” “government,” “national,” “killed,” “political,” “security,” “fact,” “response,” “information,” and “president.” The connection of a theme about the wars to stories about Sept. 11 is not surprising, because the nation went to war in Afghanistan about a month after the attacks and then invaded Iraq about 18 months later. This finding is all the more interesting because the traditional media mention the wars very little. In fact, the only concept identified by the software for traditional media related to the wars was “military,” which appeared toward the end of the concept list for the “service” theme. The results from the alternative “Afghanistan” theme were analyzed and then compared to the “military” concept found in the traditional data set.

This lead paragraph identified by the software was certainly a critical jab at the government by one of the alternative newspapers: “In the run-up to the 10th anniversary of the

September 11th attacks, a panel of foreign policy experts hosted by the New America Foundation shared thoughts on the mistakes made by the military and Bush administration in Afghanistan and Pakistan” (Zinshteyn, 2011). Soon after this statement, the article contained a subhead identified by the researcher that read “Questionable Military Tactics.” This article included comments from many sources, the researcher noted, who claimed to be knowledgeable about the United States’s actions regarding the response to Sept. 11. Much of the article was critical analysis given in hindsight. Hayden (2011) was cited numerous times by the software for this theme. In a paraphrase of one of the examples identified by the software, Hayden defended the website WikiLeaks for providing information about tens of thousands of civilian casualties in Iraq, instructions to American troops to not investigate allegations of torture against allies, and other items of interest. Yet another article identified by the software gave some history of American involvement in Afghanistan, reminding readers that in the 1980s President Ronald Reagan praised Afghani freedom fighters, who later became the Taliban (Hunter, 2011). This article continued, the researcher found, by claiming that it was wise to attack the Taliban in Afghanistan after Sept. 11, but people needed to be asking why the military was still fighting in that country. Analysis that was even more critical was pulled out by the software in an article by asking if the nation really won any kind of victory by waging wars in the Middle East (Jones, 2011). This article also included information about the economic cost of the wars and asked readers also if the nation was safer or just more feared in the world? The criticism continued with an article from a Tennessee publication that told readers the Bush administration rushed to war and set up a mentality throughout the nation that other wars were coming and needed (Barry, 2011). The next example pulled by the software boldly claimed that the nation went to war in Iraq because of lies (Clarey, 2011).

The next concept, “military,” under the “Afghanistan” theme contained the same kind of critical analysis pulled out by Leximancer. Though not mentioned in the above paragraph, the “Afghanistan” theme also included many references to the economic cost of the wars, which was around \$1.3 trillion at the time of the anniversary of Sept. 11. One article identified by the software in the “military” concept reported that 6,168 service members died during military service and 45,368 were wounded (Fulcherl, 2011). This article was not critical of the government upon further investigation by the researcher. This particular article was a report of a commemorative event that had been held in commemoration of the anniversary. Not too many articles in the traditional set, though, brought up the number of war dead in commemoration coverage, which shows a difference between the two data sets. The concept of “war” in the “Afghanistan” theme did include a highly critical story identified by the software that compared Bush to a confused and frustrated adolescent who attacked Afghanistan a second time and left the nation mired in a bloody and expensive war that the nation will not fund correctly (McCaslin, 2011).

It was clear from these examples that alternative media took the anniversary of Sept. 11 as a chance to be highly critical of the government in the decade since the attacks. Some of the stories cited by the software were outright opposed to the wars, while others were supportive 10 years ago or 8 years ago, but no longer. Iraq and Afghanistan were barely mentioned in the traditional media set, but when they were, it was mainly in the context of an event or other ceremony to mark the anniversary of Sept. 11. A review of the “military” concept identified in the traditional theme of “service” follows.

One example identified by the software for the traditional media concept of “military” was in a story about a local event occurring in commemoration of the Sept. 11 anniversary that

included a photo exhibit and other information about Sept. 11 victims but also of people who served in conflicts from World War II to the present. (Mitchell, 2011). Another article cited by the software highlighted a military appreciation weekend that featured activities for children (Bowen, 2011). Another article identified by the software for the traditional “military” concept was about the 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance and how children were learning about the attacks and what they were doing in observance of the anniversary (Loughlin, 2011). The example within this story identified by the software was about how the children wrote letters and collected items for female soldiers overseas. Bray (2011), who has already been referenced in another section of this paper, was again identified by the software for the same story that informed readers that some schools within her circulation area focused on outreach to military families in observance of the Sept. 11 anniversary.

