

“The First Draft of History”

How the Process of News Construction has
Influenced our Understanding of the Civil and Gay
Rights Movements of the 1960s

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

Produced on a regular basis and dealing with a wide range of events, newspaper data represents a treasure trove of information for researchers interested in the lives of previous generations. Unfortunately, however, the extent to which media data is used in historical research has not been matched by a similar engagement with media history and theory. Indeed, whether relying on media data for analysis or simply the 'hard facts', scholars often accept this record without asking the right questions about how it was constructed and why.

In contrast, this thesis questions the relationship between the mainstream press in the United States and social activists in a range of organisations and movements. Focused on groups within the civil and gay rights movements of the 1960s, this study not only highlights how the mainstream media has misrepresented activism, but also locates the genesis of these distortions in the process of news production. Importantly, and unlike many revisionist works that present activists as the passive victims of a powerful mainstream media, this thesis builds on theory from within sociology and communication science to demonstrate the symbiotic nature of this process. Indeed, while their efforts were not always successful, this study shows how activists purposefully and consciously adapted their actions and public communications to better fit the daily habits and professional practices of journalists and editors. Often pursuing short term gains, this process of adaptation could repress more open and representative dialogue, producing long term consequences that have influenced movement historiographies.

By utilising data from the archives of *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* – as well as the private papers, memoirs, and oral interviews of other journalists and editors – this thesis demonstrates the importance of viewing newswriters as individuals, rather than faceless servants of monolithic institutions. Indeed, each news outlet had its own unique atmosphere, with its own set of rules that set the parameters of its coverage; highlighting the need to resist claims that certain publications are necessarily more 'representative' or 'objective' than others. Importantly, then, this study demonstrates the need for historians to critically engage with the subjectivity of the media data they use and approach sources in a way that honestly recognises their limitations.

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List of Abbreviations Used in the Text

ACLU:	American Civil Liberties Union
AP:	Associated Press
APA:	American Psychiatric Association
BPP:	Black Panther Party
CORE:	Congress of Racial Equality
CSLDP:	Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade
DOB:	Daughters of Bilitis
ECHO:	Eastern Conference of Homophile Organizations
FCC:	Federal Communications Commission
GAA:	Gay Activists Alliance
GLF:	Gay Liberation Front
LAMS:	Los Angeles Mattachine Society
LCFO:	Lowndes County Freedom Organization
MARBL:	Manuscript and Rare Books Library, Emory University
MCC:	Metropolitan Community Church
MFDP:	Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party
MSNY:	Mattachine Society of New York
NYPD:	New York Police Department
MSNY Records	Mattachine Society, Inc. of New York Records, International Gay Information
NYPL:	Center, The New York Public Library [Microfilm. New York: Research Publications International, 1998]
MSW:	Mattachine Society of Washington
NAACP:	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NACHO:	North American Conference of Homophile Organizations
NOI:	Nation of Islam
NYPL:	Manuscripts and Archive Division, New York Public Library
NYT:	New York Times
SCLC:	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SHL:	Student Homophile League
SIR:	Society for Individual Rights
SLA:	State Liquor Authority
SNCC:	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SNCC Papers:	The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972 [Ann Arbor, MI: United Microfilms International, 1994]
UPI:	United Press International
WATS:	Wide Area Telephone Service
WHS:	Wisconsin Historical Society

Introduction

‘Let us today drudge on about our inescapably impossible task of providing every week a first rough draft of history that will never be completed about a world we can never really understand’
(Philip Graham, 1963)¹

‘The determination of what is or is not news, what is or is not significant, is a function, not of the nature of the world "out there," but of the work of those who must somehow bring into being some things which are more important than others and hence more worthy of publication’
(Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, 1975)²

The right to free speech and a free press is considered a cornerstone of American democracy. Since before the Enlightenment, however, scholars and philosophers have debated the role that the media plays in shaping society by informing citizens of the world around them.³ Some, such as Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, view the press as gatekeepers that act to ‘shape our collective sense of reality – our perception of what is going on in the social world’.⁴ Backed by political scientists, such as Taeku Lee, this analysis of the press suggests that, ‘the opinions we express depend heavily on information we receive through media coverage of political events and whatever cues, shortcuts, and interpretive frames accompany such coverage’.⁵ In contrast, media theorist Joseph Klapper has argued that self-selection of news by individuals – the seeking out and selection of news likely to confirm rather than challenge pre-existing beliefs – limits the power of the media to shape public opinion.⁶ This theory subverts the traditional media-audience relationship and argues that, in response to the laws of supply and demand, public opinion dictates media coverage rather than the reverse. While debate on this topic continues among sociologists and political scientists, both theoretical models encourage historians to draw comparisons between the media record and

¹ Philip Graham, as cited in Katharine Graham, *Personal History* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1997), p. 324.

² Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, ‘Accidental News: The Great Oil Spill as Local Occurrence and National Event’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 81.2 (1975), 235–60 (p. 236).

³ David A. Copeland, *The Idea of a Free Press: The Enlightenment and Its Unruly Legacy* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2006).

⁴ Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, ‘All the Rioting That’s Fit to Print: Selection Effects in National Newspaper Coverage of Civil Disorders, 1968-1969’, *American Sociological Review*, 69 (2004), 519–43 (p. 519).

⁵ Taeku Lee, *Mobilizing Public Opinion: Black Insurgency and Racial Attitudes in the Civil Rights Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 24.

⁶ Joseph T. Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (New York: Free Press, 1960).

public opinion and legitimise the use of media data to reconstruct the cultural, social, and political mores of the past.⁷

Produced on a regular basis and dealing with a wide range of events, newspaper data represents a treasure trove of information for researchers interested in the lives of previous generations.⁸ For the historian of social movements, used to relying on fragmentary organisational files and sometimes unreliable or contradicting oral testimony, the articulate, official, and regular nature of mainstream newspaper coverage is particularly appealing. Indeed, whether believing that newspapers can act as a window into the dominant social and political themes of an era, as a day-to-day record of past events, or as a representation of 'establishment' opinion, historiographer John Tosh has claimed that 'the most important published primary source for the historian is the press'.⁹ Unfortunately, however, the extent to which media data is used in historical research has not been matched by a similar engagement with media history and theory.

Communications scholar and former journalist Barbie Zelizer has argued that this lack of engagement has meant that historians have 'mined the press for data without sufficiently considering the processes by which news came to be'.¹⁰ As David Ortiz and others have argued, 'newspaper content is not created for the purpose of conducting social scientific research nor is it intended to capture or sample all protests or other political events, even in a limited geographic area'.¹¹ For the historian of social movements, these limitations are important and can lead to serious misconceptions in both popular and scholarly conceptions of the past. Chapter one, therefore, examines how accepting journalistic claims of neutrality and

⁷ For a good overview of studies on selective exposure see Natalie Jomini Stroud, 'Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure', *Political Behaviour*, 30 (2008), 341–66.

⁸ The increasing digitisation of newspaper archives, many of which stretch back more than a century, is an indication of the importance that scholars attach to media records: James Mussell, 'ProQuest Historical Newspapers', *Reviews in History*, 2011 <<http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1096>> [accessed 18 June 2015].

⁹ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History*, 5th edn (Harlow: Longman, 2010), p. 96.

¹⁰ Barbie Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004), p. 85.

¹¹ David G. Ortiz and others, 'Where Do We Stand with Newspaper Data?', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 10.3 (2005), 397–419 (p. 397).

objectivity at face value can lead scholars to overlook distortions in the media record. For instance, while failing to define terms such as ‘mainstream media’, historians and other scholars have consciously or unconsciously relied on a narrow range of media outlets without fully considering the impact this may have on their work.¹² By examining how scholars have, or have not, justified their selection processes, the chapter highlights the specific distortions present in contemporary scholarly research. While doing so, it outlines the nature of the press industry in the post-war period and examines how certain practices – such as ‘objective’ journalism – have enabled researchers to deflect criticism of their source material.

This critique of news data stands in stark contrast to how many in the media in the 1950s and 1960s viewed their work. The former president of CBS, Frank Stanton, spoke for many when he argued that ‘what the media do [...] is to hold up a mirror to society and try to report it as faithfully as possible’.¹³ However, as chapter two argues, historians seeking a useful metaphor for the press should look instead to journalist and historian Godfrey Hodgson, who has compared the media to ‘a gigantic stereo system’ that plays ‘the sound that the men at the controls think the audience want to hear’.¹⁴ Claiming in 1976 that ‘the mirror metaphor has become almost suspiciously popular with people in high places in the media’, Hodgson argued that:

It is a fact of optics that the shape, composition, location and angle of a mirror affect the image it reflects. So even if we do think of the media as a mirror, we should examine its structure, check its position, and always remember who is holding it, and at what angle.¹⁵

This more interactive conception of media production not only hints at the interplay between the press and its audience, but also acknowledges the power that editors and publishers had over the direction and content of their publications.

¹² Perhaps the most commonly cited periodicals are newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune* and magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Life*.

¹³ Frank Stanton, as cited in Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 134.

¹⁴ Hodgson, p. 135.

¹⁵ Hodgson, pp. 134–5; As well as being a common title for news publications, ‘mirror’ was also applied to new media: Sig Mickelson, *The Electric Mirror: Politics in an Age of Television* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972).

Acting as gatekeepers to the wider public and helping to craft political and social narratives, journalists and editors held enormous power. Importantly, given the fluid nature of media and communications, this chapter examines the specific composition of the press in the 1960s to understand how the political economy of the period influenced the process of news production in particular ways. For instance, with the newsrooms of America's leading papers in the 1950s and 1960s almost entirely dominated by middle-class, white men, the media's gatekeeping function often acted to exclude voices that didn't conform to the expectations and desires of an elite and heteronormative section of society. However, as Beth Bailey's examination of the American Army in this period has made clear, it is potentially misleading to ignore how individual interactions on a micro level reinforced – or sometimes deviated from – macro processes of institutionalised discrimination.¹⁶ Consequently, and building on discussions of 'mainstream' media in chapter one, the remainder of the thesis focuses on individuals at specific outlets – predominantly the *New York Times* and *Newsweek* – to understand how the 'men at the controls' were often guided by their own individual backgrounds and appealed to particular audiences in particular ways when deciding what events qualified as newsworthy.

While the practices and ideas outlined in the following pages provide a methodological basis for further study that could affect our understanding of a wide range of post-war social movements, this thesis utilises two case studies to highlight how different organisations were affected by – and reacted to – particular media practices in particular ways. More specifically, the thesis examines how media elites at certain outlets responded to the civil rights movement's rise to international prominence in the 1960s and how the same structures and individuals reacted differently to the lesser known but growing homophile movement during the same period.

These two movements have been chosen in part because both witnessed shifts in media narratives that mirror common historiographical themes. Importantly, while subsequent histories have challenged these narratives, they have proved remarkably resilient to change

¹⁶ Beth L. Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

and continue to affect the understanding of these movements today. For instance, popularised by early gay and lesbian activists who wished to avoid the medical and sexual inferences of 'homosexual', the term 'homophile' was designed to challenge negative conceptions surrounding same sex relationships. Initially serving a predominantly male and West Coast audience with the creation of the Mattachine Foundation in Los Angeles in 1950, the homophile movement grew to include the lesbian organisation the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in 1955 and gradually spread to major cities across the nation. Media coverage of these organisations, however, was scarce, especially when compared to that of the radical gay liberation organisations that emerged after the Stonewall Riots of 1969. Sparked by a police raid on the Stonewall Inn on the 28th June, the riots lasted for more than two days and, at their height, drew crowds of over 2,000 people to the Greenwich Village area of New York to protest police harassment. While initial reporting was muted, coverage of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade in 1970 – held to commemorate the riots – cemented narratives that placed Stonewall at the centre of a new and radical movement. Viewing the riots as a historical year zero for lesbian and gay politics in the United States, this narrative – now often referred to as the 'Stonewall Myth' – downplays the contribution of early homophile groups in the 1950s and 1960s and suggests that, 'before Stonewall gays lived furtive, closeted, miserable lives, while after Stonewall gays could be free and open'.¹⁷

The Stonewall Myth, however, has been hotly contested by historians. Indeed, Terrence Kissack argues that, 'almost the entire corpus of gay and lesbian history can be read as an attempt to deconstruct the Stonewall narrative'.¹⁸ Works such as John D'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, for example, have catalogued the various contributions of homophile groups, pointing to the important social function that these groups provided to a community under constant fear of arrest, destitution, or institutionalisation.¹⁹ D'Emilio and others have shown that homophile groups such as the Mattachine Society, One Incorporated,

¹⁷ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, 'Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of Pre-Stonewall Lesbian History', *Radical History Review*, 1995.62 (1995), 59–79 (p. 66).

¹⁸ Terrence Kissack, 'Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969–1971', *Radical History Review*, 1995.62 (1995), 105–34 (p. 105).

¹⁹ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

and the DOB were early pioneers whose brave attempts at subverting established norms provided the foundations for later radicalism.²⁰ However, while homophile groups are now included in scholarly works, such as David Carter's *Stonewall*, their activities are still often viewed as an inconsequential and conservative foreshadow of post-Stonewall radicalism.²¹ Even D'Emilio's breakthrough work claimed that Stonewall marked the moment when 'a furtive subculture moved aggressively into the open'.²² Indeed, revisionist works – such as Martin Meeker's influential 'Behind the Mask of Respectability' – often seek to rehabilitate homophile activists by positioning their absence from media narratives as a conscious decision to conceal more radical activities that simply would not have been tolerated by legal and political authorities if they had been exposed to the public.²³ While an important development in the historiography, this understanding of homophile activism perpetuates the idea that pre- and post-Stonewall activism were fundamentally different in nature. Indeed, claiming the riots were the 'Birth of the Modern Lesbian and Gay Rights Liberation', the memorial plaque placed outside of the Stonewall Inn is a good example of the way recent narratives implicitly acknowledge earlier activism while nevertheless differentiating it from the 'modern' post-Stonewall era.

Dichotomous histories of the civil rights movement in the 1960s also tend to focus on a riot, namely the Watts Riot in Los Angeles in August 1965. In this case, however, the riot is not seen as marking the birth of a movement, but rather its death knell. Coming just days after the Voting Rights Act was signed into law, the Watts riot and 1965 in general is seen as dividing the civil rights movement into two distinct phases.²⁴ The first of these phases is seen as a time of

²⁰ D'Emilio; Martin Meeker, 'Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10 (2001), 78–116; Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006); James T. Sears, *Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hal Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2006); *Letters to One: Gay and Lesbian Voices from the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. by Craig M. Loftin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).

²¹ David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004).

²² D'Emilio, p. 239.

²³ Meeker, 'Behind the Mask of Respectability'; Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

²⁴ James T. Patterson, *The Eve of Destruction: How 1965 Transformed America* (New York: Basic Books, 2012).

successful nonviolent direct action, where noble and heroic protesters harnessed the power of a committed and equally brave cadre of journalists to expose the brutality of Southern racism to a shocked American audience, awakening a spirit of liberalism that allowed social movements to break down discriminatory laws and practices that had stood for decades. Indeed, popular accounts of the movement, such as actor and filmmaker Jim Carrier's *A Traveler's Guide to the Civil Rights Movement*, have claimed that 'ultimately, pictures and stories of police states trying to deny citizens their rights brought down the walls of segregation'.²⁵ Importantly, movement veterans, such as Georgia Congressman John Lewis, have also applauded the 'vital role that the press played in the success of the Civil Rights Movement', even arguing that, 'without the media the Civil Rights Movement would have been a bird without wings'.²⁶ Nor have journalists and editors been shy in accepting this praise; in 1968 the Editor-in-Chief of Time Inc., Hedley Donovan, claimed that his corporation had 'very possibly [...] done as much for the cause of civil rights as any private organization in the United States'.²⁷

In contrast, the second half of the decade is seen in almost ubiquitously negative terms, with historian Harvard Sitkoff claiming that, 'the era of non-violence ended. The age of Malcolm X's angry heirs began'.²⁸ Associated with urban unrest and the angry rhetoric of Black Power advocates, activism in the late 1960s is seen as halting the progress of the movement and subverting its patriotic and democratic potential.²⁹ When explaining the reversal in coverage this entailed – with African American protestors and not white segregationists held up as

²⁵ Jim Carrier, *A Traveler's Guide to the Civil Rights Movement* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2004), p. 71.

