

The Ideological Power of Alternative Media

By Garret Farmer-Brent

Alternative media has counter-hegemonic power, and using a case study of the anti-GMO movement, this paper will show how that power is created in drawing people away from the mainstream by providing them with different ideological possibilities.

I, _____Garret Farmer-Brent_____, hereby state that the work contained herein is wholly my own, and where it is not, the necessary referencing has been provided

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INTRODUCTION

My research dissertation will take a look at the power the alternative media has in subverting people from the dominant ideological system they inhabit by providing alternative worldviews to those espoused by the mainstream media of the prevailing hegemony. In so doing, alternative media allows people who are often marginalised and left unheard, to have voices and to make truly informed choices – a function once envisioned to be that of the mainstream media (...). A case study on the global anti-GMO movement as covered by – and indeed mutually interdependent on – alternative news media sites will be constructed to understand how alternative media gives the power of information back to people.

The anti-GMO movement has made masses of people aware of what they are consuming and the possible pathological consequences of their food consumption choices. This awareness is giving people the power of informed choice about an issue that is not given to them by mainstream media, as seen by a short review of a list of mainstream articles found about the movement. Informed choice is essential in liberal democracies, where banal and cyclical disseminated control guide and coerce ‘free’ choice towards favourable elitist policy. The questions that this case study seek to understand – its main research purposes – are:

- “Why is the anti-GMO movement a good case study on the empowerment and facilitation of the movement by alternative news coverage?”
- “How is the alternative media giving people back their power of informed choice?”; and
- “How does the alternative and radical news media liberate people from the banal and cyclical hegemonical control that is perpetuated by mainstream media?”

In the following sections, the alternative/radical media as a concept will be unpacked and looked at in junction with existing theories of power (Gramsci’s hegemony, the propaganda model, etc), to comprehend and contextualise this media, and to explicate the ways in which it can be seen to have power. These three questions seek to establish three interrelated exercises of power in the function played by radical alternative news media. The first is the power of giving *individuals* access to other possible worldviews and information so that they may conceptualise the world in a way that isn’t guided by the prevailing systems of discourses and practices. The second is the power to liberate the way *masses of people* interact with the hegemonical system of elite-favoured discourses and practices. Thirdly is the power of the alternative media to give voice to a *social movement* that would otherwise be mostly ignored by the mainstream flow of information. These three questions, if satisfied, will serve to establish a theoretical conception of the power influenced in the physical world by alternative media.

To begin with, definitions and concepts will be explained to understand the case study. A review of literature, theory, and methodology will be conducted, before heading into the case study itself. Data analysis will be exercised throughout the case study, after which conclusions from the case study will be drawn and applied to the research questions postulated above to establish the power of alternative media. The case study

will be constructed using large quantities of data gleaned from online archives of alternative news media articles orientated around the unit of analysis. Articles from the time of January 2012 to June 2013 that were found in three archives provided ample data for analysis. This research data can easily be expanded out of the archives and into the field by examining: online forum discussions; reviews of comments made on online articles; quantitative and qualitative email questionnaires; personal, telephonic, or online qualitative conversations with alternative and mainstream media personnel; and so on.

Whilst reading the *selected* literature on radical alternative media, there was much by way of description of what this media is, and many case studies on real world examples of such media, but there was very little theory – a sentiment espoused by espoused by Chris Atton in her book *‘Alternative Media’* (2002) – other than linking Gramsci’s *counter-hegemony* to the functioning of radical media. Here, I have identified a missing component in the selected literature – an elaborative theoretical explication of alternative media. No where have I come across any considerable link made between the theory of power and the alternative media to describe precisely how this media functions on an ideological level. This is the gap I hope to fill with this dissertation – an attempt at building a theory of the alternative media power.

Definitions and Concepts

What is alternative media?

This essay will take as a given that the term ‘alternative media’ is multifarious and broad, with many synonyms and even more ways to conceptualise the term. It is necessarily an umbrella label for different types of media that do not flow with the mainstream corporate or government-sponsored media structures. Alternative media should not be seen only as news outlets, nor only as media that seek to challenge actively the dominant and mainstream social order of its time. For the latter, the term ‘radical’ media is better suited, as Atton attests, because ‘radical’ encourages a definition that is concerned with social change, often of a revolutionary kind (2002). The attraction of the term ‘alternative media’ lies in its inclusion of broader mediums, such as fanzines and alternative lifestyle magazines – media that is not commercially prominent due to its ‘marginal’ audience. “[T]he full spectrum of radical media in modern cultures includes a huge gamut of activities, from street theatre and murals to dance and song [...] and not just radical uses of the technologies of radio, video, press, and Internet”, writes John Downing (2001, p. 8). In essence, ‘alternative’ is a term for media that seeks to enable the construction of identity based on worldviews different from the elitist and mass ideology of the prevailing hegemony. These media provide diverse material and truths, which enable people to disconnect themselves from the singular mainstream and to plug into beliefs and philosophies of ‘unusual’ kinds better suited to their own lifestyles in an autonomous and individual manner. Alternative media provide community outside the normal flow of the dominant culture. Minorities such as the gay community can find news and lifestyle messages on their own interests catered specifically for them; disenfranchised groups such as minimum wage workers can find solace from the attacks they face by mainstream media against their rightful want for better pay.

The inventory of definitions for alternative; radical; radical alternative; community; grassroots; etc, media is extensive, and will be examined a little closer in the literature review to follow. There exist several ‘lists’ of attributes that help to define what an alternative media outlet is exactly, and from these definitions and lists I will draw pertinent points and create my own set of general criteria that compose an alternative media organisation. I will not detail all these lists in full, but rather examine what the writers have to say, and reference which text or theorist each point is derived from.

Chris Atton says that the “Alternative media ... are crucially about offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production. They are to do with organizing media along lines that enable participation and reflexivity” (Atton, 2002, p. 4). She argues further that the power of alternative media lies not so much in the content it produces, but in the democratising, social manner in which it is produced, i.e. through citizen and community journalism, through volunteerism and lack of agenda-setting by way of corporate or political sponsorship, and through interaction with the audience who are also the producers of the media they consume (Atton, 2002).

Michael Albert makes a point that to define ‘alternative’ by a list of attributes makes the term so diverse and encompassing that everything is alternative and nothing is more alternative than anything else (Albert, 2013). Albert states that the alternativeness of an institution must have to do with how the institution is organized and the way it functions (2013). He provides that an alternative media institution: doesn’t try to maximize profits; doesn’t primarily sell audience to advertisers for revenues; is structured to subvert society’s defining hierarchical social relationships; and is structurally very different from and as independent of other major social institutions as it can be (2013).

For Tim O’Sullivan, alternative media argue for social change, seek to involve people (citizens, not elites) in their processes, and are committed to innovation in form and content (Atton, 2002). This set of aims takes into account not only content, but presentation and organizational procedures. It defines alternative media positively and usefully (Atton, 2002, p. 15)

A common list of criteria of general application can now be constructed using the above and other authors – many of whom shared similar thoughts as to what defines alternative media. This set of general criteria will be useful to determine when a media outlet should be considered ‘alternative’ throughout this paper. The outlet(s):

- i. must primarily self-identify as alternative (Albert, 2013);
- ii. must be non-commercial – i.e. it does not make nor aim to make money through advertising or political sponsorship (Albert, 2013);
- iii. should be constituted by a horizontal process of production that is more democratic, participative, and reflexive (Atton, 2002);
- iv. is subversive – in the least, by catering to marginalised groups, and at most, by actively challenging dominant ideology and advocating change (Atton, 2002);

- v. frequently try to be more responsive than mainstream media to the voices and aspirations of the excluded, and often have a close relationship with an ongoing social movement (Downing, 2001)
- vi. are carriers of non-dominant (possibly counter-hegemonic) discourses and representations, stressing the importance of self-representation (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008).
- vii. expand the range of information, reflections and exchange from the often narrow hegemonic limits of mainstream media discourse (Downing, 2001)

What is 'radical' media?

Most of the writing on the terms 'radical' and 'alternative' reveals an application that is interchangeable, though Atton prefers to use them distinctly (Atton, 2002). She says that the word 'radical' carries more overtly the meaning of dissidence, subversion, and political challenge, while the word 'alternative' refers to those media that are not so intrinsically in battle against the mainstream hegemony. Tim O'Sullivan introduces the notion of 'radical' social change as a primary aim of 'alternative' media, in that they 'avowedly reject or challenge established and institutionalised politics, because they all advocate change in society, or at least a critical reassessment of traditional values (Atton, 2002). John Downing says that "[R]adical media could easily be read two very different ways: as necessary to build counter-hegemony but only truly powerful at times of political upsurge, or as within a heartbeat of expressing deeply entrenched and disruptive mass discontent." (2001, p. 16). His formulations of radical alternative media include an inherent desire to challenge the dominant ideologies of the hegemonical administration.

Towards a working concept of 'alternative media'

Alternative media need not necessarily be politically-driven, at all. In this paper, however, with its focus on the power of alternative media to 'awaken' individuals and 'subvert' them from the mainstream hegemony, the words radical and alternative will be used interchangeably. Atton neatly states the definition preferred here in:

Alternative media provide information about and interpretations of the world which we might not otherwise see and information about the world that we simply will not find anywhere else. Alternative publications are at bottom more interested in the free flow of ideas than in profit (Atton, 2002, p. 12).

The free flow of ideas – free from the canals of the mainstream flow of information – has an intrinsic power in it, because when individuals can conceive of something, they can begin to understand it, and act freely in relation to it, whether against or with it. For this reason, no alternative media outlet will ever be truly devoid of subversive intention, because even in its most benign form, like a gay lifestyle magazine, it is still providing information and discourse that the mainstream media consciously choose not to provide. Hence, alternative media is inherently radical, no matter how unthreatening it may be (Downing, 2001). For a hegemony to remain successful, it must maintain the favour of the mainstream media institutions that are effectively its voice to the people. The same way the mainstream is the voice for the governing elite, so the

alternative is the voice for the social movements against injustices perpetuated by elitist concerns. Olga Guedes Bailey et al state that, “[A]lternative media can offer ideologies, representations, and discourses that vary from those originating in the mainstream media” (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008, p. 18), in line with the functional definition that will carry on throughout the remainder of this paper on the power of the alternative media.

What is Mainstream Media?

The concept of mainstream media will be looked at from the combative and oppositional stance of the alternative media, because much of alternative media’s power derives from that opposition, as will be seen. Herman and Chomsky state that, “the mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 1). It is their function to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them in to the institutional structures of the larger society (Louw, 2005). It is necessary to have a firm conception of the mainstream media institution itself, so as to understand why it is an ideological machine wielded by governing elites to propagate, enforce, and perpetuate the prevailing hegemony. Using Albert, Herman and Chomsky, and other theorists who focus on the media, it has been useful to compile a list of common criteria of general application that can be used to determine when a media outlet is ‘mainstream’:

- (i) the outlet is owned or sponsored by a corporate or governmental entity (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008);
- (ii) its aims are to maximize profit (Albert, 2013);
- (iii) the editors and journalists are, to a varying degree, inhibited from reporting on unpopular truths by power-political factors, advertising demands, political correctness, and so on (Herman & Chomsky, 1988);
- (iv) the outlet functions in a top-down, hierarchical manner (Atton, 2002);
- (v) the outlet facilitates very little direct feedback interaction between newsroom staff and individuals from the audience (Atton, 2002); and
- (vi) is a purveyor of dominant discourses and representations (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008)

Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model is perhaps most pertinent in understanding the ways in which the mainstream media is used by power players to propagate their control (Atton, 2002). “A propaganda model [...] traces the routes by which money and power are able to filter out the news fit to print, marginalise dissent, and allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). This model will be dealt with in greater depth in the literature review and theory section. Guedes Bailey et al state that,

Mainstream media are likely to construct and grant legitimacy to ‘leading’ social values through constant exposure of them to the audience. In this process mainstream media become ideological as they reproduce a constructed and preferred view of ‘reality’. In addition, they have the power to define which specific issues to bring to the public arena, and they become ideological by giving priority to the ideas of the main social actors such as the state, politicians, and private sector over the views of the disenfranchised minorities in civil society. (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008, p. 16)

What is meant by the word ‘power’ when referring to the ‘power of the alternative media’?