The examples continued in this fashion, telling readers about what people, particularly schoolchildren (once again this thread appears), were doing in honor of military service members. Most of the articles within this “military” concept were centered around an event or a memorial service of some kind, which is not surprising given that this concept appeared in the traditional media theme of “service,” which was found to be largely about public services or memorials being held in honor of the victims of Sept. 11 and the military men and women who were deployed to fight in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Ground Zero, the Twin Towers, and Reflection

The second largest theme for the traditional data set was “zero.” This theme was a bit of a misnomer in that it referenced the World Trade Center, Ground Zero, the Twin Towers or any other word used describe to what was left after the planes knocked down the buildings. This

theme could just as well have been named “Ground Zero,” because that is what it is the content of the theme. Though it appeared as the last theme, “towers” was identified by the researcher to be connected to the “zero” theme because they are essentially the same thing. The difference lies in the “zero” theme referred to the site where the World Trade Center stood and “towers” referred to the buildings before they were destroyed. Both of these themes mainly contained stories that were of the reflective in nature, which was the case, as has been stated, for much of the traditional media.

The software identified an editorial for the “zero” theme that told how the neighborhood around ground zero had changed in the years since the attacks (Fields, 2011). This article contained another bit of information pertinent to the hypothesis regarding economics. The author provided information about how commerce had returned to the neighborhood near where the World Trade Center once stood and how people were buying apartments in the area more frequently than prior to the attacks. This was a loose example of discussion on economics, which were rare for the traditional media with regards to the financial impact of Sept.

11. Indeed, there were more mentions of economics in the alternative media, or rather cost of the war and its connection to the national deficit and the recession of 2008, than there were in traditional media, which did not support the hypothesis that traditional media would talk more about economics than alternative media. More is discussed on that later. The concept “ground” in the “zero” theme contained a story identified by the software that also talked about the vitality of the area as a way to show terrorists they gained no victory on Sept. 11 (Abdullah, 2011). “Firefighters” was another concept that appeared in the “zero” theme. An example of a story for this concept pulled by the software highlighted a group of men who joined other firefighters from around the country who flocked to New York City to help in the aftermath of

the attacks any way they could (Thibodeau, 2011). One example identified by the software for the “zero” theme concept of “firefighters” lauded the first responders that day for bravery (Derakhshani, 2011). The data showed that the “site” concept within the “zero” theme referred mainly to the World Trade Center or ground zero, but there were references to the crash site in Pennsylvania where one of the hijacked planes that day crashed in a field and also to the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. Another story in the “firefighters” concept talks about photographs from Sept. 11, 2001, that chronicled various aspects of the response to the cleanup efforts in New York City (Mitchell, K., 2011). This software identified a section that described a photograph of firefighters staring at the wreckage of the towers at ground zero. “New York” was another concept in the “zero” theme, which was logical given the fact that ground zero was in New York City. Most of the stories identified by the software in this concept were of personal memories the day of the attacks. In fact, the data showed most of the rest of the stories were about personal memories of the attacks. The data also showed that a common thread in this overall theme of “zero” was about security at ground zero or in New York City. Many promotions for television documentaries were in this concept, too.

The traditional media theme of “towers” contained mainly feature articles, reflective pieces, and informational stories about the Twin Towers, as well as numerous remembrances of the attacks on the buildings. This was the last theme that was identified for the traditional data set and when combined with the theme of “zero” accounted for one third of the traditional media themes identified by the software. One example identified by the software was an editorial from *The Daily Star-Journal* (2011) in a piece titled “Moment of silence on 9-11 anniversary.” This example listed no author, as is common with newspaper editorials, and it was relatively short. It only mentioned the towers in summarizing the commemoration in New York City on Sept. 11,

2011. The editorial's author hoped that on the 20th anniversary of the attacks the nation and world would become more tolerant and celebrate each other's differences. Leximancer pulled the following quote from a teacher named Harris in a story about what reaction schoolchildren (once again) had to learning about the attacks on the towers: "Most of them were shocked someone would be this cruel," said Harris, who was leading a reading group at Pierce Street Elementary 10 years ago when the planes crashed into the twin towers. "We talked about feelings from that day. We tried to turn a positive spin and talk about the acts that were done." (Kieffer, 2011).

CHAPTER 7

HYPOTHESES SUMMARIES

Based on the data and the analysis conducted, three of the researcher's four hypotheses were supported. The alternative media were more critical of the government, did use profanity more than traditional media, and did differ significantly from the traditional media. **H1**, which predicted alternative media coverage of the Sept. 11 anniversary would be more critical of the U.S. government than would traditional media was supported. Evidence supporting this hypothesis was abundant throughout most of the software-identified alternative media themes, with stories calling government representatives liars, editorials encouraging citizens to question the official truth of the attacks, writers pointing out facts that portrayed the U.S. military in a poor light, the highlighting of the alleged Saudi Arabian connection to Sept. 11, and personal reflections that wondered why the response to the violence of Sept. 11 was more violence. One example found by the researcher and not the software did not support the hypothesis, but it was only one of hundreds of examples of highly critical analysis, so this example was considered an outlier. Traditional media was not critical at all of the government, according to the data. This finding supports Chomsky (1997), who argued that elite traditional media influenced all other traditional media and was basically an extension of the national power structure.