²⁶ John Lewis, 'Congressional Record: On the Contribution of the Press to the Civil Rights Movement', *Federation of American Scientists*, 2005 <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/congress/2005/h090805.html>> [accessed 28 November 2013].

²⁷ Hedley Donovan, as cited in Curtis Prendergast and Geoffrey Colvin, *The World of Time Inc.: The Intimate History of a Changing Enterprise, 1960-1980* (New York: Atheneum, 1986), p. 449; A number of journalists were also quick to capitalise on their 'expertise' on the movement to secure major book deals: John Herbers, *The Lost Priority: What Happened to the Civil Rights Movement in America?* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1970); Pat Watters and Reese Cleghorn, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Arrival of Negroes in Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967); Fred Powledge, *Black Power, White Resistance: Notes on the New Civil War* (New York: World Publishing Co.; repr. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971).

²⁸ Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-92*, 2nd edn (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 185.

²⁹ Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).

dangerous and unreasonable – narratives often point to the rhetorical excess of Black Power advocates that made them ‘easy targets for demonization and dismissal’.³⁰

Despite its continued popularity, however, this traditional interpretation – known as the ‘declension hypothesis’ – has been thoroughly debunked by revisionist historians to the point where revisionism is becoming the new orthodoxy. Texts such as Timothy Tyson’s *Radio Free Dixie* or Simon Wendt’s *The Spirit and the Shotgun*, for instance, have challenged accounts that view the early 1960s as an era of non-violence by documenting the important role that armed self defence and black self-determination played in the Southern civil rights struggle.³¹ Scholars have also looked to rehabilitate Black Power activists, stressing the political substance behind their demands while also crediting the movement for important cultural gains.³² Utilising grassroots studies, others have traced the roots of Black Power to the traditions and experiences of working class African Americans in the rural South as well as demonstrating the longevity of protest movements in the urban North.³³ In doing so, this scholarship – commonly known as Black Power Studies – has challenged traditional historiography by highlighting the widespread, diverse, and long-lasting impact that the rhetoric and philosophy of Black Power

³⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, ‘The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field’, *The Journal of American History*, 96 (2009), 751–77 (p. 751).

³¹ Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); See also: Akinyele O. Umoja, ‘The Ballot and the Bullet: A Comparative Analysis of Armed Resistance in the Civil Rights Movement’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 29.4 (1999), 558–78; Lance E. Hill, *Deacons for Defense* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Christopher B. Strain, *Pure Fire: Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005); Charles E. Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff’ll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (New York: Basic Books, 2014).

³² William L. Van Deburg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965–75* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992); Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

³³ *Black Political Organizations in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, ed. by Ollie A. Johnson III and Karin L. Stanford (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002); *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940–1980*, ed. by Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Stephen Tuck, ‘“We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left Off”: The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43 (2008), 637–54; Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Dan Berger, *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

had – and continues to have – on American society.³⁴ However, beyond condemning the ‘bully pulpit’ of the press, few have examined how initial media narratives were formed.³⁵

This is not to argue that previous scholarship has not investigated media coverage or criticised the quite obvious biases that such reporting contained. Scholarship on the lesbian and gay rights movement, for example, has routinely demonstrated how mainstream outlets acted to marginalise gay men and women – often with deadly consequences.³⁶ Indeed, critiques of the media are common, especially from those who took part in the radical movements of the 1960s.³⁷ Todd Gitlin, for example, a former member of the New Left group Students for a Democratic Society, has claimed that:

I worked in a movement and watched it construed as something quite other than what I thought it was. Living with the discrepancy became one characteristic experience of my generation; we had, after all, grown up to take on faith what was in the newspapers, and to believe with Walter Cronkite that “that’s the way it is”.³⁸

Similarly, as scholars and activists have challenged histories of the civil rights movement that sideline working-class, African American activism in favour of top-down, white-centric narratives, this disapproval of common media tropes has also been reflected in the historiography.³⁹ Historian Brian Ward, for example, has argued that ‘contemporary depictions and retrospective portrayals of the [civil rights] movement in American culture and the mass media’ have encouraged the formulation of a ‘master narrative’ that has reduced a complex history into a ‘reductive and brittle formulation’.⁴⁰ This narrative, Jacquelyn Dowd

³⁴ Joseph, ‘The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field’.

³⁵ Joseph, ‘The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field’, pp. 755–6.

³⁶ Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Larry Gross, *Up from Invisibility Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America*, E-book (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

³⁷ Daniel C. Hallin, *The ‘Uncensored War’: The Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books 1988; repr. London, Vintage Books, 1994).

³⁸ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 17.

³⁹ For examples of how this trend has been applied to individuals, see: Jeanne Theoharis, *The Rebellious Life of Mrs. Rosa Parks* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2013); Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: BasicCivitas Books, 2014).

⁴⁰ Brian Ward, ‘Introduction’, in *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, ed. by Brian Ward (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), pp. 3, 8.

Hall claims, influenced early historians in a way that ‘simultaneously elevates and diminishes’ the social activism of the 1960s.⁴¹

However, whether scholars choose to laud or condemn media narratives, few actively engage with the people and institutions that created this ‘first draft of history’. This gap in the historiography is important because it suggests that historians view the news industry as a monolith, governed by a combination of mainstream prejudices and logistical processes that set the boundaries of what could and could not be printed. Historians, then, have absorbed and replicated theories which conceptualise the mainstream media as a single entity working to a set of predictable and consistent rules.⁴² In reality, the news industry – like any major institution – is composed of a myriad of individual interactions and defies standardisation.⁴³ For instance, while a number of scholars have sought to routinise the work of reporters, describing how and why a journalist covers certain events over others, their models cannot fully account for the homophobia of certain editors in the 1960s or the particular challenges of reporting from the segregated, rural South.⁴⁴ Importantly, the limited scholarship that does examine the human side of news production is mostly written by former journalists and at least semi-autobiographical in nature.⁴⁵ Indeed, whether seeking information on prominent journalists, editors, or institutions from this period, scholars often have to rely on memoirs or accounts penned by former colleagues or employees.⁴⁶

The understandable tendency for self-reflection in such narratives can provide a useful window into the minds and lives of those actively involved in covering social movements. As

⁴¹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, ‘The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past’, *The Journal of American History*, 91.4 (2005), 1233–63 (p. 1234).

⁴² The most famous of these works, upon which many more recent studies are based, is Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1978).

⁴³ Bailey.

⁴⁴ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978).

⁴⁵ The most relevant studies for these movements are: Alwood; Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage, 2007).

⁴⁶ David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Knopf, 1979); Osborn Elliott, *The World of Oz* (New York: Viking Press, 1980); Harrison E. Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: The New York Times and Its Times* (New York: Times Books, 1980); Prendergast and Colvin; Harrison E. Salisbury, *A Time of Change: A Reporter’s Tales of Our Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988); Richard F. Shepard, *The Paper’s Papers: A Reporter’s Journey Through the Archives of The New York Times* (New York: Times Books, 1996); Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life With the Times* (New York: Dell, 2000); Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).

former *New York Times* reporter John Corry claimed in his autobiography *My Times*, 'I cannot separate my views about life from the life I actually have lived, and so I think you should know about me'.⁴⁷ However, this self-reflection can also obscure the macro processes that guided the actions of their subjects as well as excluding or diminishing narratives that fall outside of the white, heteronormative male experience so common in this literature. As Barbie Zelizer has argued, 'the predominance of white, privileged, and male perspectives defining so much of the field has created an aura by which its givens appear natural and commonsensical'.⁴⁸ For instance, despite talking at considerable length about his coverage of sexologists William Masters and Virginia Johnson and the impact of the sexual revolution on his own life, Corry's autobiography entirely excludes discussion of homosexuality and the fight for gay and lesbian rights. Similarly, while accounts which specifically examine the relationship between race beat journalists and the civil rights movement of the 1960s are more common, the 'often uncritical celebration of journalism's high points left uncovered many of the contradictions and problems resonant in journalism's performance'.⁴⁹

Importantly, the self-aggrandisement that is a common feature of (semi-)autobiographical works on the media can also ignore the role that activists played in the construction of news. As Todd Gitlin's *The Whole World is Watching* has demonstrated, this failing risks ignoring how protest movements of the 1960s were themselves active participants in the creation of media coverage.⁵⁰ Indeed, while arguing that journalists 'composed versions of reality', Gitlin is careful to demonstrate how this 'composition was entering into our own deliberations' and creating symbiotic links between media narratives and the nature and tenor of movement activism.⁵¹ Although Gitlin's own experience with the social protest of the 1960s may have inspired his seminal work, others have since mirrored his approach. Jane Rhodes and Edward P. Morgan, for example, have focused on how the Black Panthers sought to challenge incomplete and often hostile contemporary media images, while simultaneously relying on

⁴⁷ John Corry, *My Times: Adventures in the News Trade* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1993), p. 143.

⁴⁸ Zelizer, p. 91.

⁴⁹ Zelizer, p. 96.

⁵⁰ Gitlin.

⁵¹ Gitlin, pp. XIV–XV.

these images for exposure.⁵² Other works, such as John Gallagher and Chris Bull's *Perfect Enemies* or Tina Fetner's *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism* have examined the dynamics created when progressive social movements find themselves in competition with conservative opponents for media influence.⁵³

This growing scholarship demonstrates the need for civil rights and homophile movement historians to be aware of, and investigate, the public relation dynamic that so heavily influenced social activism. However, while an increasing number of scholars have attempted to place activists back into the milieu of news production, few combine this analysis with a thorough examination of the media institutions and journalists with whom activists interacted. Indeed, when examining civil rights movement historiography, Gordon Mantler has argued that 'none of these studies combines a rigorous analysis of the media's "framing," in terms of social movement theory, with an exploration of civil rights organizations' own efforts to frame their activities to the public'.⁵⁴ By failing to analyse the multi-directional interactions that influence media narratives, previous scholarship on social movements can misinterpret the public rhetoric and actions of activists. Furthermore, such work often equates success with popularity in the mainstream media and fails to demonstrate how securing this coverage could mask growing disillusionment with central movement tenets. In other words, while these accounts challenge theories of media hegemony in news production, they do not adequately critique the notion that movement strategies were, and should be, aimed at gaining legitimacy in the eyes of mainstream society. Consequently, they underestimate the role that civil rights organisations played in perpetuating outdated ideas and concepts and the impact that this

⁵² Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007); Edward P. Morgan, 'The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement', in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, ed. by Renee C. Ramano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), pp. 137–66; Edward P. Morgan, 'Media Culture and the Public Memory of the Black Panther Party', in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*, ed. by Jama Lazerow and Yohuru R. Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 324–74.

⁵³ John Gallagher and Chris Bull, *Perfect Enemies: The Battle Between the Religious Right and the Gay Movement* (Lanham: Madison Books, 2001); Tina Fetner, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

⁵⁴ Gordon Mantler, "'The Press Did You In': The Poor People's Campaign and the Mass Media', *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, 3 (2010), 33–54 (p. 47 fn9).

would have on activists who sought to articulate what many in the African American community saw as a more authentic vision of social and political change.

As Jim Kepner, who worked at *ONE Magazine* from 1954, has argued, the mainstream press 'rarely mentioned homosexuality [in the 1950s] without euphemisms or extreme prejudice'.⁵⁵ Given this hostility, it is unsurprising that many homophile activists in this period focused on developing inter-personal networks that, Martin Meeker argues, laid the foundations for the formation of a community identity around a more radical and positive understanding of homosexuality.⁵⁶ Facing inwards, however, this process of intra-community narrative building failed to influence societal understandings in the period in which it was produced. Consequently, scholarship that deals with the media's coverage of the emerging gay and lesbian rights movement has tended to ignore political activism in the 1950s and 1960s, focusing instead on the national campaigns of the late 1970s and the visibility given to the community in the wake of the Aids crisis.⁵⁷ However, by ignoring the considerable barriers homophile activists encountered when attempting to secure positive coverage of their activism – or by focusing only on intra-community efforts – scholarship risks undermining the importance of the limited, yet groundbreaking, gains made by homophiles in the 1960s. In the process, this scholarship risks equating media outcomes with media goals and overlooks the emphasis that homophiles such as Barbara Gittings placed on breaking down 'that shield of invisibility that had always made it difficult for us to get our message across'.⁵⁸

When focusing on this interaction between activists and the media, it becomes clear that the press often acted – consciously or unconsciously – as an extension of dominant and institutionalised structures of privilege. As the thesis demonstrates, by privileging the testimony and actions of elite male actors, the media were unconsciously replicating the biases of American culture that placed heteronormative, white men above others in society.

⁵⁵ Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), p. 8; See also Jim Kepner in *Making Gay History: The Half Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*, ed. by Eric Marcus (New York: Perennial, 2002), p. 46.

⁵⁶ Meeker, *Contacts Desired*.

⁵⁷ Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995); Gross.

⁵⁸ Barbara Gittings in Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* (First Run Features, 1984; Peadarillo Pictures Ltd, 2010).

For instance, while seen by Knight Chair in Political Reporting, Charlotte Grimes, as a ‘classic example’ of the way in which journalists ‘speak truth to power’, this thesis demonstrates how coverage of the civil rights movement fed into conceptions of the freedom struggle that emphasized the role of whites, downplayed African American agency, sanctified nonviolent direct action, and focused attention on a small number of places, organizations, and individuals.⁵⁹ Similarly, when examining how mainstream outlets first ignored and then vilified the growing homophile movement, it is clear that privileged white elites positioned themselves as arbiters of what society considered to be ‘decent’, enforcing a conservative and increasingly out-of-touch understanding of public morality. In the process, they behaved as an extension of what Margot Canaday has termed the ‘Straight State’, using psychiatric, legal, and religious leaders to advance a particular conception of gay men and women as the archetypal ‘anticitizen’.⁶⁰

Chapter two, therefore, focuses on how institutionalised privilege interacted with editorial power to prevent and distort coverage of the African American community and demonstrates how this helped to shape early coverage of the civil rights movement and the larger black freedom struggle. Similarly, the chapter builds on the work of journalism professor Edward Alwood to understand how and why mainstream editors continued to ignore stories relating to the gay and lesbian community, long after legal censorship had been repealed and other media had pioneered such coverage.⁶¹ By considering how these processes affected coverage of two different communities at a macro level – and over a longer time period – chapter two contextualises the atmosphere in which civil rights and homophile organisations would operate in the 1960s. In the process, it rejects the lens of historical exceptionalism that is often applied to activism in the decade and encourages historians to consider how organisations were influenced by the wider societal treatment of the marginalised communities they claimed to represent.

⁵⁹ Charlotte Grimes, ‘Debate: Civil Rights and the Press’, *Journalism Studies*, 6 (2005), 117–34 (p. 117).

⁶⁰ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).

⁶¹ Alwood.

A qualitative study of all the organisations active in these movements in the 1960s is beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, chapters three through five will refine the case study developed in chapter two by concentrating on specific organisations within each movement. Given the size of the black freedom struggle, the first section of each chapter will focus on just one organisation, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Formed in 1960 and effectively collapsing by 1968, the organisation was often at the radical edge of the civil rights movement and had a unique and volatile relationship with the American press. Similarly, with the male dominated Mattachine Society having fractured in 1961, the second section of these chapters will focus on the work of two male homophile organisations – the Mattachine Society of New York (MSNY) and the Mattachine Society of Washington (MSW) – and the East Coast activism that these groups helped to spearhead in the 1960s. By comparing how media practices were applied to different organisations – and how the effects of these processes evolved over time – the thesis establishes the need to understand the shifting power dynamics present within movement histories and challenges the sometimes ahistorical approach of sociological study that seeks to routinise and categorise these interactions.