Power cannot be defined as a constraining act of violence that represses individuals, forcing them to do something. Rather, power is an exercise that takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon (Taylor, 2011, p. 5) Foucault conceives of modern power as an interactive network of shifting and changing relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures; it consists of social, political, economic, and personal relationships (Taylor, 2011, p. 3). “Placing radical alternative media within this larger context of state power, hegemony, and insubordination is a necessary step towards understanding them,” says Downing (2001, p. 19). Uncritical acceptance of anything that is presented as natural is problematic in Foucault’s work, because this passivity allows power relations to devolve into static states of domination (Taylor, 2011). In this stasis of a hegemony, only a very limited range of thought and behaviour is deemed valid or acceptable, with the result that many more modes of existence are considered invalid, immoral, or deviant. The ‘power’ of the alternative media lies in liberating individual minds from the systematic inculcation they face daily, governing the way they interact and react to the power relations they are faced with in their society – e.g. teaching children to always obey a policeman; teaching a woman to cater to her husband; teaching young people to be homophobic; etc. Using these examples, alternative media often exposes police brutality, a common occurrence that goes largely unreported in the mainstream; alternative media can help women liberate themselves, even in the smallest ways, by showing them a world where they are not defined as ‘other’ to men; and alternative media covers the bullying of gay children in schools, and thus revealing the bigger problem of boys being ‘told’ by society to exercise violent power over ‘others’ who are not like them. Alternative media changes the way that large sums of people interact with the hegemony, and that is what is meant by the ‘power’ of the alternative media.

What is meant by having a ‘voice’

Foucault, in a conversation with Deleuze, said that each political struggle develops around a particular source of power. Pointing out these sources – denouncing and speaking out – is a part of the struggle, because “to speak on this subject, to force the institutionalised networks of information to listen, to produce names, to point the finger of accusation, to find targets, is the first step in the reversal of power and the initiation of new struggles against existing forms of power” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, p. 214). Speaking about the prevailing hegemony and its unjust administration, explaining it, understanding it, makes it possible to defeat it, or

counter unjust acts perpetrated by it. “Gramsci’s perspective offers a fresh way of understanding such [radical alternative] media” says Downing, “In a framework within which classes and the capitalist state are analysed simply as controlling and censoring information, the role of radical media can be seen as trying to disrupt the silence, to counter the lies, to provide truth.” (Downing, 2001, pp. 15-16), and this is what is meant by the alternative media giving a voice to individuals, masses, and social movements.

Literature Review

First, those texts dealing with, conceptualising, and theorising on the alternative, radical, and mainstream media are elaborated on. Second, those texts dealing with case study methodology, and those texts dealing with the type(s) of data analysis methods used are examined. Lastly, the intellectual writings from which the theoretical lens of the paper is constructed – namely theories on power and ideology – are reviewed. The texts that were more heavily referred to bear deeper review than those that were just reading matter.

Chris Atton’s *Alternative Media* (2002) formed the bulk of the theoretical framework for the concept and practice of alternative media. Atton is one of the foremost and forerunning academics, and she has written pieces in many of the books here under review. Atton also sites many older alternative media theorists and academics, which has proved invaluable in building a literature review which expanded the conceptualisation of radical/alternative media in this paper. Atton’s definition is most valuable for its inclusion of the facet of democracy, which is essentially where the alternative media garners power by providing a different or wider array of information. She highlights how the mainstream media and alternative media differ the most – in their very model: mainstream is top-down (with weak attempts at audience interaction); alternative media functions at a grassroots level, horizontally, never seeking to climb too high, though it may seek to drag the elite agenda down. Atton’s writing on alternative media is extensive, and, in supplement of this book, many articles of hers are used to inform this paper.

John D. H. Downing’s book *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (2001), chapters one to four, provides an understanding of how radical media (his preferred term) can have an impact on cultural society, and where and how it draws its power to create such an impact. Downing refers to radical alternative media as those media, often small-scale and multifariously constituted, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities, and perspectives – a manner of definition quite congruent with the concept of alternative media that is favoured by this paper (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008, p. v). His preface serves to construct the concept of radical alternative media in depth in terms of what it is, as opposed to what it is not, and as different from mainstream media institutions. Chapter one of his book links the concept of active audiences to radical alternative media, and conceptualises radical media’s place as part of interlinking modes of cultural production, such as popular culture. Chapter 2 is pertinent to the theoretical basis of this paper for its Gramscian understanding of power, and how his work can be linked to radical media – “Gramsci’s perspective offers a fresh way of understanding such [radical alternative] media. In a framework

within which classes and the capitalist state are analysed simply as controlling and censoring information, the role of radical media can be seen as trying to disrupt the silence, to counter the lies, to provide truth.” (Downing, 2001, pp. 15-16). This helps to understand the quality resistance – counter-hegemony – that is present as a major facet of radical media. Chapter 3 serves to connect radical media with social movements as both being mutually reliant and sometimes difficult to separate conceptually and in practice. Chapter 4 looks at what roles the radical media play in democracy – vital to understanding the power of said media in disseminating wider and alternative spectrums of information, which helps create informed thinking and ‘free’ decision-making (free from hegemonical ideological coercion). Downing’s book is helpful overall for its apparent favour of alternative media as a tool that can be used to overcome dominant hegemonies, even in small ways. The connection this book delineated between social movements and the alternative media about them and that the movement itself creates is particularly useful to this paper on the power of alternative media as demonstrated by the anti-GMO social movement. Downing’s use of Gramsci also serves to validate the theorist’s use in this paper.

Olga Guedes Bailey *et al’s Understanding Alternative Media* (2008) from the introduction of the book links the endeavours of alternative media with theory of democracy – particularly participatory/direct democracy. This book contained many case studies on alternative media organisations looking at many different facets, from the way they are or were structured, to the cultural and political impacts they had on their societies. These case studies proved vastly useful as examples in the construction of the one here in, and also in understanding alternative media organisations as they function in the real world, as opposed to how they are theorised to function on paper. Like Downing’s, this book connected its conceptualisation of alternative media to Gramsci’s focus of thought on the process of intellectual and political changes made through ideology, saying that alternative media are indivisible from ideology, domination, and the Gramscian notion of hegemony (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008). The book repeated a lot of what has already been said, but was valuable for its four-model approach to alternative media, situating it as a concept not simply defined in opposition to the mainstream, but as serving a community and as linked to civil society. Also of value were the many well-thought-out examples interspersed throughout the text, serving to contextualise the function and impact of alternative media outlets in different societies.

Nick Couldry and James Curran’s *Contesting Media Power: Alternative media in a Networked World* (2003) is a collection of essays and case studies on alternative media institutions in practice. This book’s theoretical grounding is much the same as those reviewed above, though it is much more focussed on new media, social media, and globalisation. Unfortunately, this paper cannot delve into the impacts of the new media on alternative media at all, though to leave out a reading that is inclusive of globalisation and new media does no justice to any writing on any media institutions in modern day. The essays – some by names like Atton, Rodriguez, and Downing – served greatly to enrich style and stance, but did little for theoretical and conceptual enhancement. The book was less about alternative media on paper, and more about alternative and radical media in practice – and the same could be said about Kate Coyer *et al’s The Alternative Media Handbook* (2007), which goes one further by including a ‘how-to’ set up an alternative media print and radio

outlet of one's own. Chapter 1 of Couldry & Curran's book is titled 'The Paradox of Media Power', and does much to explicate how mainstream media power "faces two ways" – in one, it is the channel through which power players in a society pass their messages, the sword they wield against each other and against society; in the other, media institutions are a power in their own right, disseminating meanings and practices into the masses as the first instance, not as a tool (Couldry & Curran, 2003). The book's main subject is how power is contested under different but structurally comparable conditions across the world (Couldry & Curran, 2003). This is of use in understanding that alternative media outlets, though innovatory and experimental with practical organisational structuring and modes of production, must still negotiate with the existing system of meanings and practices of the society they are in. The definition of alternative media used by the book is those media production sites that challenge, at least implicitly, the actual concentrations of media power, whatever form those concentrations may take in different locations. Here again we see the facet of alternative media as oppositional to the mainstream, which is not its only facet as most of the books on alternative media detail, but the only facet that is germane for now.

Kate Coyer *et al's* book defines alternative media as "media forms that are on a smaller scale, more accessible and participatory, and less constrained by bureaucracy or commercial interests than the mainstream media and often in some way in explicit opposition to them" (Coyer, et al., 2007, p. 1). This definition is inclusive of the innovatory mode of structure and production of alternative media organisations, and even highlights the oppositional nature of them. It places alternative media in opposition solely to the mainstream however, whereas this is a surface level binary. The alternative media are against deeper institutions than the mass media, implicitly if not explicitly. They are in opposition to the hegemony that acts upon the people, of which the mass media is a tool, as stated in the above paradox. Like Couldry & Curran's book, *The Alternative Media Handbook* situates alternative media in a globalised world and as revolutionised by new media – "Alternative media activity, which exploits new technical developments for its own 'different purposes', is now prevalent at local, national, and global levels" (Coyer, et al., 2007, p. 2). This facet cannot be disregarded – indeed, all of the data informing this paper is from new media alternative news outlets, such as Facebook pages, websites, and online radio broadcasts. Coyer's book frames alternative media foremost in terms of new media, and how these new media have led to a boom in innovatory modes of production and dissemination of ulterior information and subversive messages. This framing could prove useful in expanding this paper's research into understanding how the alternative media produced on the anti-GMO movement garners power by being able to reach so many more people than ever before, in ever more innovatory ways.

Herman and Chomsky's book *Manufacturing Consent* (1988) served greatly in the construction of the concepts, postulations, theories, and conclusions of this paper on the subversive power of the alternative media. More useful, however, was its critical approach to the understanding of the mainstream or mass media as an instrument of power players in a society. The authors wrote in essence about how the mainstream media serves the propagation of dominant ideologies. One of the central themes in the book is that the observable pattern of mass media production is highly functional for established power and responsive to the needs of the government and ruling elites (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). It is written about and from an American

perspective, using statistics gathered in the USA, written in 1988, and seems somewhat dated by its referral to the Cold War, the Vietnam War, the Nicaraguan Rebellion, and especially by its pre-Internet era discourse. However, the model it presents is easily still relevant to today's mainstream media structures and workings (Herman, 1996). Herman and Chomsky put forward five filters through which information must sift that narrow the range of news that passes to the public, and that limit what can become big news (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). They call these filters a propaganda model, saying that taking a propaganda approach to media coverage explicates a systematic and highly political dichotomization in news coverage based on serviceability to elite power interests, observable in dichotomized choices of story and in the volume and quality of coverage (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The multiple filter system establishes that the mass media will allow any stories deemed hurtful to large interests to peter out quickly, if they surface at all (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The propaganda model is perhaps most pertinent in understanding the ways in which the mainstream media is used by power players to propagate their control. The propaganda model explains how dissent from the mainstream is given little to no coverage, while governments and big business gain easy access to the public in order to convey their state-corporate messages (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The five factors that serve to filter the news are:

- The size, concentrated ownership, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
- Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
- The reliance of the media on information provided by government, business, and 'experts' funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
- 'Flak' as a means of disciplining the media;
- Anti-communism as a national religion and control mechanism (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, p. 2)

This propaganda model serves to alleviate the mass media from the common belief "that the media are independent and committed to discovering and reporting the truth", and show in theory and practice that they just reflect the world as powerful groups wish it to be perceived, a standard view of the system that is dissident with reality (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). This has been vital in understanding the mainstream media, and conceptualising alternative media in its facet of being opposed to the mainstream media institution. The book rarely says anything about any alternative media institutions, but helps create a comprehension of why there is radical alternative media, and where this media fits into the whole.

The book called *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (2011) – a compilation of pieces written by him and by others about his writing – elucidated the theorist's work, which formed part of the theoretical lens of this paper concerning the power of alternative media. The introduction and chapters 1 to 3, written by various academics, neatly presented the concepts and theories on power developed and reworked by Foucault. Chapter 1 was about the common theme in Foucault's intellectual writing: power, and helped understand the dynamic presence of power in every interaction. Chapter 2 detailed Foucault's concept of disciplinary power as that

power which concerns the movement and self-construction of individuals. Chapter 3 detailed the concept of Foucault's that is more constructive to this paper, called biopower, which is concerned with people in mass. According to this concept, the state is concerned with knowing the power over and within masses, and thus understand and regulate the masses by administrating the norms of the population as a whole (Taylor, 2011). This broader type of power framed by Foucault functions through the dissemination of ideological hegemony, and can be looked at as defining how power is administered and applied by ruling elites once a hegemony and its ideological content have become banal in a society. A hegemony prevails and takes place over and within a society, and biopower is the informational and ideological force that regulates the population within a hegemony (for example, in response to data about the failing health of young children, the cafeteria food at the schools are changed to healthier alternatives). Foucault's theory on power as explained by part I of the book, and particularly the concept of biopower, have proved it necessary to understand the dynamic power relations in any given society; the theoretical framework of power forces that alternative media functions in (within and against a hegemony's biopower over the masses); and to comprehend that individuals in a mass have power exerted on them constantly and interact with that power by negotiating with it or succumbing to it, whether wittingly or not.