H2, which stated that traditional media would emphasize the financial facets of the Sept. 11 anniversary more often than would alternative media, was not supported. The researcher found that alternative media mentioned financial aspects of Sept. 11, whereas the traditional media mostly ignored this angle in covering the anniversary of Sept. 11. According to the software, there was no theme devoted to finances, nor was there a concept for finances. The

software identified a “money” concept for alternative media and that was used in the analysis to determine no support for **H2**. Additionally, qualitative analysis revealed financial facets were mentioned across many of the themes identified in the alternative data set. Much of the financial analysis done by the alternative media focused on the fact that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have cost the American taxpayers \$1.3 trillion to date. Special attention was also given in alternative media to those alleged to have financed the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

H3, which stated alternative media would be more likely to use profanity than would traditional media was supported. The researcher found the words “shit,” “fuck,” “ass,” “bitch,” “hell,” “damn,” and “goddamn” in the alternative media data set. The word “shit” was used eight times. The word “fuck” was used once. The five other words identified by Carlin (1972) were not found. The text search also discovered four variations on the word “shit” in five instances. These variations were “bullshit,” “shitty,” “bullshit,” “shitload,” and “jackshit.” The word “fucking” was also noted in the alternative data. The word “ass” was observed three times. “Bitch” was used only once. “Hell” was used 16 times. “Damn” was used twice. And “goddamn” was used only once. A total of 38 profane words were found in the alternative data set. The traditional data set only contained two instances of the use of the word “hell.” No other profanities were identified in the traditional data set. While this was not a large number of profanities for the alternative data set, the hypothesis was deemed supported because the profanities varied so much more than the single word used in the traditional data set and there were many more examples. This was expected to be the case based on the literature regarding alternative media and was not a surprising finding.

H4 stated there would be a significant difference between the manner in which alternative media and traditional media covered the anniversary of Sept. 11. This was supported

through data gleaned from the software and through qualitative content analysis of the data sets. The alternative data set yielded considerably more and varied themes, including one critical theme on war, a theme on death, a theme on the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and a theme on people. The traditional data set did not include any of these themes. The alternative data set also included articles on “truthers,” or people who questioned the government’s official account of the Sept. 11 attacks and sought the true answers. “Truthers” were not even mentioned in the traditional data set. In fact, the traditional data set mainly had themes that dealt with commemoration events for the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 and personal reflections on the day of the attacks. Alternative media had those reflective and informative themes too, but oftentimes the content was markedly different, taking on a critical tone that the traditional media did not touch. In fact, the majority of the criticism given by traditional media was leveled against themselves for providing, ironically, too much coverage of the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11.

CHAPTER 8

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research was limited in its scope. Not every single alternative publication in the nation was identified and used for data for the alternative data set. The same was true of the traditional data set. This limitation did not likely hinder the outcomes, though, which were largely predicted based on the literature review because the alternative publications came from across the country, as did the traditional media examples gathered by a Lexis Nexis search. Another limitation could be the use of the AAN members. While the use of an organization or an association may seem antithetical to the concept of alternative media, the researcher had to begin somewhere and the AAN provided a boundary, a specific area, from which to pull data. Had there been no such thing as the AAN, this researcher would have been faced with the insurmountable task of seeking out every website, blog, and web posting across the Internet. Perhaps in future research, more publications that self-identify as alternative or opposite-of-mainstream can be included.

A point to stress about the research, and not necessarily a limitation, was that it focused on a topic that was extremely emotional for many people. This is important to keep in mind because it meant the data were likely to contain highly opinionated writing. Conspiracy theories abounded in the weeks and months following Sept. 11 and the alternative media allowed a voice to those who maintain those conspiracies to this day; however, examples from the alternative media did at times contain information that most of the conspiracies had been debunked. Nevertheless, conspiracy theorists were given space throughout the alternative

media. Future research on the differences between the two media paradigms would likely benefit from a more benign topic.

Another direction for future research would be to investigate how the medium of alternative news affects the message put forth by that segment of the news world. McLuhan (1967) argued that the grammar of print construes the unseen message of institutions, and this has the effect of providing the unwary reader with assumptions. That is to say that it frames the argument for the reader. McLuhan went beyond printed words in his argument, but it is relevant here because news media is considered an institution. The whole premise of this research is the divide within that institution that creates alternative and traditional media. This ties back in to Phillipson's (1997) work on speech codes and the establishment of a separate culture. Is the alternative media influencing the national culture and dialogue, taking that privilege away from the mainstream? Future research should investigate that topic and whether readers find the news credible between the two mediums.