Having purposefully preserved large amounts of their organisational records, and with a number of former members also donating their personal papers to various archives, these organisations are good candidates for the case study approach taken in this thesis. Indeed, combined with their visible presence within their respective movements, this wealth of material has meant that these organisations have been the focus of relatively intense study within movement literature.⁶² Selecting these groups, therefore, demonstrates the benefits that a more thorough examination of news construction can play in even established historical debates. Furthermore, despite sharing certain similarities, the different ways in which these groups interacted with the media, and the different outcomes that resulted, further highlights the need for scholars to question the way we approach the process of media production. In

⁶² The seminal works on each movement remain the following: Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, 2nd edn (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1996); D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*; Scholarship on both organisations, however, has moved on considerably. For an introduction to this scholarship see: Joseph, *The Black Power Movement*; Stein.

doing so, the thesis shows how blending sociological frameworks with historical enquiry can challenge the ahistoricism of the former and false exceptionalism of the latter.

For instance, in contrast to what white SNCC volunteer Mike Miller called ‘press release revolutionaries’, SNCC often sought to position itself at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the South and its membership earned a reputation in the press for being ‘battle-tested veterans’.⁶³ Having fiercely asserted their independence at their founding conference in 1960, and again when the federal government attempted to shut down the 1961 Freedom Rides, SNCC members maintained a distrust of older organisations and institutions who they viewed as benefiting in private from activism that they condemned in public. However, while undoubtedly engaging in some startling acts of bravery and commitment, this conception of SNCC members as ‘frontline troops’ that did battle in the ‘trenches’ of the South risks overshadowing the important role that public relations played in SNCC’s activism.⁶⁴ Aware of the importance that the media could play in their struggles, SNCC had always committed significant resources to public relations. Indeed, the first paid member of SNCC’s staff, Jane Stembridge, was not only responsible for communicating with student groups across the country, but also informing the press about the activities of the fledgling organisation and its affiliates.⁶⁵ By 1962, SNCC’s involvement in voter registration projects in the Deep South had prompted the creation of a dedicated Communication Section, which by 1965 had five full time staffers under the direction of Communication Director Julian Bond. In addition to the Communications Section, SNCC also established a photography arm, SNCC Photo, and ran its own printing press to produce a newspaper called the *Student Voice* as well as other publicity materials. Indeed, historian Leigh Raiford has argued that ‘SNCC went further than any other civil rights organization of the time by creating its own extensive media structure’.⁶⁶

⁶³ *A Note about the Friends of SNCC Groups - What Do They Do?*, n.d., The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972 [Ann Arbor, MI: United Microfilms International, 1994], Series A.VI.24, Reel 12 Slide 789; ‘Civil Rights: The Invaders’, *Newsweek*, 29 June 1964, pp. 25–26 (p. 26).

⁶⁴ Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 405; Elaine Delott Baker, ‘They Sent Us This White Girl’, in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, ed. by Constance Curry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 253–88 (p. 276).

⁶⁵ Jane Stembridge to *Fellowship Magazine*, 28 August 1960, SNCC Papers, Series A.VII.1, Reel 12 Slide 836.

⁶⁶ Leigh Raiford, ‘“Come Let Us Build a New World Together”: SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement’, *American Quarterly*, 59 (2007), 1129–57 (p. 1140).

Consequently, while Bond claimed his work made him feel like ‘a whore or a pimp’, it is clear that he and Executive Secretary James Forman were acutely aware of ‘what is and is not possible with the American press’.⁶⁷

In recent years this effort has been the subject of limited, but increasing, historical study. By far the most thorough of these examinations is Vanessa Murphree’s *Selling Civil Rights*.⁶⁸ Detailing the formation, professionalization, and ultimate demise of SNCC’s communication structure, Murphree is one of few scholars to actively foreground the public relations work conducted by the organisation. However, while Murphree’s study is vital reading for anyone wanting to understand how the organisation aimed to secure mainstream coverage, its focus ‘on the communication tools used to advance the movement’, means that it often ignores the external pressures which influenced such an effort.⁶⁹ As the following chapters will demonstrate, SNCC’s early interactions with the media were aimed at maximising favourable coverage of its activities, even when this coverage ignored or overlooked the changing nature of those activities themselves. As faith in the power of the media to further the struggle and represent it favourably faltered, SNCC’s interaction with the press became more strained and the organisation began to talk publicly about ideas and strategies that it had previously kept hidden. Combined with a shift in media logistics as the civil rights movement focused on the problems of the Northern ghetto, SNCC’s relationship with the press was fundamentally altered and its ability to influence the news was substantially reduced. Alongside a more general disaffection with white liberal America, this shift saw the emergence of leaders within SNCC – most notably Stokely Carmichael – who articulated the need for black self-determination and political power. Expressed in the slogan ‘Black Power’, this philosophy was viewed by contemporaries as violent, divisive, and racist and received similar treatment in early histories of the decade.⁷⁰ However, building on decades of revisionist scholarship, the

⁶⁷ John Neary, ‘Julian Bond, A Militant Inside the System’, *Life*, 8 November 1968, pp. 43–48; *Printed Communication Manual*, Summer 1964, SNCC Papers, Series A.VII.4, Reel 14 Slide 983-93.

⁶⁸ Vanessa Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Use of Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁶⁹ Murphree, p. 10.

⁷⁰ ‘Civil Rights: The New Racism’, *TIME*, 1 July 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835847,00.html>> [accessed 11 October 2014]; Matusow.

final three chapters of this thesis will not only reject the notion that this shift represented a 'coup' by Northern radicals, but also demonstrate how media practices dominated by white elites have encouraged such a view.⁷¹ Importantly, by also examining how activists within SNCC interacted with, and at times exploited, these practices, the final chapters encourage a nuanced approach to the complex and evolving dynamics of race, gender, and class that influenced media production in the rural South and the urban North in strikingly different ways.

The historiography of the Mattachine Society has its own 'coup' narrative.⁷² Founded in Los Angeles in 1950, the Mattachine Foundation was not the first organisation in the United States devoted to improving the lives of gay men and women, but it was the first to establish a lasting and public presence. During what D'Emilio has called the Mattachine Foundation's 'radical beginnings', the group adopted a structure that largely eschewed contact with the public.⁷³ Organised in small cells, with little or no knowledge of their fellow members, many who attended Mattachine meetings were unaware of the Communist Party affiliations of the group's founders. Indeed, few had any knowledge of the founding members at all. In 1953, however, the secrecy of the organisation faced a strong challenge from those who feared the Foundation's cell-like structure and shadowy leadership put it at risk of being swept up in the national hysteria over communist subversion. This challenge would ultimately culminate in the appointment of new leaders who rebranded the group as the Mattachine Society and rejected the organisation's cell like structure and its commitment to the creation of an 'ethical homosexual culture'.⁷⁴

This change in leadership and emphasis has been viewed as a 'retreat to respectability' that delayed the emergence of gay liberation over a decade later.⁷⁵ However, in recent years a

⁷¹ Randy Finley, 'Crossing the White Line: SNCC in Three Delta Towns, 1963-1967', *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 65 (2006), 116–37 (p. 135).

⁷² William N. Eskridge, *Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 83.

⁷³ D'Emilio, pp. 57–74.

⁷⁴ "'Preamble to Constitution Changed over Objection of Some Members" from *Mattachine Newsletter* (1953)', in *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. by Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 319–20 (p. 319).

⁷⁵ Blasius and Phelan, p. 319; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, pp. 75–91.

number of scholars have challenged this interpretation of early homophile activism. Rather than representing a rightward shift, Martin Meeker and James Sears have argued that the period 1953-69 saw the continuation of a radical vision, albeit one hidden by what the former calls a 'mask of respectability'.⁷⁶ According to Meeker and others, then, the Mattachine Society's rejection of the more radical elements of the Foundation's initial programme resulted from a desire to protect the organisation until such radical ideas could gain mainstream acceptance. While the shift in Mattachine's operating philosophy was clearly triggered by the emergence of a rival leadership faction, this scholarship rejects narratives which describe the ascent of Hal Call and other conservatives as a 'coup'.⁷⁷ Instead, they argue, the resignation of the founding members emerged from a shared desire to protect an organisation that many believed to be the first of its kind.⁷⁸ As founder Harry Hay has claimed:

We had to be very, very careful in everything we did, and think about it very carefully, or we could make a mistake, and if we made a mistake, and got into the papers the wrong way, we could hurt the idea of a movement for years to come, and we were terrified of doing that.⁷⁹

Indeed, although much has been written on the radicalism of Hay and the early Mattachine, its interaction with the public was characterised by an understandable timidity.⁸⁰ Despite being modelled on the Société Mattachine, a medieval French masque group that used their anonymity to openly challenge the power and authority of the ruling regime, few in the early years of the group sought to openly critique American society. Even when the organisation mounted a defence of co-founder Dale Jennings, who had been solicited and then entrapped by a police officer who arrested him on morals charges, the Foundation established a shell organisation – the Citizens Committee to Outlaw Entrapment – to coordinate Jennings' defence and deflect attention from the Foundation. Indeed, this failure to pursue public

⁷⁶ Meeker, 'Behind the Mask of Respectability'; Sears.

⁷⁷ Eskridge, p. 83.

⁷⁸ Douglas M. Charles, 'From Subversion to Obscenity: The FBI's Investigations of the Early Homophile Movement in the United States, 1953-1958', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 19.2 (2010), 262–87.

⁷⁹ Schiller and Rosenberg; See also 'Harry Hay: Founding the Mattachine, Part 2', *Out History* <http://outhistory.org/oldwiki/Harry_Hay:_Founding_the_Mattachine,_part_2#Paul_Coates:_a_strange_new_pressure_group.22> [accessed 12 February 2014].

⁸⁰ *Radically Gay: Gay Liberation in the Words of Its Founder*, ed. by Will Roscoe (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996); Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson, 1990).

exposure is one of the reasons that a number of former members established One Inc. in 1952 and began printing *ONE Magazine* in 1953. Contributors to *ONE Magazine* ranged from the anarchic Don Slater through to future Log Cabin Republican Dorr Legg, but they were united in rejecting the secretive approach of the Mattachine Foundation in favour of an engagement with the wider public.

While the 1950s saw chapters of the organisation spring up in a small number of cities, such as New York and Denver, power remained with leaders on the West Coast. By 1961, tensions between these leaders and other chapters led to the dissolution of the Mattachine as a national entity. Establishing itself as a separate organisation, the MSNY was joined in the same year by the MSW, founded by Frank Kameny and Jack Nichols. With MSW encouraging a more radical approach to the movement, militant activists such as Dick Leitsch deepened MSNY's relationship with the Eastern Conference of Homophile Organisations (ECHO) when they were elected to office in 1965 and helped to coordinate public pickets of targets in Washington and symbolic protests outside the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia. Professing many of the ideas associated with the radicalism of the post-Stonewall era, these homophile organisations rejected the characterisation of gay men and women as sick, openly campaigned for gay and lesbian rights, and adopted 'gay is good' as their official slogan. While acknowledging that such views were not universally held in the movement, chapters three through five will also examine how media logistics and widespread homophobia in the press has contributed to the absence of positive narratives regarding homophile activism.

Splitting the interaction between activists and newswriters between the final three chapters, the thesis deconstructs news production in a way that demonstrates the various stages during which activists, journalists, and editors influenced and constructed mainstream narratives. Having established the limitations of the race beat and 'straight news' coverage of the gay and lesbian community in chapter two, chapter three concentrates on the criteria journalists and their editors used when deciding if and when stories were considered to be newsworthy. Analysing how the need for "fresh" stories on the civil rights movement affected SNCC's activism in the South, the chapter critiques the lens of escalation that governed much Southern coverage. Having purposefully eschewed the large-scale mobilisations of Martin

Luther King Jr. in favour of grassroots organising, SNCC's activism was not well fitted to media logistics that continued to focus on the most spectacular aspects of its interactions in the South, giving the American public, and future scholars, a distorted image of its day-to-day operations. Combined with the practice of 'pegging' certain ideas or developments to particular events, this style of reporting has encouraged the notion that there were a series of discrete landmarks in the Southern movement that acted as distinct breaks in the development of the black freedom struggle. However, while such practices are common to all news stories, the chapter also demonstrates how the dynamics of race, gender, and class intersected to produce specific and problematic omissions in the mainstream record. Importantly, activists within SNCC and other civil rights organisations were often aware of, and adapted to, many of these practices, helping to conceal particular movement developments and silencing the men – and more often women – that produced them. For instance, examining how journalists focused disproportionately on events involving white activists, the chapter discusses how considerations of media coverage played an important role in the decision to bring white students into the Southern movement in the summers of 1963 and 1964. Similarly, while a need for spectacular and definable events may have driven media agendas that ignored the bridge-building and educational work disproportionately carried out by African American women, it was patriarchal structures within organisations like SNCC and Southern society more generally that often limited the ability of women to take on more formal positions of leadership.⁸¹ Furthermore, used to dealing with clear and hierarchical leadership structures that privileged the cultural capital of middle and upper class male elites, journalists were predisposed to the rhetoric of established civil rights leaders – such as the NAACP's Roy Wilkins – who openly challenged SNCC's investment in, and encouragement of, rural, working-class leadership.

With so few articles published on the emerging homophile movement, it is simply not possible to replicate the approach taken to coverage of SNCC and the wider civil rights movement.

⁸¹ Belinda Robnett, 'Women in the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: Ideology, Organizational Structure, and Leadership', in *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 131–68; Doug McAdam, 'Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience: The Case of Freedom Summer', *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (1992), 1211–40.

Instead, the latter case study in chapter three examines how the continued censorship of stories relating to the wider gay and lesbian community frustrated MSNYs and MSWs attempts to secure coverage of their own actions. Furthermore, it establishes how the wider social context – in which thousands were violently protesting government action in cities across the USA – exposed a significant gap between what homophile activists and reporters deemed newsworthy protest. For instance, the muted reception to small-scale homophile demonstrations is understandable within the context of a news cycle pre-occupied with some of the largest protests in US history. Indeed, bringing larger numbers onto the streets of Manhattan, post-Stonewall gay liberation groups were always likely to gain greater coverage than their homophile forebears. Importantly, by documenting the barriers that homophiles faced when attempting to secure coverage of their own actions, this section challenges the equation of media outcomes with movement priorities. Furthermore, by noting the similarity between the strategies employed by homophile activists and their counterparts in the civil rights movement – and the very different outcomes these strategies produced – the chapter highlights how media practices intersected with institutionalised prejudice and marginalised identities in very particular ways. For instance, while adopting the trappings of middle-class respectability – conservative dress, nonviolent protest, and legal demands – homophiles in the mid-to-late 1960s saw their attempts at conformity rejected by a society that refused to recognise their claim to equal citizenship. In contrast, while the counter-cultural dress and behaviour of gay liberation activists may have encouraged greater coverage, it also allowed journalists to continue to portray activists as outsiders that were both an amusing spectacle and part of a larger threat to ‘traditional’ America.

Having outlined the parameters within which activists and reporters operated, chapter four examines how journalistic sourcing practices were governed by a unique mix of institutionalised prejudice and individual need. For instance, the peculiar nature of Southern coverage encouraged SNCC to generate a complex communications structure that became a highly respected source of information for race beat journalists. Noting the differences between Southern coverage and more traditional news patterns in the North, the chapter argues that the negative reaction to Black Power and urban unrest represented a return to

normal mainstream reporting practices that had ignored or denigrated the African American community for decades. In doing so, it challenges the romanticism attached to mainstream coverage of the Southern movement and the notion that radicalism was to blame for a white backlash that undermined previously strong support for civil rights. Analysing how SNCC was able to mask growing developments in the South that would become associated with the Black Power philosophy, the chapter emphasises the importance of journalistic routine and the power of news sources. Simultaneously, however, the chapter's examination of the hostile reaction to Carmichael's election as SNCC chairman in May 1966 stresses that the ability to influence media narratives was not a permanent phenomenon and relied on SNCC's adherence to a set of unwritten rules that were dictated by Northern whites, not the Southern African Americans with whom SNCC worked. Furthermore, examining the unease with which many reporters approached an organisation that placed little faith in formal leadership structures, the chapter highlights how journalistic sourcing practices mirrored the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of American society. At the same time, however, it highlights the role that intra-movement sexism played in perpetuating conceptions of leadership as masculine, even when challenging assumptions based on race and class.