Antonio Gramsci's work was encapsulated in the book *The Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916 – 1935*, edited and commented on by David Forgacs (2000). The term hegemony is his, but the term 'counter-hegemony' has never been used by him. Rather, those theorists influenced by him have come to use the latter term "as a way to categorise attempts to challenge the dominant ideological frameworks and to supplant them with a radical alternative vision" (Downing, 2001, p. 15). Hence, the term applies to much of radical alternative media as a counter-hegemonic institution. Gramsci's notion of hegemony as that prevailing force that is applied by use or threat of violence, or that has become banally influential through coercion, consent, and inculcation, has been highly useful in positioning the alternative media in modern culture and society. We must be careful, however, as Coyer states, not to fall into the "danger of this kind of polarised vision of the mainstream/alternative relationship" that "encourages us to see the two as wholly separate", or as mutually dependent for meaning, as in a binary opposition (Coyer, et al., 2007, p. 4). Gramsci's position directs our attention equally to less tense, more everyday scenarios, in which one way of describing capitalist hegemony would be in terms of *self-censorship* by mainstream media professionals or other organic intellectuals in positions of authority (Gramsci & Forgacs, 2000). Radical media in those scenarios have a dual role of providing facts to a public denied them, and to explore fresh ways of developing a questioning perspective on the hegemonic process and increasing the public's sense of its power to engineer constructive change (Downing, 2001, p. 16). Gramsci's strategy for resisting and eventually overcoming the power of the capitalist class in its most advanced nations was the need for the masses to challenge and displace the cultural dominance and leadership of their ruling classes – i.e. the prevailing hegemony – with a coherent and convincing alternative vision of how society could be otherwise organised. This is almost like a mission statement for the radical alternative media institutions around the world.

Other than his work on power and hegemony, his writing about the masses, about how they are clouded and controlled by the education system and other cultural institutions, is pertinent in understanding the motivations behind the radical alternative medias' endeavours to subvert people from the blind mass of the public. Lastly, his writing about how "the active man-in-the-mass" can work to overcome the hegemony that acts inside his mind serves to explain why and how people turn to alternative media as one of the few places to receive information that is not swayed by dominant discourses, and thereby construct themselves more freely.

Theory

Individual subjects are not passive recipients – in Gramsci's terms, people actively participate with the hegemonical system of representational codes: "[Hegemony] presupposes an active and practical involvement of the hegemonized groups, quite unlike the static, totalizing and passive subordination implied by the dominant ideology concept" (Gramsci & Forgacs, 2000). The trick that governing elites have to master is to guide the interaction of the masses with the dominant hegemony within acceptable parameters, in such a banal way that the masses are not aware of this guidance, and come to guide themselves. This is the effect of what Foucault calls *biopower*: control which takes hold of the individual body because it functions through surrounding norms rather than top-down laws, because it is internalized by subjects rather than exercised from above through acts or threats of violence, and because it is dispersed throughout society rather than located in a single individual or governing body (Taylor, 2011).

Gramsci's exploration of capitalist cultural hegemony and popular counter-hegemony, as Downing puts it, will inform my views of alternative media as providing ways for individuals to break with dominant discourses, and construct alternative ones. Much of his thoughts have been covered in the previous section. Hereunder will be a brief explanation of his theory of hegemony, and of why it is applicable to understanding the ideological function of alternative media. He states that *ideologies* are anything but arbitrary; they are real facts which must be fought against, and their nature as instruments of domination revealed for reasons of political struggle; in order to make the governed intellectually independent of the governing, to replace one hegemony and with another (Gramsci & Forgacs, 2000, p. 196). The work of Gramsci used herein was completed roughly in the period between 1929 and 1935 – his last period of work called *Prison Writings* – long before the pervasive advent of advanced information and communication technologies. He wrote extensively on education – the purposes it served in reproducing existing hegemony, and how it could be used to revolutionise the ideological structure of being – but he did not directly cover any form of media power, other than briefly discussing journalism. Nonetheless, his writing on power relationships is applicable because the alternative media influences such relationships directly. In a paper by Atton, she says that "A hegemonic approach appears well suited for" a study of alternative and mainstream media because it encourages us "to examine them not as discrete fields of symbolic production, but as inhabiting a shared, negotiated field of

relations” (Atton, 2002, p. 493). The alternative media as a function is a power player, just as mainstream media is. Gramsci’s piece called *Philosophy, Common Sense, Language and Folklore* explains the relationship of intellectuals, individuals, and mass groups of subjects with the prevailing hegemonic forces, and critical consciousness of that relationship. Alternative media fundamentally seeks to awaken a critical consciousness of the hegemonic power-factors that direct an individual even without him knowing that he is being directed (Coyer, et al., 2007).

Foucault’s work will inform my thinking on power, and the subversive power of alternative media. “Foucault is specifically concerned with promoting change that counters domination and oppression and fosters what he refers to as ‘the work of freedom’,” says Taylor, illustrating how his work will serve the theory building of this paper (2011, p. 2). His studies on power relations theorise that “power is omnipresent, that is, power can be found in all social interactions” (Lynch, 2011, p. 15). Foucault conceives of modern power as an interactive network of shifting and changing relations among and between individuals, groups, institutions and structures; it consists of social, political, economic, and personal relationships (Taylor, 2011). My basic understanding of Foucault’s detailed and complex “analytics’ of power” is that power constitutes a relationship between two subjects, or a subject and an object, and is present not only in a top-down format, but in every facet of human interaction. Individuals tacitly enter into relations of power with larger apparatuses such as the state, forging a relationship of dominant-dominated because that’s what individuals are taught to do by the systems of meaning they are imbued with from birth. Power, for Foucault, is not only that force exercised by those who have it upon those who don’t – individuals must be complicit in the power exercised over them, by choosing to allow it to be exercised over them. This choice is very rarely revealed to an individual, however – it is masked by the banality of the ‘right way of choosing’ ingrained into every individual in every society from the advent of his/her cognisance. Powerful apparatuses cannot benignly allow individuals to chose whether they will accept the power exercised on them or not – but neither in modern day can these apparatuses directly take that choice away (in liberal civilization, at least).

What can be taken from both theorists is that power surrounds and pervades each individual interaction, no longer truly definable as coming from a central hub. Power is in the relationships and interactions between actors. A ruling class manages these interactions to be favourable to their ends – a management that can be called Foucault’s *biopower* – through the use of the mainstream media and other cultural intermediaries such as the public education system. Thus, power is theirs for influencing and sustaining guided the relationship that the masses have with the hegemony. Therein too can be seen the theoretical power of the alternative media, for influencing and slowly changing individual relationships and interactions with the hegemony from what it wants, to what the individual wants.

With the concepts, literature, and theory explicated and used to establish a particular lens, the case study can begin by using that lens to examine how the anti-GMO movement will support theories about the power of alternative media.

THE ANTI-GMO MOVEMENT – A CASE STUDY

Introduction

The anti-GMO movement, millions strong globally, is a momentous and complex contemporary social phenomenon that has adapted and evolved over many years, as has the media production informing and discussing it. The central concern of the movement from the beginning has been about food safety and security – most dominantly, the fear of the world’s food sources in their entirety becoming tainted and causing widespread disease of zombie apocalypse proportions. Many scientists, farmers, and environmentalists have espoused learnedly grievous concerns about genetically modified and tainted foods with the potential to destroy organic agricultural structures, biodiversity, and even the food chain itself (The Cornucopia Institute, 2012); (GM Freeze, 2012). The more frightened noteworthy persons within the movement speak of transnational corporations (TNCs) seeking to own all food sources in bids to garner irrevocable world power – control the food, control the people (ETC Group, 2012). In line with these commentaries: “Critics of GM foods often say that the US population is being used as guinea pigs in an experiment” (Smith, 2007). Mothers and fathers worry about what they feed their children, wondering if GMOs will have any long-term detrimental biological effects (Schafer, 2012); (Magnani, 2012);. Masses become outraged by the influence these TNCs – Monsanto being the most infamous – exercise over government policy, and their power within the courts: often used to sue farmers who do not comply with their agenda of pushing GMO crops into every corner of the world (Roseboro, 2013). Facilitating this grassroots movement from the start has been the use of alternative media (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008). When concerned farmers and mothers found their stories and worries to be of insignificance to journalists and editors within the mainstream flow of dominant ideological information, often the only other route left has been to spread their own word over the internet, in forums, on blogs, or to otherwise alternative news sites.

In the previous section of this paper, the alternative/radical media as a concept was unpacked and looked at in conjunction with existing theory of power (Gramsci’s hegemony, the propaganda model, etc), to comprehend and contextualise this marginalised section of the media, and to explicate the ways in which it can be seen to have power. The case at present seeks to understand how the unit of the contemporary, long-spanning anti-GMO movement displays, and can help us understand, that significant subversive power of the alternative media. By the end of the paper, the inferences drawn from an analysis of the unit of the case study will be applied to a conceptualisation of alternative/radical media in order to raise consciousness (Mills, et al., 2010); build theory about a subversive alternative ideological power; and make satisfactory conclusions to the main research purposes. This will be done by looking at anti-GMO activists and their battles against ‘undemocratic’ implementation of bad policy as portrayed by the alternative media – an exercise that will help understand why the alternative media exists in the first place often in opposition to dominant ideology and mainstream views. Using an instrumental method, this case study seeks an in-depth, real world understanding

of how the workings of the alternative and combative ideologies found in radical news outlets has provided a voice for millions to use against injustice and dangerous world policy. The inferences I hope to draw are that the anti-GMO movement would not have been nearly as momentous as it is presently without online alternative news outlets created and supported by activist grassroots journalists and citizens.

The significance of doing a case study on the anti-GMO movement is because of the effect alternative media has had in rallying millions of awakened people around the world against a perceived, qualified, and believed in threat to the human food supply and future generations' safety and security. The movement's coverage by alternative media news outlets, and more notably, its measly coverage or complete lack thereof in mainstream news, has heightened public awareness of unjust top-level politics, and bad policy serving transnational corporate entities in detrimental disregard of the masses. So many people now have a voice and can choose to reject improperly tested, possibly harmful food stuffs, as is their civil right, and call for bad policy to be amended by picketing and protesting. There is power in the knowledge spread by alternative media, to create grassroots movement against injustice, to 'awaken' people from the agendas of corporate media and show them a different way of realising what is actually happening in their world. This is why a study of the anti-GMO movement is of significance, for the instrumentality of alternative media organisations in facilitating its massive horizontal strength to cause change in the world. My research questions seek to highlight the subversive power of politically-motivated alternative media news reportage, as displayed by the anti-GMO movement (also labelled as 'the unit' from here on), and perhaps create some meaningful theory and open new channels of questioning.

Methodology

The case study method that most informs what I have tried to accomplish in terms of the structure and the purposes of this case study, is called the instrumental method by Stake. Following is the manner in which the case study was constructed methodologically using authors Yin and Stake, in a way best suited to the aims of this paper in studying the power of alternative media as demonstrated by the anti-GMO movement. Also under this title are details of the method and application of data collection, management, and analysis.

Definition of a case study:

The *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* expresses that definitions of case study are multifarious according to the discipline in which the method is applied, but nonetheless puts forward three general characteristics of a case study as a research strategy. First, it is a focus on the interrelationships that constitute the context of a specific unit – for example, a social movement, or a government organisation (Mills, et al., 2010). Secondly, a case study is an analysis of the relationship between the real-world situated factors of the unit and the unit itself – it's context and how it reacts to and is acted upon by that context. Lastly, the explicit purpose of using the insights garnered from observing that relationship to generate theory and/or contribute to extant theory. A case study "consists of a focus on the link between a specific entity and its supposed contextual

interrelationships, and on what the link can tell us about either the uniqueness of the case or its generalizability to comparable relationships” writes Mills *et al* in summary (2010, p. 29).

How does the unit in question act and react within the world? Why does it act and react within the world? What do these actions and reactions say about other similar phenomenon? What do they tell about the world itself? These are the questions that form a basis for the use of case study method, in attempts to theorise and generalise about the unit and its reasons. Qualifying this is Robert Yin’s statement that case study methods are preferred when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and the focus is on a phenomenon within some contemporary real-life context (2003). He details this way of understanding case study as an “explanatory” method, and names two other complementary types of case study - exploratory and descriptive case studies (Yin, 2003, p. 1). Yin’s book explicates the difficulty of conducting a case study, and compares it to other research methods to ascertain that “the distinctive need for case studies arise out of the desire to understand complex social phenomenon” (2003, p. 2). The goal of a case study is to expand information on a bounded case and use it to generalise theories, writes Yin. This is reiterated by the Encyclopedia, stating that the purpose of case study research is to provide descriptive information and to suggest theoretical relevance (Mills, et al., 2010). A valid and high-quality case study could be conducted without even leaving the library and the telephone or internet, depending on the topic being studied, as case studies need not always include direct, detailed observations as a source of evidence (Yin, 2003).

Structure Used to Build the Case Study

There exists a great variety of different case study strategies. The multitudinous case study research designs have not been fully codified, and the purpose of Yin’s book is to define the strategy of the case study (2003). Using the research gathered, this paper will construct its own design, cutting and selecting from the various methods detailed in the encyclopaedia and by Yin and Stake to tailor a research design that best suits the data and contents’ as well as my own abilities (Yin, 2003).