Future researchers should also take note of the outcome of **H2**, which predicted the financial aspects of Sept. 11 would be more likely to be covered by traditional media because the research suggested alternative media were not as concerned with finances and Wall Street and the markets. The data showed the opposite to have occurred. The reason or reasons for this were not investigated in this research; however, the qualitative analysis of the financial aspects mentioned in the alternative data set all supported **H2**, which stated the alternative media would be critical of the government. The costs of the wars that have been waged post-Sept. 11 were a target for criticism by the alternative media. The alternative media also mentioned finances in the context of who was responsible for the attacks. Was this hypothesis not supported because of the topic researched? It is not known at this time, but it raises an interesting question about how

alternative media do cover or view financial news. A future research project should focus on investigating financial coverage in alternative and traditional media.

The support for **H3** was particularly interesting when considered in conjunction with Phillipsen's work on speech codes. What kind of unique culture do the alternative publications create when using profanity? What types of other speech are these publications using that differentiate them from the mainstream? If there is a distinct culture based on language and speech in alternative media, what do readers think about that culture? There are many avenues to investigate regarding the speech and culture of alternative media.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The data showed a clear difference between traditional media and alternative media. As was found in the review of literature, modern alternative media was born out of the civil strife of the 1960s in America, when those opposed to the status quo thought it necessary to produce news products that told the “truth” as they saw it. The alternative media of today are still maintaining the news products that offer a view that is different from traditional, mainstream media. The role of critical observer of the government that was the inspiration for many of the underground newspapers of the 1960s is still the role of the alternative press network today. That the alternative media, according to the software, developed a theme dealing with war in connection to Sept. 11 was not surprising. That the traditional media did not have a theme dealing with war while the alternative media did was interesting at the least, if not surprising. But given how the alternative media was first formed during the Vietnam War era, perhaps it was appropriate that today’s alternative publications continued that legacy with vehement opposition and highly critical, sometimes profane, analysis of the global war on terror.

Stemple and Hargrove (2003) predicted that newspapers would play a larger role in telling the broader narrative of Sept. 11. However, based on this research it seems newspapers in the mainstream media are practicing more of the routine, objective, defensive journalism that Tuchman (1972) and Shoemaker and Reese (1996) spoke about. The argument was that objectivity helps with credibility, but it seems that objectivity is an excuse for and possibly a reason for providing “safe” news that will not result in criticism for the author or their respective news organization. Ironically, it is this kind of routine objective reporting that led to the

establishment of alternative news publications in the 1960s. This tradition of alternative news continues today, in part under what could be called a mantra of offering views, information, and news the mainstream objective media will not touch. Based on the news stories read by the researcher, it seemed as though traditional media were reporting on simple stories that were easy to get, like what school children were learning or attending an official public service commemorating the Sept. 11 anniversary. In contrast, the alternative media were publishing subjective opinions that were often highly critical of the government or providing facts about the number of dead from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or giving information about the cost of those wars.

Today, in the age of high-speed Internet and social media that encourages everyone to contribute to the national conversation, understanding the kind of news people are consuming seems all the more important. The existence of the Internet was the catalyst for this research. Today's world affords anyone with access to the Internet the capability to launch a website dedicated to providing news or spreading rumors, whichever the case may be. The researcher wanted to know what kind of news Internet users were finding and consuming on the Internet, where most of the alternative publications can be found, without needing membership or paying an access fee. This project was considered to be a first step toward the larger goal of analyzing the state of news consumption in America. This research was important because most newspapers today have websites (Peng, Tham, & Xiaoping, 1999), and much news is blogged about by millions of users on a daily basis. Today, many independent news media exist apart from the corporately published news of the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, CNN, NBC, Fox News, or others. Much of this independent, alternative media was easily accessible online,

yet, as the AAN and the Alternative Press's *Annotations* (2004) shows, it is also still published in print form. Anyone can access the alternative media as easily as they can the traditional media.

Perhaps the reason for this paper, the crux of the research and why it was important to know what messages were being put forth, is best summed up in the following from Roeper (2011) who was cited as a traditional media example. Though the following quote was not pulled from Leximancer, it is particularly salient to the present research, especially the final sentence:

One of the great things about the info-revolution of the last decade is that more than ever, it's up to the news consumer to decide what he wants to watch and read and when he wants to watch and read it. If you wanted to spend the last week utterly immersed in 9/11 retrospectives, there probably wasn't a single moment when you couldn't find something on live TV, and there certainly wasn't a moment when you couldn't have called up a documentary on demand or downloaded one of the thousands of books on the subject or gone to YouTube to check out videos related to 9/11. By that same measure, it's easier than ever to avoid coverage of any particular subject matter, even something as widespread and sometimes profound as the 9/11 anniversary coverage. The freedoms in the freest nation in the world include the freedom of speech - and the freedom to decide which voices you want to hear and when you want to hear them. (paras. 13,14,15)

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