Chapter four also documents and analyses the efforts of homophile groups to be included in narratives about their own lives. With the movement in its early stages, and many rightly concerned about the impact that publicity could have on their careers and personal relationships, homophile efforts were often concentrated on educating the public about homosexuality, rather than achieving widespread fame or competing for coverage with rival groups. Criminalised, medicalised, and seen as purveyors of sin, however, homophile leaders found it much harder than their counterparts in SNCC to gain access to the media. Indeed, when examining journalistic sourcing practices that effectively policed who was allowed to speak on behalf of a community of millions, the role the media played as an arm of the 'straight state', is clear.⁸² While homophiles have often been criticised for their work with

⁸² Indeed, while Canaday's work examines how narratives and policy surrounding immigration, military service, and welfare transformed federal offices into enforcers of a heteronormative state, the media both reinforced and was reinforced by these trends. Focused on political and legal narratives, Canaday's work thus translates in important ways into the cultural and social sphere of American life in the 1950s and 1960s: Canaday.

homophobic psychiatrists and clergymen, the chapter thus reframes their engagement with officials as an attempt to utilise the social legitimacy of particular professionals to undermine the 'straight state' from within. While recognising the tensions inherent in this approach, the chapter demonstrates the important roles that such contact played in securing early coverage of the movement and the articulation in the press of ideas that challenged prevailing negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Indeed, by cross-referencing voices that did appear in coverage with homophile allies, the chapter highlights the way that the MSNY and MSW actively used these connections to directly influence coverage of the gay and lesbian community. This strategy did not preclude homophiles from attempting to speak for their own communities or obtain coverage of their own actions. Instead, it recognised the superior legitimacy that officials held in the eyes of journalists and audiences alike while actively attempting to secure this authority for themselves. Importantly, this attempt not only saw homophile voices dominating certain coverage by 1969, and the name Mattachine becoming more familiar to reporters and audiences alike, but also directly influenced the access gay liberation leaders would have to the mainstream media after Stonewall.

Dealing more explicitly with the content of news stories, chapter five demonstrates that quantitative studies – which often use the frequency with which ideas or organisations appear in the press as a measure of movement success – can ignore the power journalists had to shape public understanding of events by framing their stories in particular ways. Focusing in particular on how SNCC interacted – or was seen to interact – with potential allies, much of this process acted to sideline radicalism and was undoubtedly a product of white racial attitudes. Importantly, while many of the media's frames remained unchanged during this period – and still exist to this day in many cases – their deployment, and the ability of SNCC to affect their construction, changed dramatically over this period. Examining how 'balanced' media narratives often framed conflict in a way that clearly preferred one party, the chapter focuses on the 'morality play' constructed in the South. In the process, it demonstrates how activists and journalists negotiated a particular moral space in which activists who conformed to white, middle-class conceptions of respectability and restraint could expect their work to gain a sympathetic reading in the press. Simultaneously, however, the chapter exposes how

the parameters of this 'acceptable dissent' could be used to critique and marginalise more radical understandings of the freedom struggle.⁸³ Relying on a caricature of the Southern, racist redneck, this morality play also allowed Northern white audiences to ignore and deflect tensions closer to home until the urban rebellions of the late 1960s.

Similarly, having ignored gay and lesbian communities that had existed in major cities for decades, newspapers and magazines chose to frame their increasing coverage in the 1960s as a response to the threat of 'overt' homosexuality.⁸⁴ Conscious that their public appearances could be used by a hostile media to fuel negative conceptions of gay men and women as 'anticitizens', homophiles purposefully attempted to occupy the same moral space that had seemingly produced so many gains for the civil rights movement. However, portrayed in coverage as militants who risked perpetuating a debilitating condition, homophiles were unable to effectively challenge mainstream narratives that focused on aspects of the gay and lesbian community most likely to arouse the sensibilities of their audiences. Nevertheless, while activists have been accused of being engaged in the 'familiar American game of assimilation' that required 'the muting of a group's distinctive coloring in order that they might blend into the fabric of the mainstream', it is important to recognise how their strategic deployment of respectability was also an attempt to radically appropriate and reinterpret this fabric.⁸⁵ With Kameny and others ridiculed by officials such as Secretary of State Dean Rusk, even though they adopted the markers of white, middle-class, respectability, the chapter challenges the idea that homophile activism was not a radical and subversive act. Highlighting the fluid nature of radicalism within both media and activist circles, the chapter shows how the implicit or explicit homophobia contained within even the most positive articles, meant that homophiles faced a difficult choice between absolute authenticity and attempting to overcome significant social stigmas. While problematic in a number of ways, then, the focus on respectability in the protests of the mid-to-late 1960s can also be viewed as a temporary

⁸³ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 240.

⁸⁴ Robert C. Doty, 'Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern', *New York Times*, 17 December 1963, pp. 1, 33.

⁸⁵ Gross, p. 14.

and tactical decision to counter harmful prevailing stereotypes that laid the groundwork for future advances.

Given the ability of the media to ‘define public understanding of a movement’, qualitative sociologists have claimed that social movements outside of the mainstream are ‘especially dependent on public communication’.⁸⁶ Indeed, with few gay men and women out publicly in this period, and segregation dividing people of different races both North and South, the media was often the only source of news on these communities that white, middle-class readers were likely to come across. For instance, while New Yorkers were responsible for three quarters of all donations to SNCC according to activist Joanne Grant, a *New York Times* survey found that ninety seven per cent of white New Yorkers had not participated in any demonstrations and ninety two per cent claimed that they had no intention of doing so.⁸⁷ Indeed, the survey found that de facto segregation was such that thirty one per cent of white New Yorkers did not know a single African American by name while only seven per cent said they knew African Americans ‘well enough to be friendly with them’.⁸⁸ Popular support for these organisations and their activities, then, was rarely predicated on a personal knowledge of those involved. This need for allies outside of their respective movements heightened the importance of image production in the media and led to compromises that would be increasingly rejected as this need for allies was seen to wane. While in both cases this resulted in the production of very different images by the end of the decade, it is important to recognise both the utility of earlier frames and the effect that these had on presenting what were often more authentic depictions of activism as dramatic breaks from past practice. Before this examination can take place, however, it is necessary to examine those outlets most often dubbed ‘mainstream’ by historical scholarship and highlight the particular faults and blind spots such publications possess.

⁸⁶ Jürgen Gerhards, ‘Framing Dimensions and Framing Strategies: Contrasting Ideal-and Real-Type Frames’, *Social Science Information*, 34.2 (1995), 225–48 (p. 225); Kenneth T. Andrews and Neal Caren, ‘Making the News: Movement Organizations, Media Attention, and the Public Agenda’, *American Sociological Review*, 75.6 (2010), 841–66 (p. 841).

⁸⁷ Joanne Grant in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, ed. by Faith S. Holsaert (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 304; Fred Powledge, ‘Poll Shows Whites in City Resent Civil Rights Drive’, *New York Times*, 21 September 1964, pp. 1, 26.

⁸⁸ ‘Results of Key Questions on Whites’ Attitudes’, *New York Times*, 21 September 1964, p. 26; Powledge, ‘Poll Shows Whites in City Resent Civil Rights Drive’.

Chapter One: The Nature of the American 'Mainstream' Press and its use in Historical Research.

'Can the news media really disclaim a leadership function or disown the fact that they constitute a running historical record? Why else would historians so frequently turn to the newspaper archives as resources? How else could social scientists have found content analyses of newspapers and other mass media a valuable key to the understanding of the cultural mores of past periods?'
(Jack Lyle, 1968)¹

'Too often, what journalists claim to see stands in for reality itself, obscuring the fact that news is no more than a report, account, chronicle, or story about an event'
(Barbie Zelizer, 2004)²

The use of media data within historical research has been varied, with some scholars using it to establish a framework of events, while others hope to gain an insight into the lives and thoughts of earlier cultures and individuals. Within this research, reference is often made to the 'mainstream media'. Prone to a myriad of uses that serve an equally diverse range of purposes, however, this phrase has largely escaped definition. Indeed, even communication scientists Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allen, who classify over 400 terms in their comprehensive work *Keywords In News And Journalism Studies*, fail to define the expression.³ Before moving on to a comprehensive analysis of the media record, therefore, it is necessary to understand what is often meant when scholars talk of the mainstream media.

In its broadest sense, the term 'mainstream' could be applied to all outlets that, for any reason and regardless of success, sought an audience outside of direct inter-personal networks. Even in a digital age, however, communications scholar G. Ray Funkhouser is still correct in claiming that 'a comprehensive analysis of the total range of communications which play a role in forming and influencing nationwide public opinion is probably impossible and certainly beyond

¹ Jack Lyle, 'Introduction', in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles, CA: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. ix – xviii (pp. xv–xvi).

² Barbie Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004), p. 24.

³ This absence is even more pronounced given the use of 'mainstream media' within some of the definitions that are given: Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan, *Keywords In News And Journalism Studies* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education, 2010), pp. 39, 101, 164.

the capabilities of any single research effort'.⁴ Consequently, the term is often used to describe those outlets that scholars identify as making significant contributions to public discourses on the major events of the day. However, with over 1,500 daily newspapers operating in the US in 1968 – and hundreds more weekly and monthly outlets – journalism professor James Brian McPherson has argued that the 'abundance of sources, proliferation and diversity of writing [...] combine to make scholarship in the field a formidable task'.⁵ To manage this material, scholars obviously need to reduce the volume of newspaper data they use. Some have done this by sampling a restricted number of time periods within the context of a longer study.⁶ Others have taken random samples of media data to militate against the subjectivity introduced by human choice.⁷ When many scholars talk of a mass or mainstream press, however, they are often consciously or unconsciously alluding to a much smaller and more manageable band of newspapers and magazines. Indeed, studies have found that scholars in a variety of fields have sought to offset the difficulties involved in collecting newspaper data by restricting their search to 'only one or two sources and, in many cases, just the *New York Times*'.⁸

To understand why certain outlets are favoured over others, it is necessary to examine the nature of the American press. In particular, it is important to understand the role that industry volatility in the 1950s and 1960s played in the evolution of news publications in the US. With population increases far outstripping new subscriptions, the rise in circulation figures after the war masked a significant and worrying decline in the proportion of Americans regularly reading newspapers.⁹ This shift away from newsprint was fuelled in part by the rise of television and the increasingly sophisticated nature of television news, which began in the 1950s and rapidly grew in the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, a poll by the Roper Organization in 1963 found

⁴ G. Ray Funkhouser, 'The Issues of the Sixties: An Exploratory Study in the Dynamics of Public Opinion', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37 (1973), 62–75 (p. 62).

⁵ James Brian McPherson, *Journalism at the End of the American Century, 1965-Present*, The History of American Journalism, 7 (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), p. vii.

⁶ Doug McAdam and others, "'There Will Be Fighting in the Streets": The Distorting Lens of Social Movement Theory', *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 10 (2005), 1–18.

⁷ Edward B. Beiser and Peter Swift, 'Race and Place in the New York Times', *Social Science Quarterly*, 53 (1972), 192–135.

⁸ David G. Ortiz and others, 'Where Do We Stand with Newspaper Data?', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 10 (2005), 397–419 (p. 402).

⁹ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, The History of American Journalism, 6 (Westport: Praeger, 2006), pp. 92–95.

that, for the first time ever, more Americans claimed to be getting their news from television than newspapers.¹⁰ Importantly, while many publishers would struggle to come to terms with this changing market, advertisers were much quicker at spotting an emerging trend, and invested heavily in the new medium.¹¹ As a result, despite a dramatic overall increase in advertising revenue, newsprint media were receiving a smaller and smaller share of an industry they used to dominate.

Unfortunately for many publications, rising competition was accompanied by rising production costs. Consequently, while the growing advertising market required many papers to increase the size and sophistication of their news products, outdated printing technology and high raw material costs added to publishers' financial burdens. Furthermore, as many newspapers attempted to make savings at the expense of highly unionised print workers, several major cities, including New York, Detroit, and Minneapolis, witnessed long and costly strikes that led directly to the closure of publications like the *New York Daily Mirror*.¹² Indeed, the period between 1945 and 1965 saw more than 400 newspapers merge with local rivals or cease publication entirely as publishers struggled to come to terms with a changing market.¹³

While this seeming decline in the American newspaper industry would lead worried legislators to pass the Newspaper Preservation Act of 1970, it laid the ground for many of the definitions of mainstream used in historical research. By tackling these definitions, this chapter discusses how the media has been conceptualised, quantified, and utilised by scholars. While doing so, the chapter relates the emergence of each definition with shifts in the media industry that facilitated and encouraged such characterisations. Furthermore, by examining the potential pitfalls these definitions create, the chapter challenges the notion that the mainstream media, however it is defined, can ever offer an objective or complete record of historical events and

¹⁰ John Corry, *My Times: Adventures in the News Trade* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1993), pp. 179–80; Others claim that this shift in audience behaviour occurred as early as 1961: Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), p. 140.

¹¹ Davies, p. 125; 52.

¹² For a good overview of the tensions between the news industry and the press unions in this period see chapter eight of Davies; For a more in depth account of the 1962-3 New York strike see A. H. Raskin, 'The Strike: A Step-by-Step Account', *New York Times*, 1 April 1963, pp. 1, 22–24; Marilyn Nissenson, *The Lady Upstairs: Dorothy Schiff and the New York Post* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), pp. 272–288.

¹³ Davies, pp. 114–116.

shows how the privileging of certain news outlets in historical research can distort our understanding of the past.

I

When dealing with the press, the term ‘mainstream’ is so often conflated with ‘mass’ that some scholars use the words interchangeably.¹⁴ However, much like ‘mainstream’, this notion of a ‘mass’ media has a number of overlapping definitions. Perhaps the most popular of these definitions is to identify mass media publications as those with the highest readership. For instance, despite referring to both the ‘mainstream’ and ‘mass’ media in their investigation of Supreme Court coverage, Rosalee Clawson et al. based their research on just three outlets: the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Los Angeles Times*.¹⁵ When justifying their selection, Clawson et al. stressed the ‘large circulation’ of these publications and encouraged the notion that size and mass appeal are integral to definitions of the mainstream press.¹⁶

When utilising a select number of ‘mass’ and ‘national’ publications, scholars are relying on shifts in media ownership and production that took place in the post-war period. Indeed, the British reporter and author Godfrey Hodgson has identified the late 1950s as the moment when increasing ownership concentration, corporatisation, and the rise of television came together to transform the American press ‘from a brawling, competitive localized business into an order dominated by a double handful of fiefs of imperial power and wealth’.¹⁷ Claiming that this process was preceded by, and strongly reinforced, what he calls the ‘nationalizing of the American consciousness’, Hodgson argues that the ‘growing interest in national and international affairs [...developed] to the point where few even of the larger metropolitan dailies [...] either could afford, or chose to afford, to give their readers comment or analysis

¹⁴ For example, despite using ‘Mainstream’ in their title, Clawson et al. instead used the term ‘mass media’ in their keywords: Rosalee A. Clawson, Harry C. ‘Neil’ Strine IV and Eric N. Waltenburg, ‘Framing Supreme Court Decisions: The Mainstream versus the Black Press’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 33 (2003), 784–800 (p. 784); See also Diana C. Mutz and Paul S. Martin, ‘Facilitating Communication across Lines of Political Difference: The Role of Mass Media’, *The American Political Science Review*, 95 (2001), 97–114; Jackie Smith and others, ‘From Protest to Agenda Building: Description Bias in Media Coverage of Protest Events in Washington, D.C.’, *Social Forces*, 79 (2001), 1397–1423; Delphine Letort, ‘The Rosa Parks Story: The Making of a Civil Rights Icon’, *Black Camera*, 3 (2012), 31–50.

¹⁵ Clawson, Strine IV and Waltenburg.

¹⁶ Clawson, Strine IV and Waltenburg, p. 798.