Robert Stake’s method of the instrumental case study as “research on a case to gain understanding of something else” suits this paper neatly, though, it has been adjusted and informed by other methods and writings (Stake, 1995, p. 171). My own definition of a case study informed by the literature is one highlighting the method’s ability to define an occurrence or a person by demarcating it within a certain time period and a certain real world context in order to view it and the way it is affected by and affects the world as a whole, and draw inferences from it that can be generalised to other situations. The intention of this case study is to understand something else – the alternative media. Downing says that it is important to grasp that audiences and movements do not live segregated from one another (Downing, 2001). In the persistence of a social movement, the interrelation between the audiences of media – the radical alternative media – and those movements may be very intense. Alternative media and social movements are interdependent, which means a case study of the instrumental kind will be best suited in showing the link between the unit, and what it has to say about something.

Yin's 5 points

Yin proposes five components of a research design that are important to a case study's success. A research design is defined by him as a "logical plan from getting here to there, where 'here' may be defined as the initial set of questions to be answered, and 'there' is some set of conclusions about these questions" (Yin, 2003, p. 20). The link between the initial research questions of a case study, and using data collection and analysis to draw conclusions on them, is facilitated by a research design (Yin, 2003). The five points he postulates as important for a good research design are: (i) a study's questions; (ii) the study's propositions; (iii) clear explanation of its unit of analysis; (iv) the logic linking the data to the propositions; and (v) the criteria for interpreting the findings (2003).

Instrumental Case Study Method

Robert Stake's outline of case study components is the protocol of this study. The method most relevant is one of three put forward by him, called the instrumental method (Stake, 1995). Stake emphasized that the type of case studies depends upon the purpose of the inquiry, and an instrumental case study is used to provide insight into an issue, using the case to highlight the issue. "Case study here is instrumental to accomplishing other than understanding this particular [unit]" writes Stake (1995, p. 3). This particular strategy of case research is claimed as the informing the current design because it seeks to facilitate the understanding of something else, and the case itself is secondary to understanding a particular phenomenon (Mills, et al., 2010). This case study of anti-GMO movement will facilitate an understanding of the nature of the power alternative media possesses. The instrumental case offers thick description of a particular unit of analysis, which can be analysed to build theory, and to draw generalisations in comparing the unit to others of similarity. My application of the instrumental case study will render out the factor of comparison for lack of space, though the anti-GMO movement case will be of easy generalizability onto other social movements empowered by alternative media. The central feature of any case study is the intense focus on a single phenomenon (Mills, et al., 2010). The instrumental case study seeks in-depth explication of a complex contemporary social phenomenon in order to understand and/or develop theory.

Donna M. Zucker's article *How to Do Case Study Research* delineates Stake's method of structuring a case study. The following list is adapted by Zucker from Stake's book *The Art of Case Study Research*, and supplemented here by Yin's five points. It illustrates a general case study protocol that will guide the construction method of this case (Zucker, 2009). First, the purpose and rationale for doing the case study must be stated, including the significance of the phenomena of interest, and the research questions and propositions there on. Second, the design should be based on the unit of analysis and research purpose. Third, explicate the data collection and management techniques: field methods; transcribed notes and interviews; mapping of major concepts; and building typologies. Fourth, the unit will be described in full detail. The fifth protocol is to focus the analysis of the data built on themes linked to the purpose and unit of analysis. Sixth, the findings must be analysed based on the purpose, rationale, and research questions, using the following steps: consider the case's perspective; consider the disciplinary perspective – the theoretical lens used; and write up the case

from an emic (culturally situated) perspective. Lastly, the steps for establishing rigor, which requires credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. So we see here a list of protocol written by Stake, supplemented by Yin, which serves to construct the case study.

The following is a list of the research questions driving the purpose of this case:

1. Why does the contemporary social phenomenon of the anti-GMO movement display the liberating power of the alternative media?
2. How can the anti-GMO movement be used to understand the power of radical online news outlets?
3. Would there be such a strong movement without alternative media? Would mainstream media suffice to mobilise millions?
4. How does the alternative media subvert people from the dominant hegemony disseminated by mainstream media?

The anti-GMO movement is a contemporary phenomenon driven by the desires of unhappy citizens to be reinstalled with the choice of knowing wholly what they and their children consume. These desires are expressed mainly through alternative media, as rarely will the mainstream news place citizen desires over the directives and agendas of corporate sponsors and owners (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Those citizens see no other way but to begin producing their own media *sans* revenue support. This in turn provides alternative information for other people to divorce themselves from mainstream worldviews, and perhaps begin producing their own grassroots media, or be inspire them to support and interact with existing alternative media outlets and social movements.

The propositional answers to the questions are as follows. The *proposition* in regards to how the anti-GMO movement highlights the powerful role of alternative media is therefore that the alternative media has the power to give people the ability to raise their voice against the wrongs they perceive to be committed against them by the hegemonical administration. Alternative information from and on the mainstream allows people to begin to conceptualise the power relations they are subject to, and begin to consciously interact with them.

Another *proposition* regards question 2 above. It has been stated above that social movements and alternative media are interdependent, and the data will show that the alternative media surrounding social movement disseminates information that is vital to sustain the movement. Examples of this information are calls to participate, and packages of discourse that serve the movement. Alternative media influences how a social movement interacts with the hegemony by giving it a meaning and a presence, and that is how a movement shows power.

Next is a proposal of what this paper hopes to find regarding question 3, which seeks to know if a social movement would have any presence without the power of the alternative media, and solely with the voice given to it by mainstream media. A list of mainstream media articles were found in the alternative media archives, due to their coverage of the GMO phenomenon. These articles may prove that the mainstream does not adequately explicate the anti-GMO movement when discussing the GMO phenomenon, and therefore that the movement needs alternative media to give it a presence with strength to make an impact.

The final proposal for question 4 is near the crux of the matter of this paper. The power of alternative media was dealt with in depth theoretically in the previous section. Here, the question is about the physical manifestation of its influence on power relations. The data will show the *manner* in which the alternative media facilitates subversion from the dominant ideological messages disseminated by mainstream media. This manner involves providing information such as stories of the damage done by GMO consumption to individuals, and stories of victories won by some of them when fighting the issue. Dates and venues of protest offer readers avenues to participate, and stories about anti-GMO protest action around the world serve to motivate. These things, among others, are the practical function of the alternative media, the ways in which it actually informs readers who will use the information in some manner.

Data collection

The main source of data used to inform and evidence this case study was online alternative news articles, both present and trawled from archives. “The careful analysis of archival records can provide valuable information on the life, concerns, and aspirations of individuals and groups, as well as on the activity, structure, mission, and goals of associations, organizations, and institutions,” states Lavinia Stan in *the Encyclopaedia of Case Study Research* (Mills, et al., 2010, p. 29). Physical archives typically consist of written documents, maps, and official and private letters, but more recently also of audio-visual material (Mills, et al., 2010). Vast archives of digital documents exist on the internet, no longer situated solely in huge rooms full of files.

When using archival records as evidence, a number of questions need to be raised, because serious limitations can affect the nature of the questions researchers try to answer and the reliability of their final research results when using archives (Mills, et al., 2010). First, questions about the validity must be asked about the archival record under consideration (Mills, et al., 2010): Is the archive dated accurately? How reliable is the information within the archives? These and other such questions should be answered, as they pose limits on the validity of the information gleaned from a particular archive. Second, there must be an awareness that not all archives were systematically collected, perhaps due to purposeful or accidental loss or destruction of certain documents (Mills, et al., 2010). Due to the human element of collecting for an archive, there will always be personal bias in what went into the archive, and what was omitted, though this is not always a bad thing. For example, an archive with its purpose of gathering and storing internet articles explaining the anti-GMO movement from a pro-stance will be biased against documents that do not share the same position. Third, archivists may sometimes willingly destroy or lose material that would reflect negatively on them, their organization, or their country (Mills, et al., 2010). This is to reiterate the bias mentioned before, although such a bias of wishing to hide unfavourable information can be considered vastly different from a bias seeking to achieve a specific direction. Lastly, it is important to remember that archival documents often reflect the reality as perceived by the organization or government that produced them (Mills, et al., 2010). The archives on anti-GMO movement internet articles reflect a specific reality from the perception of anti-GMO activism, to the exclusion of other realities that are not congruent or that are opposing. With these limitations in mind, it must be noted that this paper does not seek to establish some

objective, quantifiable truth about the alternative media as being a power player. There is a viewpoint, a perspective (not a stance, which may be characterised as picking a side) to this case study – looking from the angle of the anti-GMO movement at the movement, its basis, and its opposition. Biased and opinionated content still serve to expound the underlying motives of the people within the radical media outlets, and not necessarily hinder the validity of the information posed in that content

About the Archives

GMWatch.org was the largest archive used with 287 articles gathered. It is an independent organisation that seeks to counter the enormous corporate political power and propaganda of the biotech industry and its supporters, doing so through numerous websites, a campaign, social media, and other outreach and campaigning activities (GMWatch.org, 2013). Characteristic to alternative media, GMWatch.org isn't funded by big business, government or political parties, but rather, it is mostly funded by donations from individual supporters and receives some modest funding for aspects of its work from a small number of NGOs (GMWatch.org, 2013).

The archives found on GMWatch.org were the best discovery yet, with well-organised and dated stores of articles going back to the year 2000. Following the initial plan to review content from January 2012 to June 2013 so as to bound the case, this website provided articles for almost every single day within that period. “Archives whose records are neatly catalogued are easier to access than collections that are not, or are poorly organized. This is especially important for larger archives, where browsing can be time consuming, tedious, and expensive, without guaranteeing an interesting find” says Mills *et al* on the matter (2010, p. 29). To deal with the vastness of the archival material on GMWatch.org, a set of themes identified in a preliminary content review were used to read further, so as to narrow the scope of data gleaned.

The second archive used is called The Organic Consumers Association (OCA), which classifies itself as an online and grassroots non-profit public interest organization campaigning for health, justice, and sustainability (Organic Consumers Association, 2013). Forty-one articles were used from this source. The OCA deals with crucial issues of food safety, industrial agriculture, genetic engineering, children's health, corporate accountability, environmental sustainability, and other key topics. The website claims to be the only organization in the USA that is focused exclusively on promoting the views and interests of the nation's estimated 50 million organic and socially responsible consumers, representing over 850,000 members, subscribers and volunteers, including several thousand businesses in the natural foods and organic marketplace (Organic Consumers Association, 2013).

Reasons for Choice of Archives

OrganicConsumers.org and GMWarch.org provided me with hundreds of journalistic and informational articles covering every aspect of the GMO phenomenon and the global movement against it. These articles were not solely written for and by the websites collected from, but were also sourced from many different alternative internet news websites. The archives' content included interviews with leading scientists such as

Judy Carman; links to news and inspirational videos; reviews of books and films dealing with the anti-GMO phenomenon; letters written by influential players on both sides; and other multifarious media. This provided a great variety of opinion and knowledge. Although there is very little that can be done to academically quantify much of the content found online, in the spirit of alternative media and grassroots journalism it can be said that such broad and many-handed information as has been gleaned presents truth and knowledge more poignant than could an abstracted academic. People create their own meanings, and alternative media in its broad sense, as explained above, facilitates this and makes it possible for individuals to produce the meaning of their own lives outside of the mainstream worldviews. The archives of the two aforementioned organisations represent a trove of peoples' knowledge, and should be regarded as a host of many truths all contributing to one singular, alternative perspective about the pressing issues of global food consumption and the GMO phenomenon.

Data management

The preliminary collection of online articles was divided into four separate folders, labelled 'About Monsanto', 'Anti-GMO Movement Stories', 'Counter-PR to the anti-GMO movement', and 'Info Articles on GMOs'. This served to make easy the construction of relevant themes. This preliminary collection was conducted at random using the keyword 'GMO', and relevant articles were selected that would divulge the most information. The archival data beyond the preliminary collection was gathered over a period of seven days, copied and pasted from the archival websites – along with relevant referencing information – into a word processor. Each article was pasted into an individual word processing document. The headline of the article was preceded with the date, and placed into the archive in a YEAR-MONTH-DAY format, ordered in an effective chronological manner.

Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis for any research method needs to be chosen carefully, so as to make sure the data yields adequate and satisfying (even if adverse) information that can be applied or rationalised into solid theories, and conclusions (Yin, 2003). For the present study, it has been said that a hegemonic approach suits well to regard the production of the articles and the archives they are in terms of the fluctuating ideological power relationships within a hegemony. Further than that, a content analysis takes us beyond mode of production, and suits the use archival data very well: "Content analysis is possible whenever there is a physical record of communication [...] created independently of the research process" (Mills, et al., 2010, p. 226). News is a form of communication codified in hard or soft copy, and the news itself as well as the content of the news are often highly scrutinised by academia (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). In content analysis, "The text is broken down into manageable categories that could range from a word or a word sense to a phrase, a sentence, or even a theme (Mills, et al., 2010, p. 227)." Themes proved very useful when reading the massive amount of archival online news articles, allowing information to be gleaned effectively from the material, using data coding protocols decided during the preliminary research phase (Mills, et al., 2010). An

open analysis of content can be used to identify the dominant messages and main subject matter of a recorded communication. Here, themes were again greatly useful in sectioning large sums of information into comprehensible parts (Mills, et al., 2010).

Theme analysis is a categorization of observations, documents, and transcripts of meetings or interviews rendered into text, assessing events, viewpoints, identities, topics of speech acts, or whatever suits the imagination and interest of participants or the theoretical preoccupation of analysts (Mills, et al., 2010, p. 593)

R.E. Stake in his book identifies two strategies of case study data analysis: categorical aggregation or direct interpretation; and says about them that the nature of the study and the focus of the research questions determine subjectively which of them would best be used (Stake, 1995). Categorical aggregation involves the grouping of many distinct parts or units into a mass or whole until something can be said about the features they collectively share (Stake, 1995); (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Direct interpretation involves an individual instance that is examined simply and directly by asking ‘What did that mean?’. Stake states that case study relies on both of these, as both rely on patterns defined by using codes (categories; questions; themes) that are either established before analysis, or emerge unexpectedly during analysis – both of which were so, in this case. My interpretation of Stake’s case study data analysis method is as follows. Similarly to a content analysis by theme, the unit of analysis must be interpreted through pre-established yet constantly updated categories or themes that examine single instances (e.g. one particular anti-GMO article) – as in direct interpretation; and examines a grouping of articles, to figure out what each has in common and what each says about the group – as in categorical aggregation. This is how the data of this paper will be analysed, and has been since the themes and categories elaborated on below were established, early on in writing. A content analysis that focuses on a single instance in detail, and focuses on a group of single cases to learn what they all have to say similarly.

Themes of Pertinence

A content analysis was done according to common themes found to be recurring upon a precursory review of 34 articles gathered from the vast and scattered collection of online factually informative and opinion-motivated articles. “In emergent coding, categories are established after a preliminary examination of the data and during data analysis”, which suits a case that the researcher does not know very much about and first has to build an understanding of the unit (Mills, et al., 2010, p. 227). The basic themes identified from this developing understanding of the unit were constantly updated while they were used to search for, select, and peruse the rest of the archival internet content. A deadline had to be set for online article collection, because the information was unending and there was always at least one other link within an article to another article – research could have gone on indefinitely until the mass of information became unwieldy and difficult to process. The total period of online research and content collection was more or less three weeks, wherein a total of 363 articles related to GMO-related issues were gleaned using the established themes. Necessarily,

themes on the anti-GMO movement, and on the corporate perspective and countering of the movement were both used to gain a multi-perspective quality to the study and for comparative purposes. The basis of the case study is, however, on the perspective of the movement, which is the primary aspect.

Constructing themes served to bound the case and define the unit of analysis in a clearly demarcated way. Without themes, the massively diverse quality of the anti-GMO movement and its coverage by global alternative media would have been unmanageable. The themes were chosen to be broad and encompassing, but nonetheless to the exclusion of others, drawing guidelines on what to look for, and what to pay no heed. One such exclusion was a central concern of the anti-GMO movement pertaining to a continued lack of impartial scientific research on GMOs, and interference independent research attempts by dirty tactics such as intimidation, withdrawal of research funding, preclusion of research funding, and PR slander of 'alternative' intellectuals. Though made mention of, there was no space to include a third central concern of the movement in detail. When reading the articles, the themes served to isolate relevant information within the text, which could then be processed into categories and as much applicable data gathered as possible. By this way, the vast lump of archival data was channelled through particular filters to refine it all into usable information so it could be analysed to create knowledge and theory.

While reading the articles, a list of questions related to defining and elaborating on the unit of analysis itself were used as a further way of filtering information – for narrative and explanatory purposes, as opposed to analytical data – so that terminology could be gleaned, a timeline could be constructed, and contexts could be established. This list will be elaborated on further in the paper. When reading the articles, the tone of the article, its attitude, and the type of article it was (pure opinion; scientific; informative; etc) were noted, so as to understand the nature of the information taken from each specific article. Other useful assets of doing this were: to establish a wider understanding of the type of information the alternative sites were providing to their readers; to understand the general emotional attitude of the people towards GMOs and the biotech companies; and to comprehend the purports and purpose of the article.

If an article particularly highlighted the adverse effects of any kind of GMO, included statements given by anti-GMO activists and NGOs made against GMOs and biotech companies, or otherwise had an attitude in opposition of GMOs, it was classified as 'anti-GMO in nature'. An article giving statements from both activists and proponents of GMOs was classified as 'neutrally informative', whilst an article espousing GMOs or slating the anti-GMO movement was classified as 'counter-movement'.

The dates and titles used are those when the site itself gathered and reposted and article, and not the dates and titles of the actual publishing of the article online, which was only sporadically provided. The date of the repost of an article from one source onto the archive was that date when an individual working with the archive site found and thought of as relevant a particular article, and decided to repost it because of its relevancy to the sites 'anti-GMO aims'. This subjective selection is of more poignancy because it influences the symbolic production of an article, and thus the date of the repost is preferred. The authors of the articles, whether human or corporate, were used as stated in the article.

On the anti-GMO movement

The first theme is labelled ‘March Against Monsanto’, and filters out all the instances of protest action of the movement around the world found in the archive content. Petitions, picketing, placard protests, bodily occupations of physical space, individual actions, flyers for printing and distribution, etc., are found according to this theme (Case, 2012). The anti-GMO movement protests by calling power-players out on bad policy and demanding that the peoples’ voice be heard. Though March Against Monsanto is the name of a specific event that occurred on the 25 May 2012, the title is representative of the ongoing battle against the greedy domination of biotech transnational companies by grassroots activists and concerned NGOs. Included in this theme are instances of victory against a biotech firm – politically, legally, or otherwise – and good-news stories of success by components of the movement in their drive for proper scientific study of GMOs, labelling, bans on GMO products, etc. An example of a protest action is the symbolic act on 25 March 2012 by around 1500 beekeepers of dumping loads of dead bees onto the steps of the Ministry of Agriculture in Warsaw, in protest against the genetically modified foods and pesticides that are largely responsible for killing bees, butterflies, and moths in huge numbers (Sewell, 2012). An example of a good-news story of victory for the anti-GMO movement is the day that the French government imposed bans on the growth of particular GMO products developed by Monsanto, some say due to pressure by local green groups (Reuters, 2012).

Perhaps the most central reason for the anti-GMO movement, and theme 2, is a basic concern for health, for the health of future generations, and for the health of the environment. These concerns were raised in some form in most of the archival articles, often coupled with a highlight on the lack of proper and impartial testing done on GMOs (a central concern that, as mentioned above, had to be sidelined). The action taken by anti-GMO proponents to address these concerns is generally an indignant ‘right to know’ labelling campaign that would allow the people to exercise their right to chose not to consume potentially hazardous GMOs. This filter helps glean information from articles concerning issues raised about individual, public, and/or environmental health. An example is the info about a German university study that found significant concentrations of glyphosate in the urine samples of city dwellers, causing great distress at the implications of this chemical being seen in human systems (GMWatch.org, 2013). The right to know campaigns seek to address this distress by demanding products with GMO components be labelled as such, giving people the democratic power to say yes or no. The November 2012 ‘Prop 37’ issue in California is perhaps the most notable right-to-know labelling action – a people’s ballot initiative demanding that all GMO products be labelled, which was narrowly defeated by a hugely expensive pro-GMO ad campaign (Lundberg & Phillips, 2012). A third theme identifies scientific research and proof of health-, environmental-, and societal-related GMO foodstuff concerns, identifying an accumulating quantitative and qualitative knowledge about the detriments caused by glyphosate herbicides and their genetically altered counterpart organisms, about new pathogens and genes found within GMOs that could have unknown adverse affects on humans, about environmental impacts, and so on. GMOs have long been (a) promised to increase crop yield and solve world hunger (among several other claims), but using this theme has brought forward many different forms of

literature (reports, interviews with anti-GMO activist experts, etc) invalidating such claims. Multitudinous adverse effects (b) are found to be caused by GMOs and the particular herbicides used on them, and this theme makes it easier to list such effects and understand them holistically – that is, as a harmful phenomenon. Scientists and citizens for the anti-GMO movement (c) repeatedly mention a ‘threat to agricultural infrastructure’, ‘permanent damage to the food chain’, and other grievous, far-reaching concerns situated in both scientific fact and fact-based opinion (Penn State, 2012). Modern research has also found various instances of (d) herbicide-resistant ‘superweeds’ that have evolved tolerance to powerful herbicides (Kaskey, 2012). The growing knowledge base on the detrimental effects of GMOs can be seen when looking at the archival content with this theme, which can then be used to understand why there are such pervasive and deep concerns for public and environmental health as seen through the use of theme two, and provides scientific and factual motivation for the protest actions seen in theme 1.

Theme four revolves around the bad policymaking within governments in support of GM crops as influenced by biotech company lobby action, to the disregard of the peoples’ input and expressions of concern. A poignant example gleaned by using this theme is the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill 2011 passed in India, a shocking piece of legislature negating several constitutional aspects, and installed despite massive public protest. “This is a blatant case of officials siding with private companies over farmers and completely disregarding public opinion and safety”, states the article, highlighting perfectly a huge facet of motivation behind the anti-GMO movement and the purpose of alternative media – the fight for democratic fairness (Malpani, 2012). This theme has it made it easy to see that the peoples’ voices are being ignored, and helps understand motivations fuelling the movement. Made apparent by the use of this theme is how common it actually is for governments to completely ignore the voices of protesting masses, and act against their best interests in favour of profiteering biotech companies with enough money to buy politicians. The alternative media often exposes these acts to the protesting masses, fuelling their voices raised in protest.

There were several other recurring aspects of notability within the archival content that were not particularly themes, but rather, general characteristics within the host of information. Alternative-perspective news exposure was a constant quality in the online articles, with many indignant expose pieces, usually on the bad faith of companies claiming to sell organic products (Organic Consumers Association, 2012). Calls for donations and support of anti-GMO NGOs and protest actions was prevalent, as was a call to interact with articles by leaving comments or writing in with opinions (Sewell, 2012). Often, the contact details of politicians were provided in articles asking people to express the opinions directly to political sources (Sewell, 2012). Noticeable too was the use of individual citizen’s perspectives and those of anti-GMO NGOs, as opposed to ‘official statements’, a characteristic of alternative media, as well as showing biased informational inclinations against the government.

Corporate/Mainstream countering to the movement

Of course, there is never a movement without a response from the focal entities of that movement. These entities also have their own particular perspectives not reliant on their counter-voice to protestors, which have

also been highlighted by using themes. Theme six deals with the battle by biotech corporations against labelling campaigns, allowing counter-voice and counter-PR to the movement to be spotted in the data, and the purposes behind such antagonism explored. Large companies like Monsanto have espoused in no unclear terms their desires to own global food sources in entirety, which would garner them unparalleled profit and power (Roseboro, 2013). These companies make use of PR campaigns (for example, the millions spent by corporations on ad campaigns combating the successful realisation of Prop 37 in California) that many say are misleading and purely false (Simon, 2013). This theme has revealed the biotech industry's lobbying efforts against labelling campaigns based on a potential rise in product cost to incorporate such labelling – and how that really is not the true reason behind their fight against labelling. This theme cannot be dealt with in too much detail, but has served to create another perspective on the GMO phenomenon: as representing a powerful political and social clash of interests that warrant very large sums of money and time be spent on fighting from one side or another.

There were several other themes and subthemes that could have provided a great wealth of knowledge if applied, but only those themes pertinent to the objective of this paper could be applied to the archival data. One such 'extra' them was Europe's and other countries' resistance to GM crops and biotech coporate agenda. This theme of the battles being fought for and against GMOs in many different countries would serve the same purpose as the themes focussing on the corporate perspective on the movement: to create a many-angled perception of the anti-GMO movement, in this case by giving it global context, as opposed to focussing narrowly on one or two countries.

The themes, when applied to the data, create a rounded, bounded unit of analysis by filtering desired information out from the rest of the content. In addition to a content analysis by themes, the frequency of certain words, names, and concepts were noted. The frequency of the names of scientists and pundits that appeared often across many articles, as well as NGOs, and government organisations, can be used to illustrate the existence of a bona fide institutional, ideological, and intellectual struggle between different schools of thoughts about the same phenomenon. This phenomenon has its own set of concepts particular to it, seen by the regularity of words such as 'biosafety' and 'superweeds'; technical terms specific to the fields of biotechnology and agriculture, like 'glyphosate' and 'agroecology'; and company coined brand names like 'Roundup Ready' and 'stacked genes'. The movement, with all its concepts, jargon, noteworthy names, and genetically modified products, will next be constructed to form a picture of the unit for analysis.