¹⁷ Hodgson, p. 138.

with any distinctly local flavor'.¹⁸ Closely tied to this notion of mass, therefore, is the idea that mainstream papers are national in scope. Establishing bureaus across the United States and foreign cities such as London, Paris, and Berlin, mainstream outlets began to create news organisations that could credibly claim both a national outlook and audience. Indeed, historian David Greenberg, argues that the expansion and professionalization of papers such as the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post*, in the post war period allowed them to develop into, 'truly national powerhouses'.¹⁹

This notion of a national press is attractive to those wishing to utilise a small number of papers for studies spanning a large geographical area. However, John T. Woolley, who has attempted to quantify the likelihood that certain events will be included in mainstream coverage, has found that supposedly national publications like the *Times* actually 'exhibit significant regional biases [...and] disproportionately cover large urban areas or areas with wire service offices'.²⁰ Indeed, in contrast to Hodgson's notion of a 'national consciousness', Paul L. Martin argued in the early 1960s that 'the great strength of the American newspaper is that it is a *predominantly local institution* both in news and advertising'.²¹ Indeed, Martin – head of the Gannet Group's Washington Bureau and editor of the *U.S. News and World Report* – argued that the rise of television and radio encouraged this localism; '[While] the top national and international headlines are siphoned off at any hour through electronic newscasting [...] no Douglas Edwards or David Brinkley can possible cover the big local events so important to growing suburbia, exurbia, and interurbia'.²²

When considering the impact of such regional biases on the use of news data, it is important to note that all of the outlets most often designated as 'mainstream' in historical research were exclusively based in the urban North. Indeed, many, including not just the *New York Times* but

¹⁸ Hodgson, pp. 151–2; 139.

¹⁹ David Greenberg, 'The Idea of "The Liberal Media" and Its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement', *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, 1 (2008), 167–86 (p. 170).

²⁰ John T. Woolley, 'Using Media-Based Data in Studies of Politics', *American Journal of Political Science*, 44 (2000), 156–73 (p. 158); See also Ortiz and others, pp. 405, 411; Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, 'All the Rioting That's Fit to Print: Selection Effects in National Newspaper Coverage of Civil Disorders, 1968-1969', *American Sociological Review*, 69 (2004), 519–43.

²¹ Paul L. Martin, *Diversification of Media of Information in the United States: The National Picture 1900-62*, Slide 284, Paul L. Martin Papers, (Microfilm Edition, 1987), Reel 1 Slide 234-312, Wisconsin Historical Society [Hereafter referred to as WHS].

²² Martin, p. 296. Emphasis in original.

also magazines such as *TIME*, *Newsweek*, and *Life*, were all based within a small area of downtown Manhattan. Consequently, the ‘significant regional biases’ found in mainstream publications have privileged coverage of events in local urban centres in the East over those in the South and Midwest.²³ As Hodgson argues, while this bias may have occurred ‘without anyone willing it’, it still ‘had the effect of tending to impose the attitudes of New York and Washington on the medium from which Americans were increasingly deriving their view of the world’.²⁴

II

The exclusion of hundreds of smaller, local papers from historical studies significantly reduces the burden of source material, but it still leaves scholars with a number of mass-circulation national outlets. For instance, with a guaranteed circulation of 900,000 and a projected readership of close to 5,000,000 in December 1965, *Ebony* magazine could certainly be considered a national, mass publication.²⁵ However, given *Ebony*’s overt appeal to a specific demographic of the American public – African Americans – the magazine is rarely included in definitions of mainstream or mass media. Instead, a number of studies have positioned the mass or mainstream media as separate from, and sometimes in opposition to, a more specifically defined minority, alternative, or specialised media.²⁶ For instance, when examining African American attitudes to local press sources, political and communication scientists Timothy Vercellotti and Paul R. Brewer produced a lengthy definition of what constituted the ‘black press’, while definitions of the term ‘mainstream’, which also appeared in their article’s title, were absent.²⁷ Instead, when detailing the questions asked of their respondents, it is clear that Vercellotti and Brewer unconsciously defined ‘mainstream’ as any local news programme or print media that was not ‘published specifically for the African American

²³ Woolley, p. 158.

²⁴ Hodgson, p. 140.

²⁵ ‘Backstage’, *Ebony*, December 1965, p. 26.

²⁶ Brendan Comiskey, ‘The Media and the Churches’, *The Furrow*, 36 (1985), 217–28; Una M. Cadegan, ‘Guardians of Democracy or Cultural Storm Troopers? American Catholics and the Control of Popular Media, 1934-1966’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 87 (2001), 252–82.

²⁷ Timothy Vercellotti and Paul R. Brewer, ‘“To Plead Our Own Cause”: Public Opinion Toward Black and Mainstream News Media among African Americans’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 37 (2006), 231–50 (pp. 233–35).

community’ or ‘devoted to African American issues’.²⁸ While this concentration on alternative media in scholarly works can certainly be productive, it can also encourage a view of the ‘mainstream’ as a homogenous ‘mass’, and in the process overlook the considerable variances between publications and outlets on specific issues.

This definition of the mass media as one with a generic appeal also ignores that mainstream audiences were – consciously or unconsciously – conceptualised in white, heteronormative, and middle-class terms. Again, this development had its roots in the history of the American news industry and its relationship with American society. Despite the conception of the free press as a bulwark against tyranny and corruption, most newspapers derived the majority of their income from advertising sales and operated as for-profit commercial entities.²⁹ Indeed, former *New York Times* Executive Editor Max Frankel has claimed that newspaper readers were ‘a commodity that [was] routinely “sold” to advertisers’, and that this sensitivity to the needs and desires of advertisers often resulted in a ‘tug-o’-war’ between the news and accounting departments at the paper.³⁰ Consequently, while the system of pleasing one’s audience is a recognisable and universal trend in journalism, mainstream media outlets were not only sensitive to the demands of their readers, but were also careful to cultivate a specific readership that would appeal to advertisers. Given the unusually high levels of domestic consumerism in the 1950s and 1960s, advertisers in the mainstream press were often looking to reach a specific demographic of American society that fulfilled stereotypically middle-class and heteronormative suburban ideals. As well as ignoring the realities of life for millions of white, working-class Americans, this trend rendered African Americans and the gay and lesbian community largely invisible in mainstream advertising. Indeed, informing a conference of African American publishers in 1965 that they needed to ‘present a clearer image of the Negro to the nation’s major advertisers’, representatives of some of the nation’s largest advertising firms simultaneously demonstrated their own personal lack of understanding and the way in which African American consumers were conceived as being part of a fundamentally different

²⁸ Vercellotti and Brewer, p. 240; Catherine R. Squires, ‘Coloring in the Bubble: Perspectives from Black-Oriented Media on the (Latest) Economic Disaster’, *American Quarterly*, 64 (2012), 543–70.

²⁹ William A. Gamson and others, ‘Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18 (1992), 373–93 (p. 377).

³⁰ Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life With the Times* (New York: Dell, 2000), pp. 504, 506.

audience.³¹ As a result, advertising in mainstream publications such as the *New York Times* was almost wholly produced by, and intended for, a white, wealthy, heterosexual audience.³² For editors looking to cultivate a profitable advertising base, considerations of whether or not a particular story was newsworthy were therefore influenced by its relative appeal to a specific demographic of American society.

As a consequence, it is important that historians who use newspaper data understand the inherent flaws in the mainstream media record. Indeed, such flaws formed part of the heavy criticism levelled at the press in 1968 by the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, also known as the Kerner Commission. Arguing that, 'when the white press does refer to Negroes and Negro problems it frequently does so as if Negroes were not a part of the audience', the Kerner Commission's report highlighted how many of those titles considered to hold mainstream or mass appeal actually reproduced racial divisions found elsewhere in society.³³ As comparative studies of the African American and white mainstream press have consistently shown, this inability to empathise with the daily struggles of African Americans inevitably prejudiced the accounts of mainstream newspapers such as the *New York Times*.³⁴ Given the continuing differences in the way that white and African American news outlets report and discuss racism in America, it is important that historians recognise how the mass media was actually produced for and by a specific audience.³⁵

Similarly, while the 1960s saw increasingly strong and officially recognised challenges to racial disparities in coverage, the lack of any systematic attempt to measure and assess the exclusion

³¹ Theodore Jones, 'Negro Press Urged To Clarify Image', *New York Times*, 13 March 1965, section Business/Financial, p. 29.

³² For a good overview of the relationship between mainstream advertising and the African American community see Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); For similar on the gay and lesbian community see Katherine Sender, *Business, Not Politics: The Making of the Gay Market* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

³³ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 383.

³⁴ Ronald N. Jacobs, *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society: From Watts to Rodney King* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³⁵ Lawrence Schneider, 'White Newsmen and Black Critics', *Nieman Reports*, September 1971 <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102038/1971-White-Newsmen-and-Black-Critics.aspx>> [accessed 20 August 2014]; Bob Cesca, 'The Profound Unfairness of the Baltimore Riots', *The Daily Banter*, 2015 <<http://thedailybanter.com/2015/04/the-profound-unfairness-of-the-baltimore-riots/>> [accessed 28 April 2015].

of gay men and women from mainstream narratives is symptomatic of the institutionalised homophobia of this period. Lacking formal apparatus to enact changes on their own behalf, the gay and lesbian community developed their own media to articulate their ideas and debate what, if anything, united the millions of Americans who shared a common affection for their own sex. While short-lived newsletters had been produced before the 1950s, it was the publication of *ONE Magazine* in 1953 that represented the first sustained and far reaching effort at producing news and information from and for the gay and lesbian community. While *ONE Magazine* was initially established in opposition to the clandestine organisational form of the early Mattachine, soon the Society – and a number of other regional homophile groups – would publish their own newsletters. As Martin Meeker’s *Contacts Desired* demonstrates, the gay and lesbian press helped to sustain and build a community that received little acknowledgement from mainstream sources.³⁶

Unable, and in some cases unwilling, to carry advertising, these periodicals represent a fundamentally different news product and approach to America’s gay and lesbian community. With small circulations and an obvious appeal to a relatively small demographic of American society, these magazines and newsletters would never qualify as mainstream news.³⁷ However, these periodicals not only highlighted the continuing and often radical work of homophile activists in this period, but also devoted considerable space to cataloguing and critiquing the appearance of gay men and women in the popular press.³⁸ Consequently, especially when examining communities that didn’t fit the white, middle-class, heteronormative definitions of mainstream in this period, it is important that historians consider the impact that their choice of source material may have on their research.

³⁶ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

³⁷ Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, ‘Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth’, *American Sociological Review*, 71 (2006), 724–51 (p. 732 fn 8).

³⁸ For a good overview of the gay and lesbian press in this period see: Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).

III

One of the key designations in deciding which publications to utilise in research regards a paper's ability to act as an effective record of events.³⁹ At first glance, it is hardly surprising that the *New York Times*, which not only declares itself to contain 'All the News that's Fit to Print', but has also established itself as America's 'Newspaper of Record', has received so much scholarly attention.⁴⁰ Indeed, a number of both qualitative and quantitative works rely solely on the paper's record to represent or understand the past.⁴¹ In reality, however, the privileged position of the *Times* in historical research is not only a function of the high regard in which the paper is held in the journalistic and professional world, but also a more practical result of its extensive and detailed news index. Established in 1913, the *New York Times'* news index was the first of its kind and, according to sociologist Roberto Franzosi, 'seems to be the unstated criterion for the choice of the *New York Times* in many studies of event data'.⁴² Consequently, while other papers such as the *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, and *Los Angeles Times* had strong reputations for reporting national and international news, the accessibility of the so called 'Gray Lady' cemented the paper as the mainstay of historical research. Indeed, when other papers – such as the *Washington Post* – are included in sample data it is often to test the accuracy of the *New York Times*, rather than resulting from a belief that they represent a superior or more complete resource.⁴³ While such comparisons are more frequent in the light of increasing digitisation that has made traditional indexes

³⁹ Clawson et al, for example, also describe their selected publications as 'mainstream papers of record': Clawson, Strine IV and Waltenburg, p. 798.

⁴⁰ Described by Professor W Joseph Campbell as 'the most famous seven words in US journalism', this slogan has featured on the masthead of the *New York Times* since 1897: W Joseph Campbell, 'Story of the Most Famous Seven Words in US Journalism', *BBC.co.uk*, 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-16918787>> [accessed 3 April 2014].

⁴¹ For relevant examples see: Stanley Lieberson and Arnold R. Silverman, 'The Precipitants and Underlying Conditions of Race Riots', *American Sociological Review*, 30 (1965), 887–98; Peter K. Eisinger, 'The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities', *The American Political Science Review*, 67 (1973), 11–28; James P. Winter and Chaim H. Eyal, 'Agenda Setting for the Civil Right Issue', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 45 (1981), 376–83.

⁴² Roberto Franzosi, 'The Press as a Source of Socio-Historical Data: Issues in the Methodology of Data Collection From Newspapers', *Historical Methods*, 20 (1987), 5–16 (p. 11); For more on how the *New York Times* established its reputation as America's 'Newspaper of Record' see Shannon E. Martin and Kathleen A. Hansen, *Newspapers of Record in a Digital Age: From Hot Type to Hot Link* (Westport: Praeger, 1998).

⁴³ For relevant examples see: Edwin Amenta and others, 'All the Movements Fit to Print: Who, What, When, Where, and Why SMO Families Appeared in the *New York Times* in the Twentieth Century', *American Sociological Review*, 74 (2009), 636–56; Myers and Caniglia.

considerably less relevant, the *New York Times* remains the archetypal mainstream newspaper.

As any scholar knows, there are always trade-offs between what is preferable and what is practical when it comes to conducting research. While recognising the tremendous impact of television on moulding and influencing public discourse and opinion, for instance, scholars such as Jane Rhodes have defended their concentration on print media by highlighting the difficulties and costs involved in accessing archival footage, especially before the creation of the Vanderbilt Television News Abstracts archive in 1968.⁴⁴ It is not, therefore, a problem that the *New York Times*' designation as America's 'Newspaper of Record' was based as much on the accessibility of its archives as its professed objective to contain 'All the News that's Fit to Print'. Instead, the problem emerges when scholars who consult the media's 'first draft of history' conflate media accounts with actual events and, in the process, 'both accept and reinforce media standards about what is "fit to print"'.⁴⁵

Indeed, even when recognising the subjectivity of the press, many sociologists and historians have still attempted to extract certain key facts from media data. In particular, scholars have relied on newspapers to track and quantify various event types from peaceful sit-ins to urban riots.⁴⁶ As sociologist Doug McAdam has argued, however, when scholars use the coverage of papers such as the *New York Times* 'as a proxy for [...] activity at the national level', it is important to realise that, 'the resulting sample of events represents an infinitesimal percentage of the underlying phenomenon'.⁴⁷ Sociologist John T. Woolley, for example, has found that publications such as the *New York Times* tended to 'report events with large numbers rather than small' and focus on the most spectacular elements of a story.⁴⁸ This focus on the spectacular has served to 'make dissidents appear more radical, more militant, and more

⁴⁴ Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007), p. 9; Similar arguments are made in Edward P. Morgan, *What Really Happened to the 1960s: How Mass Media Culture Failed American Democracy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), p. xi.

⁴⁵ McPherson, p. xi; Myers and Caniglia, p. 540.

⁴⁶ Kenneth T. Andrews and Michael Biggs, 'The Dynamics of Protest Diffusion: Movement Organizations, Social Networks, and News Media in the 1960 Sit-Ins', *American Sociological Review*, 71 (2006), 752–77; Myers and Caniglia.

⁴⁷ McAdam and others, p. 6.

⁴⁸ Woolley, p. 158.

outside the mainstream' than they actually were.⁴⁹ Indeed, McAdam has gone as far as to argue that the media's focus on public demonstrations, and the subsequent focus on event coverage within research, 'has created a stylized image of social movements that threatens to distort our understanding of popular contention'.⁵⁰ Perhaps more importantly for this study, this stylized image has also constrained what protest events and activities are considered to be worthy of inclusion in narratives of the 1960s. As chapter three demonstrates, this focus on an ever escalating cycle of violence and protest overshadowed important developments in other movements that, while unable to compete with the visceral images of protest in the Deep South or the war in Vietnam, nevertheless represented considerable evolutions from previous practices. Consequently, while media data can be a useful source of information, scholars who rely on such data are implicitly 'reinforcing the media's understanding and presentation of culture and politics, and reproducing whatever biases they might have'.⁵¹

As well as these logistical issues – which affected a range of different political and social actors – social movements operating outside of heteronormative white spaces also faced other barriers to coverage. Again, when seeking to understand the genesis of these barriers, it is important to examine the nature of the news industry in this period. With closures and mergers reducing the competitive nature of local journalism, there was widespread concern that America's free press was being curtailed by commercial interests as power and readership were being concentrated into fewer and fewer editorial hands.⁵² For instance, despite personally owning six newspapers with a cumulative circulation of nine million in the 1960s, John S. Knight claimed that publicly liable companies were particularly ill-suited to supporting incisive journalism and feared that, 'newspapers under public ownership will be too conformist in their thinking, and their managements more attentive to the stockholders than to the public interest'.⁵³ For instance, while the acquisition of the *Montgomery Advertiser-Journal* by chain

⁴⁹ Ortiz and others, p. 407.

⁵⁰ McAdam and others, p. 1.

⁵¹ Ortiz and others, p. 407.

⁵² Raymond B. Nixon, for example, has claimed that only three per cent of daily newspapers operating in 1968 competed with two or more local papers: Davies, pp. 117–9.

⁵³ John S. Knight, as cited in Davies, p. 120; Others in the industry shared similar concerns: A. H. Raskin, 'A Newsman's Critique of the Press: What's Wrong With American Newspapers?', *New York Times*, 11 June 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM28, SM77–84; Such fears were not a new phenomenon, and had emerged during debates in the 1920s and 1930s that critiqued both materialism

owner Carmage Walls led to an improvement in the overall quality of the newspaper, Editor Ray Jenkins claimed that this was accompanied by a decline in the per centage of column inches devoted to news, with the more profitable advertising space growing from fifty per cent to sixty five per cent of the final product.⁵⁴

The everyday effects of this dependence on advertising revenue could be relatively benign. Former *New York Post* owner Dorothy Schiff, for instance, reportedly commissioned pieces on pets, gardening and other leisure activities that might draw in advertisers from specific markets when the paper ran into financial trouble in the early 1960s.⁵⁵ However, this dependence also acted to dampen the bravery of news reporting, with advertising executive Robert Foreman telling the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 1959 that ‘a program that displeases any substantial segment of the population is a misuse of the advertising dollar’.⁵⁶ While advertisers in newspapers didn’t directly sponsor articles in the same way as they did with television programmes, mainstream papers still needed to maintain an ‘atmosphere’ within their publication that promoted a definable, and marketable, audience. For ‘respectable’ outlets such as the *New York Times*, this meant avoiding sensitive subjects such as homosexuality for fear of ‘giving offense to our readers and risking the loss of vast revenue’.⁵⁷

Dealing with issues such as prejudice, poverty, and institutional discrimination, the gay and civil rights movements of the 1960s therefore faced an uphill battle for coverage, especially as they were rarely conceived of as forming part of the audience in the first place. Indeed, Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky argued in their 1988 work *Manufacturing Consent*, that ‘the “societal purpose” of the media is to inculcate and defend the economic, social, and

and big-business ownership within the US press: Oswald Garrison Villard, *Some Newspapers and Newspapermen* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1923); George Seldes, *Freedom of the Press* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1935).

⁵⁴ Ray Jenkins, 2004 <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ray_jenkins_oral_essay.pdf> [accessed 28 September 2013].

⁵⁵ Nissenson, p. 254; Frankel also suggests that this is why films and other advert rich topics are covered in more detail than other leisure activities such as gardening: Frankel, p. 514.

⁵⁶ Robert Foreman, as cited in Hodgson, p. 148; See also Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 139.

⁵⁷ Frankel, p. 473.

political agenda of privileged groups that dominate the domestic society and the state'.⁵⁸ Often established in opposition to just such established agendas, social movements, according to Herman and Chomsky, are marginalised and their voices delegitimized.⁵⁹ As such, it is important for historians not only to investigate media content, but also consider what gaps exist in the media record and why these gaps affect particular communities more than others.

When doing so, historians can borrow from the considerable scholarship available in the fields of sociology and communication science. While Franzosi claims that 'researchers can do little to change the level of reporting error' in newspaper data, he has also argued that sociologists 'can – and should – do a great deal about measuring its extent'.⁶⁰ In undertaking such measurements throughout the 1990s, sociologists were aided by important theoretical developments that had taken place in the field of communication studies.⁶¹ Seminal works released throughout the 1970s, such as Leon Sigal's *Reporters and Officials*, Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis*, Gaye Tuchman's *Making News*, and Herbert Gans' *Deciding What's News*, had encouraged wider research into topics such as media selection effects, elite versus non-elite access to the media, and media framing.⁶² The 1980s thus saw a plethora of studies including investigations into the media's treatment of so called 'deviant groups' and attempts to create a universal model for media fatigue.⁶³ However, despite providing a framework that, to an extent, routinized the selection, portrayal, and consumption of news events, this new scholarship generated more questions about how and why media outcomes varied between groups and led scholars such as David Ortiz to argue that 'the claim of consistent bias has

⁵⁸ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books 1988; repr. London, Vintage Books, 1994), p. 298; See also: Víctor Sampedro, 'The Media Politics of Social Protest', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 2 (1997), 185–205.

⁵⁹ Similar arguments are advanced by Todd Gitlin in his investigation of the New Left's interaction with the media: Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

⁶⁰ Franzosi, p. 10.

⁶¹ For a good overview of trends in sociological research of journalism see Zelizer, pp. 45–80.

⁶² Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1973); Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1978); Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979).

⁶³ Pamela J. Shoemaker, 'Media Treatment of Deviant Political Groups', *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 61 (1984), 66–82; B. Guy Peters and Brian W. Hogwood, 'In Search of the Issue-Attention Cycle', *The Journal of Politics*, 47 (1985), 238–53.

become implausible'.⁶⁴ In other words, despite decades of research, even a sophisticated understanding of reporting bias cannot guarantee that a researcher will be able to quantify and respond to specific gaps in the media record, as these gaps are the product of individual human interaction rather than a predictable algorithm.⁶⁵ As a highly subjective industry, news production therefore requires a more qualitative approach, especially when examining the coverage of minority social movements by an industry dominated by white, middle-class, heterosexual men.

IV

Steven Maras has argued that objective news reporting has a specific style that 'plays to facts and not opinions. It is a "system of signs" designed to give the impression of authority and trust, especially in core descriptions and information such as who, what, when'.⁶⁶ This reduction of objective journalism to a particular style of writing can hide the difference between ideological and practical objectivity because 'journalists do not need to commit philosophically to objectivity in order to practise objective journalism'.⁶⁷ Indeed, reporter Thomas Griffith claimed in 1959 that 'for all the pseudo-philosophizing about the impossibility of being objective, I have never met a newspaperman who did not know how to follow the injunction to "play it straight"'.⁶⁸ This objective appearance is important, because, as historian David Greenberg has argued, when qualifying as 'the new pillars of the mainstream media', outlets such as the *New York Times* and *CBS News* not only had 'to command a national following; they also had to be seen as responsible for delivering unbiased information'.⁶⁹ This style has undoubtedly affected the use of mainstream newspapers within historical scholarly research. For instance, when justifying his use of media data to examine the public actions of the NAACP, Martin Marger argued that the 'less than objective manner' in which the

⁶⁴ Ortiz and others, p. 414.

⁶⁵ Indeed, Woolley has found that even natural disasters such as earthquakes can display considerable variability in the likelihood of coverage across time and publications: Woolley, p. 159.

⁶⁶ Steven Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), pp. 9–10.

⁶⁷ Maras, p. 9.

⁶⁸ Thomas Griffith, 'The Pursuit of Journalism', *Nieman Reports*, January 1959

<<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102000/1959-The-Pursuit-of-Journalism.aspx>>

[accessed 20 August 2014]; See also Wallace Carroll, 'The Seven Deadly Virtues', *Nieman Reports*, July 1955, 25–30.

⁶⁹ Greenberg, p. 170.

organisation recorded its events '[necessitated] the consultation of more neutral sources'.⁷⁰ By equating the mainstream media record with a 'more neutral' version of events, scholars like Marger appear to be accepting journalistic claims to objectivity at face value and elevate a highly subjective historical record to the plane of established fact.

As the remaining chapters will show, as long as journalists stayed within the regimented style of 'objective' journalism, they had considerable discretion to shape what events, practices, and voices were included in news stories. For instance, while certain publications, such as the *New Republic* or *Nation*, could claim a national audience and long lasting market presence, their editorial writing style has often precluded them from inclusion in conceptions of the mainstream.⁷¹ Similarly, publications like the *New York Post* – whose editors saw the paper's 'liberal identification as its reason for existence' – are also excluded from study despite often conforming to 'straight' reporting styles and maintaining sizeable readerships.⁷² The conflation of mass with mainstream outlined above, therefore, ignores the fact that the term 'mainstream' is not necessarily deployed in opposition to a numerically inferior 'minority'. Instead, mainstream has come to stand for a brand of journalism that markets itself as providing an allegedly objective, or at least neutral, interpretation of world events.

Walter Cronkite, who anchored the *CBS Evening News* for much of the 1960s, has claimed that 'objectivity is the reporting of reality, of facts as nearly as they can be obtained without the injection of prejudice and personal opinion'.⁷³ However, fellow journalist John Corry argues that by the end of the 1960s Cronkite and others 'moved from reporting news to making it, and from telling us about affairs of state to instructing us in how those affairs should be handled'.⁷⁴ Complaining that Cronkite's position against the Vietnam War in 1968, 'changed the rules' of broadcasting – with newsmen 'now free to dispense advice and counsel while giving viewers their opinions' – Corry articulates an increasingly common grievance about

⁷⁰ Martin N. Marger, 'Social Movement Organizations and Response to Environmental Change: The NAACP, 1960-1973', *Social Problems*, 32 (1984), 16–30 (p. 17).

⁷¹ Greenberg, p. 170.

⁷² James Weschler, as cited in Nissenson, p. 255.

⁷³ Maras, p. 7.

⁷⁴ Corry, p. 189.

reporter bias in the 1960s that was seen to undermine public confidence in journalism as an institution.⁷⁵ Indeed, calling this new trend ‘journalism in name only’, Corry recalls that:

I considered myself a reporter, a diligent collector of facts, who did not allow personal opinion to get in the way when he presented what he collected. A reporter held himself above the fray and impartially evaluated all sides. A reporter prized objectivity. No one, of course, seems to believe that about reporters anymore, not even reporters themselves, although when everyone stopped believing it, something important went out of American journalism. Henceforth journalism would be practiced and regarded other than before. Its boundaries would widen but its soul would shrink, and polls would show that people no longer trusted it as they once had. Journalism was another casualty of the sixties.⁷⁶

This shift, former journalist and communications scholar James McPherson claims, has led ‘many historians [...] to have little use for the media’, claiming that as some scholars recognise ‘that the press of the past often fails miserably as a reliable source of the truth’, they have begun ‘to shy away from it altogether’.⁷⁷ Such fears are echoed by journalist Jack Shafer, who claims that ‘historians tend to view journalism as unreliable and tend to be dismissive of our work. They'd rather work from primary sources—official documents, photographs, interviews, and the like—rather than from our clips’.⁷⁸ However, while there are undoubtedly faults with the media record, it simply isn’t practical or possible for many historians to ignore media data. Interaction with, and utilisation of, mainstream media records therefore remains an important part of historical research and scholarship in general. Importantly, as McPherson himself has noted, this trend away from rarefied notions of objectivity was not unique to journalism, but rather a sign of a wider rejection of traditional professional practices. Addressing similarities within journalism and historical research, McPherson claims that:

Despite occasional departures into pseudo-science or propaganda, both disciplines generally have shifted from believing in a mythical ideal of objectivity [...] to recent desires for fairness, balance, and plausibility – aims

⁷⁵ Corry, p. 191.

⁷⁶ Corry, pp. 186, 26.

⁷⁷ McPherson, p. 203.

⁷⁸ Jack Shafer, ‘Who Said It First?: Journalism Is the “First Rough Draft of History”’, *Slate*, 30 August 2010 <http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/press_box/2010/08/who_said_it_first.html> [accessed 17 September 2013].

perhaps less satisfying at some level than final and complete objective truth, but goals that seem more attainable.⁷⁹

While this philosophical debate over objectivity continues within historical scholarship, this more nuanced understanding of historical practice offers a similarly nuanced and practical way of assessing media data.⁸⁰

Others, however, have decried this departure from the ‘great *Times* tradition’ of anonymity and objectivity.⁸¹ Believing this shift in journalism was explicitly tied to the leftist politics of the 1960s, Corry claims that he ‘had never met a Republican in the newsroom’, and characterises media elites such as Mike Wallace, David Halberstam, and Harrison Salisbury as a liberal cabal that ‘really did think alike’.⁸² However, while journalists often report a sense of under-dog spirit that some consider left-leaning, they operated within a structure dominated by more conservative elites.⁸³ Tracing the accusation of ‘liberal media bias’ back to Southern segregationists in the 1960s, Greenberg has highlighted how such allegations clashed with the commonly accepted view in the 1950s that the media ‘had not a liberal or leftist tilt but a *conservative* one’.⁸⁴ As he notes, it was Democratic politicians in the 1950s, such as Harry Truman, who lambasted the ‘cloak of protection’ afforded to the Eisenhower administration, while historian D. F. Fleming argued in 1954 that ‘the great organs for molding public opinion are nearly all in conservative or ultra-conservative hands’.⁸⁵ Initially used by Southern officials to deflect negative coverage of segregation, the notion of a ‘liberal media’ was adopted and popularised by President Nixon and others in reaction to the increasingly negative coverage of the Vietnam War.⁸⁶ Importantly for those studying the 1960s, this analysis suggests a symbiosis between a liberal media and the protest movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, if not in practice then at least in the minds of commentators both then and since.

⁷⁹ McPherson, p. 202.

⁸⁰ Thomas L. Haskell, ‘Objectivity Is Not Neutrality: Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick’s *That Noble Dream*’, *History and Theory*, 29 (1990), 129–57.

⁸¹ Corry, p. 184.

⁸² Corry, p. 223; 240; 221.

⁸³ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p. 15.

⁸⁴ Greenberg, p. 171 [Emphasis in original].

⁸⁵ Harry Truman and D. F. Fleming, as cited in Greenberg, p. 171.

⁸⁶ Greenberg; Morgan, pp. 164–5.

Despite clashing with common understandings of objectivity, partisanship had a long history in the American press. Indeed, Richard Streckfuss has argued that notions of journalistic objectivity only entered popular lexicon in the 1920s as political commentators struggled to come to terms with the jingoism of post-war American society and the emotionalism of the first Red Scare.⁸⁷ In contrast to modern conceptions of objectivity, which often conflate it with neutrality, Streckfuss argues that:

Objectivity was founded not on a naive idea that humans could be objective, but on a realization that they could NOT. To compensate for this innate weakness, advocates in the 1920s proposed a journalistic system that subjected itself to the rigors of the scientific method.⁸⁸

Emerging at a time of crisis in Jeffersonian understandings of the ‘ideal democratic citizen, omniscient and sovereign’, Streckfuss argues that objective journalism ‘was seated in the broader cultural movement of scientific naturalism’.⁸⁹ Consequently, and despite later associations with passivity and neutrality, political liberals saw objectivity as a crucial component of representative democracy and the only defence against what Walter Lippmann termed ‘the contagion of unreason’.⁹⁰ As Streckfuss admits, however, the adoption of this grandiose interpretation of objectivity often belied more cynical commercial motivations. While the concentration in ownership of the 1950s and 1960s often presented papers with much greater advertising opportunities, similar concentrations in the 1920s and 1930s had required publishers to reconcile two very different audiences. Having previously relied on partisan appeals to particular constituencies, publishers presiding over newly merged papers utilised objective reporting styles to avoid controversy. In the process, Streckfuss argues, ‘objectivity had shrunk from a methodology needed to preserve democracy to a practical posture of day-to-day production’.⁹¹

⁸⁷ While the term was used before the 1920s, Streckfuss is right to argue that the 1920s saw the popularisation of the term and its more widespread adoption by members of the public as well as practitioners themselves: Richard Streckfuss, ‘Objectivity In Journalism: A Search and a Reassessment’, *Journalism Quarterly*, 67 (1990), 973–83; For examples of earlier uses see Maras, pp. 38–9.