The Unit of Analysis Described

A list of questions and categories was constructed to portion information into organized channels, facilitating a descriptive understanding of the very complex and diverse global anti-GMO movement. The list was applied to a considerably large collection of internet archival content to establish terminology, concepts, chronology, as well as to define the unit of analysis itself as a whole.

What is the movement?

“Consumer demand for labelling is driven in part by the growing number of studies that indicate genetically engineered foods may contain novel toxins, allergens, and other substances that can present real risks to our health. Labelling of GE foods will make it possible to identify and track any adverse health reactions that may occur as a result of consuming GE foods” (VTDigger.org, 2012).

Very broadly, the anti-GMO movement is any citizen (scientific, plebeian, or media-related) in any country in the world, who in some way denounces the use and perpetuation of genetically modified organisms in food sources and livestock feed – vilified along with the large transnational biotech companies that promote their own bottom line agendas – through their words and/or actions against it. The main ideological motivations behind the movement were simple to identify – the writings on health and environmental concerns connote a basic fear for the survival of the human race; and the labelling campaign represents an ideological fight for democratic freedom of knowledge – i.e. ‘the right to know’. These two ideologies are the central concerns of the movement. The real world, cause-and-effective reasons and drivers for the movement are based on these, but are not as simple, being multifarious and shifting in nature, but there are definite identifiable fundamental bases and objectives driving the continuing campaign. Most notable is the call for labelling of GMO products or products containing GMO ingredients, so that democratic judgement can be taken by consumers by enabling their right to know and to chose (Gillam, 2012). This public call stems from the general and pervasive fear of the negative biological and societal effects of GMOs on humans, as well as deep concern for the integrity of the food chain (Mercola, 2013). These fears are roused by ample scientific research detailing the adverse effect of GMOs and the herbicides used on them. The movement is fuelled by anger about bad governmental legislative decision-making and policy that favours biotech companies’ profit-driven agenda, and ignores the voices of the people, undermining democracy. An article titled *Obama administration disappoints/angers public* detailed such an undermining, saying that regardless of receiving nearly 45,000 public comments in opposition to a particular genetically engineered (GE) corn variety – with only 23 comments in favour – the Obama administration gave Monsanto the go-ahead to release its newest product freely into the environment and into American food supply, without any governmental oversight or safety tracking (The Cornucopia Institute, 2012).

At the beginning, there were the biotech companies, bringing with them the promise of a solution to world hunger, but succeeding to date only in poisoning food supplies, the environment, and contaminating humans too (Cummins, 2012). The one of most significant infamy is today a trans-national company called Monsanto, the dominant player in commercial GE crops, and the biggest seed company in the world (UCSUSA.Org, 2012). The company describes itself on its website as “a sustainable agriculture company” that “delivers agricultural products that support farmers all around the world” (Monsanto, 2013). Monsanto aggressively touts its technology as vital to achieving laudable goals such as ensuring adequate food production, responding to the challenge of climate change, and reducing agriculture's negative impacts on the

environment. Theme three, identifying scientific research and proof explicating the adverse health-, environmental-, and societal-related effects GMO pervasion, usefully surfaced data contradicting these laudable claims. Published in 2009, a peer-reviewed study called *Failure to Yield: Evaluating the Performance of Genetically Engineered Crops* on GM crops and yield, authored by former US EPA and Center for Food Safety scientist, Dr Doug Gurian-Sherman, concluded that genetically engineering herbicide-tolerant soybeans and herbicide-tolerant corn has not increased yields (GMWatch.org, 2012). Other biotech multinationals are Dow AgroScience, Syngenta, BAS, and Dupont. The biotech and chemical industries have no interest in developing the kinds of knowledge- and ecology-based farming vital to a productive and sustainable agriculture that conserves resources and biodiversity, and which will be vital to confronting coming challenges of climate change and expanding populations (Stirling, 2013). The companies can't sell this knowledge, so they are not interested in it. Strong public sector policies will only come through ongoing and vigorous engagement to convince the public and its servants, who are lobbied heavily by these industries, that sustainable agriculture is critical to the health of our food supply, our environment, and rural communities (*Are Genetically Engineered Herbicide-Resistant Crops Undermining Sustainable Weed Control?*, 2012, Doug Gurian-Sherman) (Gurian-Sherman, 2012). Alternative media can be seen almost as vital in convincing the public to what is being done, and what needs to be done. The anti-GMO movement is continually defeated by the lobbying and PR of these very wealthy and influential biotech companies against product labelling. Companies like Monsanto and Dow pay millions of dollars in the US in campaigns and political action against GMO labelling, because "One simple label to identify foods that have been genetically engineered [...] would lead more consumers to seek out organic, non-GMO alternatives. And that [...] is why Monsanto is fighting labelling" (Kaldveer & Cummins, 2013, p. 3). Ronnie Cummins, founder and director of the Organic Consumers Association sums up succinctly what the anti-GMO movement is, in an article headlined *Are Walmart and Big Food Lobbying for a GMO Labeling Law?* (Cummins, 2013). Calling it a monumental food fight, he explains that the movement is not solely about the mandatory labelling of GMO products, but fights "for a healthy and sustainable food and farming system, a green and equitable economy, a stable climate, and a real democracy where citizens, not corporations and their indentured politicians, rule" (Cummins, 2013). In the article he uses terms like grassroots activism and movement, and makes note of the "momentum of the nation's fast-growing right-to-know and anti-GMO movement" – putting a name to the movement (Cummins, 2013).

The march against them presented Monsanto and friends with a frightening new element—the danger that that grass roots anti-GMO protest would spread and make life even more difficult for GMO proliferation (Engdahl, 2013). As noted, a social movement should be thought of as undividable from the alternative media outlets that display the actions of the movement where the mainstream will not, and serve to provide informed reasons as to why ever-day citizens should wake up from what the prevailing hegemony will have them believe (that GMOs are good and necessary), and join the movement.

What are GMOs? - Concepts

The literature on GMOs and the reasons why they are considered so bad ranges from the complexly scientific, to agro-economic impact reviews, to angry blog posts written by mothers worried about the health of their children. By sifting through the multitudinous material and drawing on the most seemingly applicable and reliable sources, a somewhat reduced explication can be constructed adequately to define what GMOs are, and the reasons, both scientific and qualitative, for their rejection by millions of people and even governments throughout the world. There are very many harmful effects documented by scientific research that have found to be caused by the different types of GMOs and their respective herbicides, which will be discussed too, though some of these effects are speculative and unquantified.

The terms genetically engineered (GE); genetically modified organism (GMO); and genetically modified crops (GM crops) are used interchangeably to denote the organisms that have been altered at a molecular level in a particular way to produce a particular effect. A summary of Antoniou *et al's* explanation of the genetic engineering process in their 2012 paper *GMO Myths and Truths* serves to explain in detail the genetic alteration process where this paper will not (2012). Note, it is not the fact that the GM transformation process is artificial that makes GMOs undesirable or dangerous, but rather, it is the unknown and untested consequences of this procedures' genetically altered *products* that gives cause for concern.

Don Huber Ph.D. details two traits that account for most of the genetically modified crops grown in the world today (Huber, 2011). They are either designed to be resistant to the herbicides that biotech companies produce (such as Monsanto's Roundup Ready (RR) products), so that it can be sprayed over crops that would otherwise die along with the weeds if they were left unmodified (Huber, 2011). Or, they produce internally an insecticide called *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) that kills some crop pests when they try to eat the GM crop (Huber, 2011).

Two herbicides were noted in the data to be under most popular scrutiny for the detrimental effects caused by their exposure to living organisms – only one of which will be discussed here due to austerity. Glyphosate, the main component in Monsanto's RR brand of herbicide, is the subject of an emerging body of scientific literature that raises serious concerns about the health-risks it poses and the environmental implications of its continued widespread use. It is the most widely used herbicide in the world (Cummins, 2012). It has been confirmed to leach into groundwater by Spanish researchers (GM Freeze, 2012). A German university study published in a German journal called *Ithaca* recently found significant concentrations of glyphosate in the urine samples of city dwellers (GMWatch.org, 2012). According to Don Huber, nutrient-deficient, GM plants suffering from disease and that also harbour herbicide residues, presents an array of possible safety hazards to animals and humans, the possible harm including direct toxicity of glyphosate itself, which has been shown to cause endocrine disruption, DNA damage, reproductive and developmental toxicities, neurotoxicity, cancer, and birth defects (Huber, 2012). Symptoms of direct exposure to glyphosate include nausea, headaches, lethargy, skin rashes, and burning or itchy skin (Smith, 2007). An example of how these herbicides can harm humans directly is the successful lawsuit of French grain grower, Paul Francois, seeking restitution

from Monsanto for damage done and amenities lost (Reuters, 2012). US biotech giant Monsanto was found guilty of chemical poisoning of a French farmer, establishing valuable precedent for other adversely affected individuals. Francois says he suffered neurological problems including memory loss, headaches and stammering after inhaling Monsanto's Lasso weedkiller in 2004 (Reuters, 2012).

"Glyphosate is used very widely, so even unborn children can be exposed to the weedkiller in many different ways. It is far from clear the accumulation from all these sources is safe. We need to ensure glyphosate does not result in long-term public health problems by reviewing the growing body of scientific evidence on its safety and regulating accordingly. People have a right to expect protection from Monsanto's weedkiller in their food and water" (GM Freeze, 2012)

This quote illustrates the underlying theme 2 and 3, of concern for health safety coupled with an espousal of the right to know, driven by scientific research. Glyphosate has become insidious in much of the world's food sources, and people aren't being afforded the right to avoid the harmful substance – except by the alternative media outlets that drive and inform audiences with information neglected by mainstream media (Guedes Bailey, et al., 2008).

The conversion of US agricultural structures to a commercial monochemical herbicide practice has resulted in the widespread and ample use of glyphosate herbicides (Huber, 2012). Over-reliance on glyphosate-type herbicides for weed control on U.S. farms has created a dramatic increase in the number weed species that have developed genetic resistances to the popular herbicides (Penn State, 2012). Such plants have come to be known as 'superweeds' (Harrington Investments, 2012). "[T]he pervasive use of herbicide-resistant crops in the US is perpetuating a rapidly escalating arms race with insects and weeds that develop a resistance to the industry's potent poisons as they become more common" (Shen, 2012). "As many others have also noted, the excessive reliance on glyphosate-based herbicides [...] has resulted in the emergence and spread of many harmful weeds that can no longer be controlled by glyphosate" (*Are Genetically Engineered Herbicide-Resistant Crops Undermining Sustainable Weed Control?* 2012, Doug Gurian-Sherman) (Gurian-Sherman, 2012).

Why an entire social movement?

An entire global movement against GMOs has grown, because they represent a flagrant disregard by power-players for democracy. The people are not being given the information (labelling) needed to exercise their choice to self-determine; their expressions on a vital matter that adversely affects them directly are being ignored; and the mainstream ensures that masses of people don't even know this, effectively taking their voices away. "The most basic democratic right is being denied to you. For those who don't want to eat GM food, it is being shoved down your throats against your will..." stated Judy Carman (2009). "People believe they have a right to know what goes into their bodies," said Mark Mellman, a public opinion pollster and consultant (Gillam, 2012). A potential threat to the human race drives this movement to claim back the voice

of the people, and there is no better way to evaluate this than in terms of the functional power of alternative media.

Ignorance, in some cases, may be bliss. But in the case of GMOs, the ignorance of not knowing what is in your food is not bliss, it's subservience to Monsanto and its allies. And it could mean a lifetime of devastating health problems for you and your children. It's going to be a battle. Let's win this one for ourselves, for the earth, and for all future generations. (Robbins, 2012)

Chronology of the GMO phenomenon

Though it has not been possible to pinpoint any specific date or period of time for the advent of the movement, tracing a timeline of the introduction, spread, and significant events related to GMOs helps to situate the contemporary social phenomenon.