⁸⁸ Streckfuss, p. 974 [Emphasis in original].

⁸⁹ Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1927; repr. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1993), pp. 24–5; Streckfuss, p. 980.

⁹⁰ Walter Lippmann, *Liberty and the News* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920; repr. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995), p. 51.

⁹¹ Streckfuss, pp. 982–3.

With the advent of McCarthyism in the early 1950s, this sanitised form of objectivity came under increasing scrutiny. Indeed, Steven Maras has argued that ‘the 1950s [...] was a time when a positive connection between journalistic objectivity and the processes of democratic deliberation began to be strained: objectivity became, for many, part of the problem not part of the solution’.⁹² Calling it one of the industry’s ‘seven deadly virtues’, journalist, editor, and publisher Wallace Carroll argued that ‘objectivity interpreted too literally can approach the borders of irresponsibility’.⁹³ Claiming that ‘Senator McCarthy was able to exploit our rigid “objectivity” ... in such a way as to make the newspapers his accomplices’, Carroll’s criticisms echoed those of *CBS News* correspondent Eric Severeid, who argued that objective journalism had, ‘given the lie the same prominence and impact that truth is given; they have elevated the influence of fools to that of wise men; the ignorant to the level of the learned; the evil to the level of the good’.⁹⁴ In other words, by adopting a predictable format of news coverage that tended to reprint rather than interrogate official sources for fear of appearing partisan, the media had allowed the often unfounded accusations of McCarthy and his follows to reach a much larger and broader audience. As various social movements emerged in the 1960s, this notion of objectivity came under increasing attack from those that argued it favoured official interpretations of events and defended the status quo. Indeed, Michael Schudson has argued that, in this period:

Objectivity in journalism, regarded as an antidote to bias, came to be looked upon as the most insidious bias of all. For “objective” reporting reproduced a vision of social reality which refused to examine the basic structures of power and privilege. It was not just incomplete, as critics of the thirties had contended, it was distorted.⁹⁵

In response, a number of reporters in the late 1960s and early 1970s began to embrace journalistic forms that rejected traditional objectivity. Blending fact and fiction in a way that paid little attention to traditional notions of truth and preferred first person narrative, the emergence of this ‘New’ or ‘Gonzo’ Journalism was obviously a radical departure from

⁹² Maras, p. 3.

⁹³ Carroll.

⁹⁴ Eric Severeid, as cited in Carroll.

⁹⁵ Michael Schudson, *Discovering the News: A Social History of American Newspapers* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 160.

traditional reporting.⁹⁶ Often interested in the more radical fringes of society, this journalistic trend can be useful for those studying marginalised social movements.⁹⁷ When using the mainstream media record, therefore, we should be aware of other forms and styles of telling the news that can shed light on subjects that objective reporting ignores.

While mainstream outlets rejected such an extreme abandonment of journalistic practice, the growth of television and other changes within the media industry did encourage a shift in the relationship between publications and the news copy they produced. Often beaten to stories by TV and radio outlets that were able to break major news items at a moment's notice, mainstream publications realised that they would have to concede certain elements of news production to faster, newer outlets. However, by exploiting the limited format of their competitors, mainstream publications were able to maintain and expand their role as educators of the public. Indeed, while the Federal Communication Commission declared in 1949 that the 'basic purpose' of television stations was 'the development of an informed public opinion through the public dissemination of news and ideas concerning the vital public issues of the day', television news was often criticised for its focus on entertainment at the expense of analytical depth.⁹⁸ Hodgson, for instance, argues that evening news programmes 'beamed out atomistic images of vivid information with little explanation or discussion, so that the viewer was often left with little understanding of *why* these disturbing things were happening, or of what they meant'.⁹⁹ Former *New York Times* Editor Max Frankel has claimed that, 'paradoxically, the more that radio and television usurped our function of being first with the news, the greater the public's desire to have it explained, investigated, and amplified as only we could'.¹⁰⁰ Whether reporting the major events of the day, or simply the scores from yesterday's football games, newspapers may have lost some of their ability to break news, but

⁹⁶ For a discussion of the roots of this movement and an examination of some of its key players see: Marc Weingarten, *The Gang That Wouldn't Write Straight: Wolfe, Thompson, Didion, Capote & the New Journalism Revolution* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005).

⁹⁷ Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, 2nd edn (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991); John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁹⁸ Federal Communications Commission, as cited in Hodgson, p. 146.

⁹⁹ Hodgson, p. 151.

¹⁰⁰ Frankel, pp. 440–1; See also Davies, p. 53.

they could still contextualise it and help to shape public understanding.¹⁰¹ Consequently, while Hodgson claims that ‘to a large degree it was television that defined the issues for the print media’, it was clear that newspapers also helped to explain the issues defined by television.¹⁰² As Frankel has argued, ‘as much as news, we sold judgment and expertise’.¹⁰³ Encouraging the practice of beat reporting, this shift in the role and nature of mainstream coverage also led to an increase in investigative journalism that would have an important effect on both the civil and gay rights movements of the 1960s.

V

Recognising this change in media function, a number of scholars have concentrated on the ability of newspapers to interpret and define the public agenda. Consequently, references to a paper’s influence on political and social discourses can be found repeatedly in research that utilises the *New York Times* and other mainstream papers. For instance, claiming that the *Times* was ‘more than just a newspaper’, social scientists Edward N. Beiser and Peter Swift argued that ‘it may not be inappropriate to conceive of [the *Times*] as a spokesman for the liberal establishment’.¹⁰⁴ For some scholars, then, the subjectivity inherent in newspaper data is not necessarily a problem, but instead a useful insight into the boundaries of social and political discussion. Indeed, Peter Schraeder and Brian Endless claimed that they used the *Times* primarily because ‘it is one of the newspapers most often read by members of the foreign policy establishment, serving as an important source of their information on foreign affairs’.¹⁰⁵ In this formulation, the narrow categorization of what newspaper outlets are considered to be mainstream by historical researchers relies not on the ability of these media

¹⁰¹ Davies, p. 57.

¹⁰² Hodgson, p. 151. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰³ Frankel, p. 441.

¹⁰⁴ Beiser and Swift, p. 192.

¹⁰⁵ Peter J. Schraeder and Brian Endless, ‘The Media and Africa: The Portrayal of Africa in the “New York Times” (1955-1995)’, *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, 26 (1998), 29–35 (pp. 30–1).

to capture a complete or even representative sample of news events, but their ability to direct and dominate political and social discussion.¹⁰⁶

Importantly, papers like the *Times* are not just seen as important influences on political and business elites, but also on other media outlets. Shraeder and Endless, for example, also justified their use of the *Times* by claiming that ‘other media outlets, from other newspapers to television news, rely on the *New York Times* in their reporting due to its large international bureau and strong reputation for accuracy’.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, Hodgson included the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* within what he defined as the ‘oligopolies of the news industry’ that ‘virtually monopolized the supply of news to American minds’.¹⁰⁸ When doing so, Hodgson stressed the national and foreign staff of each paper, but also argued that they were the only papers ‘with any claim [...] to employ well-informed and influential commentators, and to syndicate their material at all widely to other papers’.¹⁰⁹

Building on the work of Hodgson, Greenberg has argued that the late 1950s thus witnessed the emergence of ‘a set of relatively like-minded national institutions whose choices about what to cover and how to cover it so permeate the culture that someone can be understood when generalizing about them as a single entity’.¹¹⁰ This notion of homogeneity is important, because it has been used as a justification for relying on a very narrow sample base. Funkhouser, for example, justifies his utilisation of the magazines *TIME*, *Newsweek*, and *U.S. News* on the basis that while ‘not cited as primary sources of information by most people, it seems likely that their content reflects the nationwide content of the prominent news media-television and newspapers’.¹¹¹ It is clear from his methodology that the actual reason for the utilisation of these three magazines was the existence of a subject index within the *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature*. However, this notion of homogeneity allowed Funkhouser to claim that his selection was based on sound assumptions that ‘if television and newspapers

¹⁰⁶ While the *New York Times* tends to be included in all such categorizations, other papers, such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*, are included only when their particular spheres of economic and political influence are seen to be relevant.

¹⁰⁷ Schraeder and Endless, pp. 30–1.

¹⁰⁸ Hodgson, p. 141.

¹⁰⁹ Hodgson, p. 141, [My emphasis].

¹¹⁰ Greenberg, p. 170.

¹¹¹ Funkhouser, p. 64.

were presenting abundant material concerning ecology (or drugs, or whatever), the news magazines probably would be doing so also'.¹¹²

Once again, however, this selection method prioritises a narrow and socially unrepresentative media record at the expense of outlets which can provide historians with a richer understanding of social protest. It also encourages historians to conceive of 'public' agendas in a way that might bear little resemblance to conversations taking place outside of elite political institutions. For instance, Carl T. Rowan – who as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State was the highest ranking African American in the Federal Government – has claimed that government officials in the Public Affairs bureau didn't read a single black publication until he ordered them to do so in 1961.¹¹³ To exclude the black press on this basis, however, is to ignore how African American outlets were often better placed to write about and contextualise the struggles of civil rights activists in both the North and South. Similarly, while prominent homophile activist Frank Kameny sent copies of *The Homosexual Citizen* to government officials including J. Edgar Hoover – often despite repeated requests to cease doing so – it would be disingenuous to suggest that such publications had any effect on government policy or in shaping media narratives.¹¹⁴ However, while not influencing national or elite agendas, these outlets would provide much needed information for communities often overlooked by the mainstream press and acted as important sites of intra-community dialogue and development. To concentrate on the *Times* and a limited number of other influential periodicals, then, can ignore the considerable differences between these elite outlets and other media that targeted different, yet equally important, audiences.

Conclusion

Given the difficulties that emerge when attempting to accurately quantify what is meant by mainstream, or consider the impact that this record has had on historical work, it is perhaps not surprising that journalism history has become an often isolated specialism within

¹¹² Funkhouser, p. 64.

¹¹³ Carl T. Rowan, *Breaking Barriers: A Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), p. 176.

¹¹⁴ Streitmatter, p. 58.

communication and media studies departments.¹¹⁵ However, as this chapter has demonstrated, this failing has not only damaged our understanding of the past more broadly, but has also caused historians of the 1960s to ignore fundamental changes in the exchange of information that impacted on almost every facet of American life. Indeed, although the contraction in media ownership and publication in this period was a source of worry for contemporaries, the emergence of a small number of national publications has allowed scholars to better justify the necessary but potentially misleading process of concentrating on a narrow set of media data.

While the flexibility with which the term 'mainstream' is employed in historical research reflects the diversity with which this media data is used, a rough definition can be discerned from the implicit or explicit justifications scholars give for their selections of media data. For instance, despite the fact that local papers such as the *New Jersey Record* are described as the 'paper of record' for their particular regions, mainstream papers often require a much more national outlook and audience.¹¹⁶ This approach ignores the considerable evidence produced by scholars within sociology and communication studies that has demonstrated how the national are also inherently regional. Indeed, while researchers continue to rely on supposedly national newspapers such as the *New York Times*, Doug McAdam and others have shown that 'the more localized the focus of attention, the more credible the use of newspapers as a source of event data'.¹¹⁷ In other words, when wanting to use the media as a source of information on activism across the country, historians might be better placed consulting a series of local or state wide newspapers than relying on outlets which claim a national focus. While it would be unreasonable to expect historians of national movements to utilise even a fraction of the 1,500 daily newspapers published across the United States in the 1960s, it is clear that there needs to be a greater recognition of the limitations of the data that is used.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Zelizer, p. 85.

¹¹⁶ John A. Ianacone, 'I Only Know What I Read in the Paper', *The English Journal*, 82 (1993), 46–49 (p. 46).

¹¹⁷ McAdam and others, p. 5; This is also clearly demonstrated in Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, 'Accidental News: The Great Oil Spill as Local Occurrence and National Event', *American Journal of Sociology*, 81 (1975), 235–60.

¹¹⁸ Davies, pp. 117–9.

Selective reporting, however, was not simply geographic. Just as definitions of mainstream that relied on national appeal prioritise certain areas of the country over others, the preference for outlets that eschewed overt appeals to particular demographics of American society ignores the fact that 'mass' in the context of 1960s America often meant white, heterosexual, middle-class, and male. To sideline outlets generated by and for particular communities in society because of their partisan stance, therefore, is to overlook the fact that such publications were often created to compensate for the absence of these groups in the supposedly mainstream media. Unable – and often unwilling – to escape institutionalised prejudice, the men and women responsible for creating a daily record of events in American society inevitably made judgements that marginalised and discriminated against certain communities. Indeed, while many journalists have claimed that their work held up a mirror to reality, this idealistic approach to news construction hides the logistical and human processes that dictated where this mirror was pointed and what part of the reflection was considered 'fit to print'.

While historians recognise that a number of sources – from diaries to organisational newsletters – are the function of inherently human and personal processes, the notion of journalistic objectivity has encouraged the belief that media data can be taken without a thorough analysis of who produced it and why. Indeed, while often flawed, the justifications outlined above at least provide a rationale for an inevitable process of data selection. Contained almost exclusively within journals relating to political science, sociology, and communication studies, however, the absence of such justifications from more traditional historical scholarship is noticeable and speaks to the common aversion to methodological discussion within the discipline. This absence is important because, as the following chapters demonstrate, the newspaper record represents a negotiation between a number of contrasting and often unbalanced interests and reflects the personal foibles of all those involved. Definitions of the mainstream press that continue to focus on notions of objectivity not only ignore the rejection of such concepts within history as a discipline, but the increasing scrutiny of such ideas amongst the media and its users in the 1960s themselves. Indeed, according to communication scientist Jack Lyle, there was a growing recognition in this period

of 'the paradox that the objective news report may be a more biased account of an event than an interpretive one'.¹¹⁹ Historians, then, must recognise the role that individual opinion played in news coverage and rehabilitate journalism history as a vital and relevant study within the academy.

Finally, while the post-war process of news nationalisation has encouraged the equation of 'mainstream' with 'influential', historians must be careful not to use this notion of influence to draw parallels between newspaper data and public or even official opinion. American newspapers, much like the society they covered, were not homogenous. This is not to deny that some publications wielded much more influence in official circles than others, but rather to challenge the implicit assumption that coverage within these heavily esteemed newspapers and magazines was a marker of success and that the record of such outlets represent a history of the important events of the decade. While outlets such as the *Times* are still useful resources for a wide variety of scholars, more attention should be given to implicit and explicit flaws in their coverage. By concentrating on the record of these outlets, and contrasting their coverage with alternative media and the private files of SNCC, MSNY, and the MSW, the remaining chapters will demonstrate how scholarly definitions of 'mainstream' act to exacerbate the exclusion of under-represented minority groups. In doing so, they reinforce racist, heterosexist standards of what was considered 'fit to print'.

¹¹⁹ Lyle, pp. xii–xiii.

Chapter Two: The Construction of News Beats

'The information that reaches the public is never a full record of important events and developments in the world. It is, rather, a highly selective and stereotyped view of what has taken place. It could hardly be otherwise'
(John Zaller, 1992)¹

'To a large degree what we see and hear in the news is there because some editor or producer thought it was interesting, important, or both'
(Edward Alwood, 1996)²

Gaye Tuchman argues that newspapers construct a 'news net' that produces a fresh haul of stories with a regularity and familiarity that 'imposes order on social reality'.³ Incapable of responding to each and every event that could be considered newsworthy, journalists cast this net over institutions, individuals, and geographical areas that are likely to produce events and stories that they deem to be significant. Herbert Gans has compared this process to a factory assembly line and argued that 'news organizations need predictably available raw materials that can be assembled by a work force in a routine fashion'.⁴ In the 1950s and 1960s, the construction of these news nets – commonly referred to as beats – relied on a number of important and overlapping components. Firstly, the particular beat had to be of significant enough interest to the intended audience to warrant the assignment of dedicated reporters. Secondly, the beat needed to deal with issues that required, or would have benefited from, the increased specialisation these dedicated reporters would bring. Finally, the beat had to be capable of producing interesting stories on a regular, and preferably predictable, basis.