In 1982, scientists working for the original Monsanto company were the first to genetically modify a plant cell (Monsanto, 2013). In this decade, a contaminated brand of a food supplement called L-tryptophan killed about 100 Americans and caused sickness and disability in another 5,000-10,000 citizens; the source of contaminants was believed to be the genetic engineering process used in its production (Smith, 2008). This can be seen as some of the early exposure to and movement against genetically modified organisms. In 1992, the Food and Drug Administration of the USA (a governmental department) claimed that they had no information showing that GM foods were substantially different from conventionally grown foods and therefore were safe to eat, though FDA scientists warned that GMOs can create unpredictable, hard-to-detect side effects (Smith, 2008). Genetically modified foods were first sold commercially in America and on world markets from 1996, upon the introduction by Monsanto of Roundup Ready Soybeans, which provided farmers with in-seed herbicide tolerance to Roundup and other glyphosate-based herbicides (Monsanto.com, 2013) (Monsanto, 2013). From 1997-98, RR canola, cotton, and corn were introduced (Monsanto, 2013). A tipping point of consumer concern about GMOs was achieved in Europe in 1999, and within a single week, virtually all major food manufacturers committed themselves to remove GM ingredients (Smith, 2008). In 2000, a new Monsanto Company was incorporated as a stand-alone subsidiary of the pharmaceutical company called Pharmacia (Monsanto, 2013). By 2004, farmers were using an estimated 86% more herbicide on GM soy fields compared to non-GM soy crops (Smith, 2007). The 2005 crop season marked the tenth season that biotech crops were planted throughout the world (Monsanto, 2013). From 2007-10, Monsanto, in affiliation with Dow Agrosiences, releases several new products onto the agricultural market (Monsanto, 2013). In February 2011, a letter by prominent plant physiologist and pathologist, Dr Don Huber, Emeritus Professor at Purdue University, was leaked to the mainstream and alternative media, condemning glyphosate in no uncertain terms, and elucidating grave public and environmental concerns to the US Secretary of State Tom Vilsak (Huber, 2012). Year 2012 proves to be a momentous and action-packed one for both the biotech industry and the anti-GMO movement. Monsanto unveiled its new 'Roundup Ready® Xtend Crop System', designed to provide more consistent, flexible control of weeds, especially tough-to-manage and

glyphosate-resistant weeds – i.e. superweeds (Monsanto, 2013). In February, the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill 2011 passes, symbolising a blatant attack on democracy (Malpani, 2012). In September, the causal link between cancer and genetically modified food is confirmed by a French study, the first independent long-term animal feeding study not commissioned by the biotech corporations themselves (Ji, 2013). In November, California’s Proposition 37, a citizens’ ballot initiative that would have required labels on all GE foods, was narrowly defeated by a misleading \$45-million ad campaign, paid for by the biotech and food giants, symbolising yet another attack on democracy similar to the bill passed in India earlier in the year (GMWatch.org, 2012). Year 2013 starts off with a once-anti-GMO environmentalist named Mark Lynas changing his stance to publicly espouse the use of GM crops (Food First, 2013). May the 25th sees a global march of millions in protest of the company Monsanto and the pervasion of GMOs in 52 countries and over 400 cities, under the title ‘March Against Monsanto’ (Case, 2013). On May the 26th, the ‘Monsanto Protection Act’, as it is called by anti-GMO activists – similar in many regards to the BRAI Bill in India *supra* - was signed into force by President Obama, despite overwhelming public activism against it (Simon, 2013). On May the 31st, world media headlines read “Monsanto backing away from GMO crops in Europe” (Deutsche Welle, 2013). The timing of the interview in German leftist paper ‘TAZ’ is suggestive of what seems to be a carefully orchestrated Monsanto PR deception campaign (Engdahl, 2013).

Are there end objectives to the movement?

“With the continued fight for GMO labelling and ultimately the discontinuance of GMOs altogether, we are protecting not only our own rights, bodies and our children, but also generations to come,” writes Mike Barret for NationofChange.org, succinctly summing up the aim and end objectives of the vast contemporary social movement against the public health and environmental threat of untested GMOs and the herbicides applied to them (Barret, 2013).

Food security and biosafety are major aims of the complex movement against GMOs. These objectives can be achieved by conserving natural areas that are important for fostering biodiversity, a facet of ecology being threatened by the rise in US mono-crop agriculture (*Are Genetically Engineered Herbicide-Resistant Crops Undermining Sustainable Weed Control?*, 2012, Doug Gurian-Sherman) (Gurian-Sherman, 2012). “Food security is achieved when availability, access, stability, and utilization are assured equally for all” says Hans Herren, Ph.D. in an interview (Roseboro, 2012). The movement seeks ultimately an end to the pervasion of GM crops and so the overuse of harmful herbicides around the world, before the damage they cause becomes too prevalent to reverse. Labelling is an important step towards the end goal, because it gives people the power to spurn GMOs, driving customers and their money away from the biotech companies *en masse*, leaving the continuance of GM crops unviable. With the end of GMO global ubiquity, food security and biosafety can become assured from irreversible threat, and the central ideology of fear for the human race can be eliminated.

How is the movement perpetuated? What media was used?

In the article '*Bio-economy versus biodiversity*', two informative pieces provide readers with links to two significant scientific reports on the GMO issue: 'Bio-economy Versus Biodiversity'; and 'The potential impacts of synthetic biology on the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity' (GMWatch.org, 2012). This article, in providing such reports to a wider audience beyond academia, shows how alternative media disseminates information from alternative intellectuals to the readership so that they may construct themselves as anti-GMO. The vast majority of individuals will never come across these reports, and will never know the implications on GMO consumption that the reports disclose. Without this alternative media website (GMWatch.Org) the small population of individuals privy to this article of information would not have the necessary packages of discourse. Without these packages, the individuals would not be able to build themselves alternatively to the lack of any information on the issue at all in the mainstream flow of discourse. This is one of the ways of understanding how the movement is perpetuated by the alternative media coming from within and about it from outside – through its function of providing information about GMOs and giving reasons as to why they should be rejected, the alternative media site provides consumers with a freer and more informed choice. "The primary aim of radical media is to provide access to the media for protest groups on those groups' terms", states Atton in support (2002, p. 493).

A highly visible example of how alternative media serves to perpetuate and mobilise the movement is by evaluating the protest actions taken by anti-GMO activists, most remarkably, "The March against Monsanto," which "was notable in several key respects" (Engdahl, 2013). Most alarming for Monsanto and the biotech companies was the fact that it was the first such demonstration not organized by anti-GMO NGOs such as Greenpeace, BUND, or Friends of the Earth, but rather it was all organized by concerned activists using Facebook as a platform (Engdahl, 2013). It has been stated before in this paper that the affects of new media in the production and propagation of alternative media have been manifold and served small outlets to thrive, but these affects cannot be looked at in much depth due to austerity. It must suffice to say that social media has proven to be the boon of history for social movement activists, as illustrated by the March Against Monsanto in spreading the call for protest action across the globe. From this can be understood how media, used in an alternative way with alternative information, can serve to mobilise a social movement, give it power and meaning. Many of the articles in the archives called for readers to "TAKE ACTION" (the most common phrase used) (Sewell, 2012); 'call your local politician and complain about GMOs' (Sewell, 2012); 'go to the Facebook page' (Case, 2013); "More ideas on how to take action: [website]" (ibid.); and on the calls for help and aiding material go, found in both archives and in much of the preliminary content reviewed. A social movement is perpetuated using the media that it produces and that is produced about it from an alternative stance, both in support of it and both calling for social change, through the use of online articles that appeal to individuals to awaken, and providing them with the right information and the right channels to express their voice.

What purpose does alternative media serve in the movement?

The purpose of alternative media then, is to give the movement a voice, and thereby give it the power to make itself felt as a phenomenon. It is the means by which active and passive members, or just concerned citizens, are hailed into the movement, as well as a platform to ask for donations to fund the movement and its media. Many articles included above or below the content a call for donations, to undertake active support, or both (West, 2012). There were several movie and book reviews on artistic visual and literature media concerning itself with the GMO phenomenon, the problems facing the environment, or the environmental challenges of a specific place (GMwatch.org, 2012). All this was found in the archives of anti-GMO websites – i.e., alternative media news outlets. Such information about how to participate in the movement, dates and places of protest actions, reasons why to protest, how to help in the smallest way, etc, would not be available anywhere but on these types of alternative sites. Without such sites, the dissemination of favourable information about the movement would not be so wide, varied, and diffused. The leaking of high-ranking letters about the issue, communication of intellectual packages of information such as scientific reports, and interviews with prominent academics, etc, would not occur. The only information that would be available would be from mainstream media outlets, and the lack of information given there would surely never allow individuals to find out about social movements and the veritable reasons for them. And therein the function of the alternative media and the main purpose of this paper can be seen: the alternative makes possible what the mainstream would have rejected.

Radical media can be viewed as an extremely democratic form of communication, where people normally denied access to mainstream media are able to speak on issues that concern them. Radical media are especially important for new social movements, where “activist-journalists” seek to establish a counter-discourse to those typically found in the mainstream media. (Atton, 2002, p. 491)

An example of this is *New educational website about GMOs and glyphosate* – an article detailing the launch of a new website called ‘GMO Evidence’ (<http://gmoevidence.com>), which is designed to be a worldwide user-friendly library of evidence of harm caused by GMOs and glyphosate to animals and humans. “It’s an excellent educational resource – check it out” reads the article in direct address (GMwatch.org, 2012).

Briefly on articles of mainstream coverage of the GMO phenomenon

There was a noticeable quantity of mainstream online articles included in the archives of GMOWatch.org dealing with the GMO phenomenon as a political and social issue, and sometimes discussing protest action against GMOs. Though they cannot be deconstructed in depth as an aggregation, it is pertinent to note some common factors found in the list of mainstream news articles found in the anti-GMO online alternative media archives. This would serve to satisfy research question 3 and its proposal that mainstream media does not give the movement the strength of voice that the alternative media does.

Analysis of Data – What does the Data say about the propositions?

Here we satisfy the fourth of Yin's five points (detailed above in the methodology section): the logic linking the data to the propositions, or in other words, are my propositions satisfied by analysis of the data? For purposes of clarity, I will reiterate the method of data analysis in this case. Shortly, used was a content analysis focusing on single articles in detail so as to garner raw information, and on a group of single articles to learn what they all had to say similarly. An open analysis of content using themes, a question and category list, and frequency and importance of words served to extricate and organise a wealth of raw information contained in the archive articles. Stake's intertwined methods of categorical aggregation and direct interpretation served to examine single instances such as the release of a new scientific report, and a grouping of instances – for example, all those articles about Prop 37, or all those considered mainstream.

The proposition for question 1 (see p. ...) was that the alternative media has the power to give people the ability to raise their voice against the wrongs of the hegemonical administration, by giving them alternative information with which to begin conceptualising and consciously interacting with the power relations they are subject to. In short, the alternative media awakens contestation in people towards the dominant system – somewhat like unplugging a human from *The Matrix*. Useful here were themes 3, 4, and 5, which had to do with providing packages of information, be it scientific, political, and/or expository information. However, it was appropriate to analyse a single article to validate this proposition. This article, titled 'GMO Myths and Truths', uses information presented in a new report by an NGO called Earth Open Source (Organic Consumers Association, 2013). This report is mentioned and used by several other archive articles and was readily provided for reading, which makes it an interesting article to analyse for the first proposition. The reason it is interesting is because this one package of information – the 'GMO Myths and Truths' report – informed a vast number of people in their movement against the GMO phenomenon, providing information for grassroots journalists to write about, providing academic discourse for the movement, and understanding for concerned citizens. This particular article under scrutiny, consists of several lists, and is not a news story *per se*. The first list details the claims 'they' (the "GM crop industry and its supporters") make about the benefits of GMOs (Organic Consumers Association, 2013). The second uses information from the aforementioned report to contradict the first list of claims with its own – for example, the first three points of the first list are that GMOs:

- “Are an extension of natural breeding and do not pose different risks from naturally bred crops
- Are safe to eat and can be more nutritious than naturally bred crops
- Are strictly regulated for safety” (Organic Consumers Association, 2013)

Whereas the second list provides that GMOs:

- “Are laboratory-made, using technology that is totally different from natural breeding methods, and pose different risks from non-GM crops
- Can be toxic, allergenic or less nutritious than their natural counterparts\
- Are not adequately regulated to ensure safety” (Organic Consumers Association, 2013)

Here we see a contestation of mainstream information by an alternative media article, which provides information to the contrary of what is claimed by the power players that are ‘they’. In the bars beside these two lists on the page, there is a link, which calls for people to “**TAKE ACTION:STOP THE 12 NEW GMOS!**”, and goes on to list a set of links that will take a reader to pages of information on each of these new GMOs such as “Monsanto's "Alfalfa”” and “Syngenta's "Ethanol Corn”” (Organic Consumers Association, 2013). By giving such information, readers can begin to conceptualise and interact with this global phenomenon of potentially dangerous genetically modified food that they might be consuming. A fourth list is titled ‘BOYCOTT’, and names five companies and products that should be boycotted due to their affiliation with GMOs and the biotech companies (Organic Consumers Association, 2013).

Each of the five points on the boycott list is linked to another webpage, which provides information and opinions as to why each point should be boycotted. This can be understood theoretically as giving people the ability to raise their voices against the wrongs committed upon them. As Foucault said, “[T]o speak on this subject, to force the institutionalised networks of information to listen, to produce names, to point the finger of accusation, to find targets, is the first step in the reversal of power and the initiation of new struggles against existing forms of power” (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977, p. 214). The last list in this article was titled “LABEL GMOS”, and provided a set of links such as “In the Top Grocery Chains!” and “Tell Your State Reps!” – providing avenues for people to follow in order to take action, to contest the GMO phenomenon, to have a voice (Organic Consumers Association, 2013).

This is why the contemporary social phenomenon of the anti-GMO movement displays the liberating power of the alternative media, because without the media, lists such as those above, as well as many other alternative packages of discourse, would not necessarily be present for persons to use in re-constituting the way they interact with the prevailing hegemony

The proposition for question 2 stated that the data will show how the alternative media that focuses on a social movement disseminates information that is vital to sustain the movement. Atton says neatly that, “Radical media are especially important for new social movements, where ‘activist-journalists’ seek to establish a counter-discourse to those typically found in mainstream media” (Atton, 2002, p. 491). This proposition has to do with showing the immutable link between radical media and social movement. To draw an inference, it is necessary to regard a multitude of articles, rather than generalise from one poignant article, as was done for proposition 1. Useful here was theme 1 and 2, the first dealing with protest action, and the second dealing with ‘the right to know’ – and the two seem relatively interdependent, because the protest action is based broadly on the right to know, though it is not so limited. The best example from the data to use would be those many articles following the ‘Prop 37’ peoples’ ballot initiative, detailed above, as this one initiative encompasses both pertinent themes, and is a landmark issue in the historical and current presence of the movement. A list of the articles read can be found in Appendix ..., because not all are made explicit use of here, but serve to illustrate and enhance understanding.

The opening sentence for the earliest article found to mention ‘Prop 37’ reads as follows: “As we have emphasized repeatedly, the November 6th Right-to-Know Ballot Initiative in California (Proposition 37) is the

Food Fight of Our Lives” (Cummins & Baden-Meyer, 2012). This ‘Food Fight’ has been characterised by corporate antagonists as “most serious threat” to agricultural biotechnology in history (Cummins & Baden-Meyer, 2012). In other words, it is a protest action by a social movement that has a very loud voice, and corporates are feeling threatened. There is a threat to the hegemonically dominant discourse in the form of a mass of individuals who have become empowered with the ability to act consciously against it. This empowerment comes in the form of coverage on the ballot initiative itself; about those companies and NGOs that are supporting Prop 37, and therefore should be supported; about those corporations, politicians, and other power players that are opposing Prop 37, and are therefore vilified; calls for donations; avenues to take action; and most importantly, packages of counter-discourse.

The article titled ‘Who's opposing Prop 37?’ contained in it three separate articles juxtaposed by the archive of GMWatch.org, all on the issue of Prop 37 (GMWatch.org, 2012). The first is titled Three California Democrats Team Up with Monsanto by Rebekah Wilce for an organisation called PR Watch (02-08-2012), and names the three whilst voicing outrage in conspiratorial style against the anti-Prop 37 waged by the ‘Big 6’ biotech companies (GMWatch.org, 2012). Here, there is a political nature to the message of the article, giving information on the political state of affairs about the issue, and therefore enabling people to act against or boycott politicians. The second is titled Prop 37 Cash: Which Companies Are Supporting Genetically Modified Food by Katherine Spiers for KCet, and also plays a name and blame game, saying: “We know these companies are huge and powerful and influence our lives in untold ways” (GMWatch.org, 2012). This act of pointing the finger at the opponents of Prop 37 is a common feature in all the articles, and serves to give the movement an enemy, giving people information that they can use to focus their emotions. The third article, is an extension of the previous, and is simply a list of opponents to Prop 37, and the amounts each has paid to oppose the proposition for labelling (GMWatch.org, 2012).

Prop 37 was defeated by majority, due to the biotech companies’ ad and PR campaigning against it, as states several articles dealing with issue post-conclusion (Organic Consumers Association, 2012). Claims of corruption and propagandic vote-fixing by the biotech companies accompanied information about the defeat, and motivational statements such as: “After the shooting down of Proposition 37 in California [...] people are fired up across the country to maintain the momentum for GMO labelling” (2012-12-24 Momentum for GMO labeling growing across US) (Sewell, 2012). This information about Prop 37 and its opponents is vital to the sustenance and impact of the social movement, because if the movement were to have an actual voice, this information is the educational basis motivating what it would speak about, and speak out against. This is how the anti-GMO movement can be used to understand the power of radical online news outlets, because it moves so many individuals to begin to interact hostilely with the prevailing hegemony and its unjust administration.

The proposition for question 3 states that by analysing the data, it may be demonstrated that the mainstream media does not adequately illuminate the anti-GMO movement when discussing the GMO phenomenon, and from this stems the inference that the movement needs alternative media to give it a presence with strength to make an impact. In other words, this proposition will show why there is an immutable link between radical media and social movement. Useful here was theme 6, which looked at the

data through a mainstream, corporate lens. Here, unlike the two propositions before, it was appropriate to look at both a singular article and a grouping of articles in order to draw conclusions. The grouping consists of a list of mainstream media articles found in both the archives, so defined according to the general criteria detailing in the Definitions and Concept section above.

The singular case is titled *Weapons grade junk journalism from the LA Times*, notable as an example of the alternative media attacking the mainstream media, providing alternative information, calling out falsities, exposing connections of power, evaluating speakers motives, etc (GMWatch.org, 2012). This article is a piece by piece deconstruction and invalidation by GMWatch.Org of a mainstream columnist's publication concerning the 'anti-science' of the anti-GMO movement. A statement made by GMWatch.Org explicating the piece says,

“The Los Angeles Times has published an article by its business columnist Michael Hiltzik about Seralini's study, calling it “junk science” and “shoddy” and claiming that its use by supporters of Proposition 37, the ballot initiative to require GMO labelling, is “ignorance and anti-intellectualism [...]”. Hiltzik's article is being promoted with glee by the No on 37 campaign backed by Monsanto (see their campaign email reproduced below)” (GMWatch.org, 2012)

The nature of this article is highly oppositional towards the mainstream columnist, seen in statements made like: “As is common with this type of “attack” article, Hiltzik avoids citing sources” (GMWatch.org, 2012, p. 1). The purpose of delineating this oppositional element in drawing inferences on the proposition is to bring attention not to the opposition itself, but to the reason for the scathing retort by alternative media article in the first place – an attack on the anti-GMO movement by a mainstream source. One must remember that though this Hiltzik wrote the column, it was the editor that chose to publish it, for a specific reason, according to specific ideological guidelines most likely picked up during tertiary education (Louw, 2005). It is these ideological guidelines that the alternative media attack. From articles like this, it can be seen that the mainstream media does not only leave the anti-GMO movement uncovered and under-examined, but occasionally directly attacks the movement.

With this in mind, it helps to look at whether the anti-GMO movement is indeed left unexamined. The ... articles were analyzed by content, looking for words such as social movement, anti-GMO movement, or otherwise statements including *favourable* information on the social movement. Not all of the articles were devoid of information about protest events and activist actions, showing that the divide between what alternative media and mainstream media is not definite. All of them, however, shared the same basic, neutral tone – a stark difference after reading so many anti-GMO stance articles with angry and oppositional tones.

What I have gained from analysing this list is an understanding of how the anti-GMO voice 'sounds'. By comparing the general tone of the alternative media about the issue and the tone of the mainstream media about the same issue, there is a noticeable lack of any of the motivation and anger of the alternative articles, in the mainstream ones. There is also a considerable lack of information divulged by the mainstream articles on

the GMO phenomenon and the movement against it. This is what the questions ‘would there be such a strong movement without alternative media?’ and ‘would mainstream media suffice to mobilise millions?’. No, the movement would not be as strong if it did not have alternative media, because no, the mainstream media does not suffice to give the movement the voice and disseminate the information it needs to make an impact, and is in fact often the carrier of PR and slur against the campaign.

Question 4 is about the physical manifestation of the radical alternative media’s influence on power relations. The proposition states that data will show the *manner* in which the alternative media facilitates subversion from the dominant ideological messages disseminated by mainstream media. This manner involves providing information such as stories of the damage done by GMO consumption to individuals, and stories of victories won by some of the victims in fighting the issue. Dates and venues of protest offer readers avenues to participate, and stories about anti-GMO protest action around the world serve to motivate. These things, among others, are the practical function of the alternative media, the ways in which it actually informs readers who will use the information in some manner. This proposition need not be overly dealt with, as the previous propositions have said much by way of dissemination of packages of discourse. Except, it is worthy to notice in the data those actual applications of ideological dissidence, such as pleas for donations to various efforts and NGOs. An article called *Mass protest planned against GM wheat* provides an internet link to a “Flyer: Two-sided flyer for circulation” that is easily printable (Case, 2012). Proposition 2 detailed the dissemination of information as an ideological function, and here there is added a physical, tangible element to this function. This is how the alternative media actually subverts people from the dominant hegemony’s ideologies disseminated by mainstream media in practice.

The Report – Conclusions

We’ve answered why the anti-GMO movement displays the power of alternative media, by giving people a dissident voice (Proposition 1). We’ve answered how it does so, ideologically (Proposition 2) and in practice (Proposition 4). We’ve looked at if the alternative media is separable from a movement, and if separated, leave it with the appropriate voice and informational standing (Proposition 3). This case study has used a real-world contemporary phenomenon as an instrument to demonstrate the actual and ideological power of the alternative media. The conclusions drawn here from this instrumental case study will be applied to the main purposes of the paper in the next section, and from this application, hopefully theory can be made about the power of alternative media.

Data Application

Here are the main research purposes once more, they have been re-ordered and numbered for purposes of clarity and flow of information:

1. “Why is the anti-GMO movement a good case study on the empowerment and facilitation of the movement by alternative news coverage?”
2. “How is the alternative media giving people back their power of informed choice?”; and
3. “How does the alternative and radical news media liberate people from the banal and cyclical hegemonical control that is perpetuated by mainstream media?”;

Research purpose 1 is easy enough to conclude after the lengthy process of constructing and writing the case study. The question deals with why looking at a social movement will elucidate the empowerment and facilitation given it by the alternative media. Alternative media disseminates alternative packages of discourses that construct counter-actions and subversive ideologies, which are vital if a movement is to have any sort of impact, because the mainstream media does the movement no favours.

Research purposes 2 and 3 will require a more intensive application of what was learnt in the case study. The question for research purpose 2 focuses on the crux of what alternative media is, and is also the most central concern of the anti-GMO movement: a fully informed choice, free from guidance by the prevailing hegemony and its favoured ideologies. It has been stated several times in the case study that the movement fights for ‘the right to know’. What can be drawn from the analysis is that alternative media facilitates that right where the mainstream seems to fail, not only in giving a broader basis of information in the articles that individuals can read, but also in fighting the bigger battle against those power players who would have the same individuals kept ignorant. The question for research purpose 3 deals with liberation from banal ideological control that coerces every individual in a society into accepting the administration of the prevailing hegemony. Under attention here is the oppositional element of alternative media. In the previous research purpose, the right to broader bases of information was looked at as an element in and of itself. With this current and final research purpose, the power of subversion (counter-hegemony) is in focus, placing alternative media as righteous antagonist of the prevailing hegemony. If research purpose 2 is personified as a wise, old librarian, then research purpose 3 is a vigilante warrior fighting against the system. The entire aim of this paper has been to establish a theory on the subversive power of alternative media, and the data and its analysis have been highly agreeable towards this end. Alternative media gives an individual or a movement a voice, but it does not stop there – it gives the reason to raise that voice; it points out the direction in which to shout; and it weaponises minds by awakening them. Thus is the subversion element: alternative media changes the way masses of individuals interact with the power relations they are subject to, it takes passive individuals, puts a metaphorical sword in hand, gives them a battle cry, and sends them off running towards the enemy host.

Conclusions

An intensive examination of alternative and mainstream coverage of the anti-GMO movement has established that social movements would be relatively powerless without the empowerment and facilitation of the alternative media. This is the power of the alternative media to give voice to a *social movement* that would otherwise be mostly ignored by the mainstream flow of information. The alternative media gives people back their informed choice by giving them the necessary information, which they can use to align themselves according to their own ideological constructions, and not those given to them by the mainstream media. This is the power to give *individuals* access to other possible worldviews and information so that they may conceptualise the world in a way that isn't guided by the prevailing systems of discourses and practices. Alternative media has subversive, counter-hegemonic power, and using a case study of the anti-GMO movement, this paper has shown how that power is created in drawing masses of people away from the mainstream by providing them with different ideological possibilities. This is the power to liberate the way *masses of people* interact with the hegemonical system of elite-favoured discourses and practices. The anti-GMO movement has made masses of people aware of what they are consuming and the possible pathological consequences of their food consumption choices. This awareness is giving people the power of informed choice about an issue that is not given to them by mainstream media. Alternative media allows people who are often marginalised and left unheard, to have voices and to make truly autonomous choices.

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