Some of these beats were a constant on the news landscape. Coverage may have fluctuated or followed particular trends, but the beat remained a staple news product. The crime beat, for instance, featured in almost every newspaper in the United States, producing a steady flow of dramatic stories that were easily verified by contacts that crime beat reporters had

¹ John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 7.

² Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 8.

³ Gaye Tuchman, 'The News Net', *Social Research*, 45 (1978), 253–76 (p. 253).

⁴ Herbert J. Gans, *Democracy and the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 50.

cultivated in local, state, or federal law enforcement agencies.⁵ While coverage of particular crimes differed – and trends saw particular crimes highlighted for a temporary period – the beat itself remained ‘a durable news commodity’.⁶ Other beats, however, were temporary, emerging at particular times for particular reasons before being overtaken by newer and more newsworthy trends elsewhere. When examining coverage of these beats, the process of deciding what is and is not ‘fit to print’ is not a formulaic or predictable procedure, but the outcome of an inherently human and subjective system. Consequently, while it is important that historians engage with the work of sociologists such as Tuchman and Gans, scholars of minority movements need to be mindful that these ideas were formulated as ahistorical explanations of news construction at a macro level.⁷ To understand how these processes apply to specific communities or events, one must investigate the human interactions that led to the production, or non-production, of news on a more micro scale.

With finite time and resources, problems of geography, finances, and personnel were common to news production, but their specific impact on particular beats at particular outlets was a unique blend of logistical constraints and the individual prejudices and desires of news executives. While certain news events are viewed as being inherently newsworthy, former *New York Times* editor Max Frankel has argued that ‘there was no such thing as “the news” of the day; there was only “our news” as we chose to define it or, more precisely, as we thought our readers defined their needs and interests’.⁸ Recalling the front-page editorial meetings that he used to lead as Executive Editor, Frankel has explained how he ‘kept firm command of the discussion, viewing it as my main chance to engage the news intellectually and [...] define our values and refine our judgments throughout the paper’.⁹ Such processes extended far beyond the front cover, with stories passing through layers of gatekeepers before finally

⁵ Mark Fishman, ‘Crime Waves as Ideology’, *Social Problems*, 25 (1978), 531–43.

⁶ Vincent F. Sacco, ‘Media Constructions of Crime’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 539 (1995), 141–54 (p. 142).

⁷ Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1978); Gans.

⁸ Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life With the Times* (New York: Dell, 2000), p. 436.

⁹ Frankel, p. 491.

reaching the newsstands.¹⁰ In contrast, other publications adopted different journalistic styles that tended to give reporters much greater freedom to shape and frame stories as they saw fit. For instance, having previously worked in the highly structured and formalised atmosphere of the *Times*, John Corry found that editorial conferences at *Harper's Magazine* often consisted of 'two martinis in the Chinese restaurant around the corner'.¹¹

Media logistics, therefore, are not uniform, and while journalists at different outlets may work under many of the same conditions, the news product they produce is affected by the individualised atmosphere of their respective newsrooms. Consequently, the discussion below combines sociological theory with historical research to understand how the intersection between institutional practice, national trends, and personal impulses influenced decisions about what stories news executives at mainstream outlets felt were 'fit to print'. In the process, it demonstrates the need for a qualitative approach to the media that investigates the role that editors and publishers play in news production. Furthermore, the chapter exposes the differences between these mainstream publications and other media and analyses how a concentration on the former can ultimately distort historical research.

I

Perhaps more than any other movement of the 1960s, the civil rights movement is associated with iconic images and stories that were beamed into America's living rooms at night or splashed across the front page of their papers at breakfast time.¹² However, while often referred to in both contemporary and modern discourses as the 'race beat', this coverage did not represent a long standing commitment to news events relating to men and women of colour in America.¹³ Instead, the race beat was a temporary phenomenon amongst the mainstream Northern press that focused on the African American civil rights movement of the

¹⁰ Steven E. Clayman and Ann Reisner, 'Gatekeeping in Action: Editorial Conferences and Assessments of Newsworthiness', *American Sociological Review*, 63 (1998), 178–99; See also Warren Breed, 'Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis', *Social Forces*, 33 (1955), 326–35.

¹¹ John Corry, *My Times: Adventures in the News Trade* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1993), p. 28.

¹² Dorothy Sterling, *It Started in Montgomery: A Picture History of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Scholastic Book Services, 1972).

¹³ 'The Race Beat', *Newsweek*, 15 June 1964, pp. 88, 90; Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage, 2007).

1950s and 1960s. Concentrating on the increasingly vocal and dangerous protests against Southern segregation, the race beat also had a limited geographical focus that tended to ignore Northern racism until the ghettos of cities like LA, Newark, and Detroit erupted in flames during the mid-to-late 1960s.

This focus on the South, however, did not come naturally to many mainstream publications. Based exclusively in the urban cities of the East and West Coasts, many mainstream editors and executives had little or no personal experience of the Southern way of life. Relying instead on popular stereotypes of the South as a land 'characterized by poverty, ignorance [...] and extreme forms of resistance to change', Northern editors were less likely to attach importance to cultural and social events in the region.¹⁴ From a financial point of view, major news outlets also derived the majority of their circulation and advertising revenue from the urban North rather than the more rural South. Consequently, even when Southerners such as *Newsweek's* Bill Emerson were elevated to senior editorial positions at mainstream publications, they continued to favour coverage of events in Northern cities where the majority of their target audience resided.

Politically, while federal, state, and even local elections could receive coverage from bureaus in Los Angeles, Chicago and other major northern cities, the South's one party system meant that Congressional incumbents were re-elected with few of the dramatic twists and turns that encouraged mainstream coverage. Once returned to Congress, however, the disproportionate influence that Dixiecrat politicians were able to exert on Capitol Hill was a common source of political news.¹⁵ As the issue of civil rights and desegregation began to become a federal issue in the 1940s and 1950s, this influence assumed even greater significance and interest for mainstream newspapers.¹⁶ Whether discussing division over army desegregation, early civil

¹⁴ John C. McKinney and Linda Brookover Bourque, 'The Changing South: National Incorporation of a Region', *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), 399–412 (p. 400).

¹⁵ 'The Congress: The Elephant Hunt', *Time*, 13 March 1950
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,812124,00.html> [accessed 11 March 2014]; William S. White, 'Strong, Southern Wing Holds Democratic Veto: In Congress and in Party Councils It Will Have to Be Considered', *New York Times*, 16 November 1952, section 4: The Week In Review, p. E10.

¹⁶ William S. White, 'Eastland in Judiciary Post; Lehman and Morse Vote No', *New York Times*, 3 March 1956, pp. 1, 9; 'National Affairs: Death for Civil Rights', *Time*, 6 August 1956
<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,862288,00.html> [accessed 11 June 2014].

rights reform, or the impact of Jim Crow on America's foreign policy, however, these stories were often covered by reporters, such as William S. White, based in Washington bureaus.¹⁷ Indeed, with over 500 news outlets represented by more than 1,500 Capitol Hill accredited reporters, mainstream papers could cover most civil rights stories from a federal level without ever going south.¹⁸

The logistics of reporting from the South further discouraged mainstream efforts to cover the region. While phoning in dispatches was a much cursed aspect of bureau reporting, Southern reporters found that many areas of the South lacked the necessary infrastructure to maintain such correspondence.¹⁹ With rural and African American neighbourhoods often without even basic telephone connections, Southern reporters found it difficult to cover news events in these areas and still file stories in time for that evening's deadline.²⁰ The sheer scale of the region, totalling almost 2,000,000 km², also meant that reporters spent the majority of their time on the road. During the summer of 1965, for example, Gene Roberts claimed that the *New York Times'* Atlanta bureau had been 'unmanned at least four days out of five'.²¹ Such constant travelling not only meant that Southern reporters accrued comparatively large

¹⁷ William S. White, '21 Southern Senators Map A Filibuster on Civil Rights', *New York Times*, 28 July 1948, pp. 1, 5; C. P. Trussell, 'Civil Rights Battle Averted As Party Adopts Platform', *New York Times*, 11 July 1952, pp. 1, 9; William S. White, 'The Solid - and Not So Solid - South', *New York Times*, 31 August 1952, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM9, SM36; Russell Baker, 'Filibuster Fight to Start Quickly', *New York Times*, 6 January 1959, p. 21.

¹⁸ Paul L. Martin, *Diversification of Media of Information in the United States: The National Picture 1900-62*, Slide 310, Paul L. Martin Papers 1933-77, (Microfilm Edition, 1987), Reel 1 Slides 234-312, WHS.

¹⁹ Paul Hofmann, 'Hold the Line - I'm Tied Up', *New York Times*, 14 February 1965, section Resorts, Travel, p. XX.

²⁰ Claude Sitton, 2004 <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/claude_sitton_oral_essay.pdf> [accessed 25 September 2013]; Even major cities in the South sometimes proved incapable of coping with the influx of outside reporters with the lack of available telephone operators during the Ole Miss riots leaving journalists apparently waiting for up to an hour to file stories: Roberts and Klibanoff, p. 328; This need for telephone lines was not simply limited to the South and even required the establishment of a special tent during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963; Mary C. Curtis, "'You Knew Things Would Be Different": How the March Changed One Family', *Washington Post* <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/she-the-people/wp/2013/08/23/you-knew-things-would-be-different-how-the-march-changed-one-family/>> [accessed 6 February 2014].

²¹ [Gene] Roberts Telephoned 8/26, 26 August 1965, New York Times Company Records, National Desk Records, Box 2 Folder 21, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library [hereafter referred to as NYPL]; Claude Sitton to Mr. Daniel, 13 September 1965, New York Times Company Records, National Desk Records, Box 2 Folder 21, NYPL.

personal expenses, but also required the employment of bureau secretaries to keep the day-to-day functions of the office going.²² Southern reporting, then, did not come easy or cheap.

Given the logistical, financial, and cultural barriers to coverage, it was not until John Popham established a one-man bureau for the *New York Times* in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1947, that any Northern newspaper permanently assigned a reporter to cover the South.²³ Even the arrival of Popham failed to signal any major change in mainstream approaches and it would be another six years before he was joined by Bill Emerson of *Newsweek* in 1953. This does not mean that mainstream outlets abandoned coverage of the South entirely. As early as 1846 – when a group of New York based outlets established the Associated Press (AP) – competing newspapers had pooled resources to create logistical networks that secured ‘as much information as possible for the minimal investment possible’.²⁴ Followed by other organisations such as United Press International (UPI), the wire press allowed Northern outlets to provide token coverage of Southern news and thereby maintain or advance their reputations as national newspapers. When stories emerged that required greater depth than formulaic wire press coverage could provide, Northern outlets would employ local journalists as freelance stringers to avoid the cost of sending their own staff to the South. As well as covering stories, both the wire press and local freelancers also played an important role in identifying trends and major news stories that would be of interest to Northern audiences. In combination with national organisations such as the American Society of News Editors, as well as chain ownership that saw Southern publications joining firms based in the North, editors of mainstream publications therefore constructed a system that alerted them to major news events in the South with a minimal amount of effort and investment.

With Northern outlets showing only periodic and shallow interest in the travails of Southern life, this arrangement provided an agreeable solution for much of the South’s news. When it came to stories about the African American community, however, local Southern papers either refused to carry coverage, or relegated the news to an insert – colloquially known as the

²² [Gene] Roberts *Telephoned 8/26*.

²³ Harrison E. Salisbury, *A Time of Change: A Reporter’s Tales of Our Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 44.

²⁴ Tuchman, ‘The News Net’, p. 255.

‘colored pages’ – that was only delivered in African American areas. In doing so, segregationist publishers reflected the prejudices and demands of their local audiences who could react negatively to even the smallest perceived transgression against the ‘Southern way of life’.²⁵ As historian David R. Davies has argued, this reluctance to print stories on the movement meant that, ‘Southern newspapers were ignoring the opportunity to cover and interpret a story in their own backyards’.²⁶

The wire press was able to plug this gap to an extent, but AP and UPI reporters in the South were often drawn from the same segregated communities they were expected to cover. For instance, while UPI based five journalists in Jackson, Mississippi, the organisation relied on part-time stringers to tip them off to stories in cities and towns across the rest of the State. As UPI reporter John Herbers claimed in 1962, however, the wire press was ‘not likely to be tipped on a story with a racial angle’ because these journalists were ‘an integral part of their community’ and did not wish to associate their towns with racial strife. Even when committed to coverage, UPI officers in Jackson had to make sure that enough of their material was publishable by a range of local segregationist outlets as ‘the great bulk of that reported never goes beyond the state wires’.²⁷ Consequently, when covering racially divisive stories such as the sit-in protests of early 1960, Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff claim that the wire services ‘wrote the stories as if they were typing over land mines’.²⁸ With the wire press already providing stories stripped of any real analysis, this failure to act as ‘the news lifeline for the vast majority of American – and foreign – newspaper readers’ caused journalist Paul Good to argue in 1966 that ‘the information gap [between Northern readers and the Southern movement] was enormous’.²⁹ While some freelance stringers in the South – such as Bill Minor of the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* – responded to this silence by volunteering to cover stories on early African American political activism, they were the exception rather than the rule.

²⁵ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, The History of American Journalism, 6 (Westport: Praeger, 2006), p. 64.

²⁶ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, p. 70.

²⁷ John Herbers, ‘The Reporter in the Deep South’, *Nieman Reports*, April 1962 <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102051/1962-The-Reporter-in-the-Deep-South.aspx>> [accessed 20 August 2014].

²⁸ Roberts and Klibanoff, p. 223.

²⁹ Paul Good, ‘“The Meredith March”, *New South*, Summer 1966’, in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 495–515 (p. 499).

Therefore, while it is important not to ignore the courageous work of liberal Southern editors such as Ira B. Harky Jr. and Hodding Carter III, it is easy to understand why Charles Evers – the prominent civil rights activist whose younger brother Medgar Evers was assassinated in Jackson, Mississippi – claimed in 1968 that ‘the press has been and is one of the worst enemies, along with the police, that the Negro has in Mississippi’.³⁰

I.i

For the first half of the twentieth century this state of affairs did not trouble many Northern editors. To understand this attitude, it is necessary to move beyond simple dichotomies of the Southern struggle that pit a liberal Northern press against their Southern segregationist counterparts. For example, this dichotomy overlooks the fact that Adolph Simon Ochs, who bought the *New York Times* at the end of the nineteenth century, was raised in Tennessee and had financed the purchase through his ownership of the *Chattanooga Times* and earlier work at the *Knoxville Chronicle*. Ochs, despite his father’s Republican, Reconstructionist background and his own crusades against anti-Semitism, ‘was a conventional Southerner on the issue of race’ and saw little issue with maintaining an all-white newsroom.³¹ This picture had not changed much by the 1960s. While coverage of a 1964 *New York Times* survey expressed mild alarm that thirty one per cent of white New Yorkers did not know a single African American by name, the picture amongst those with the power to decide what news did, and did not, qualify as ‘fit to print’ at the *Times* was not much different.³² Brought up in highly segregated Northern cities, many editors, such as Max Frankel who joined the *Times* in 1952 and would eventually become its Executive Editor in 1986, ‘did not live or play close enough to blacks in early life to grow up genuinely color-blind’.³³ Frankel and the *Times* were not alone. *Newsweek* Editor, Osborne ‘Oz’ Elliott, for example, was born to an affluent New York family

³⁰ Charles Evers, ‘Comment By Charles Evers’, in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 68–70 (p. 68); For a series of case studies on Southern journalists see: *The Press and Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement*, ed. by David R. Davies (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001).

³¹ Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York: World Pub. Co, 1969), p. 326.

³² ‘Results of Key Questions on Whites’ Attitudes’, *New York Times*, 21 September 1964, p. 26; See also Fred Powledge, ‘Poll Shows Whites in City Resent Civil Rights Drive’, *New York Times*, 21 September 1964, pp. 1, 26.

³³ Frankel, p. 463.

who purposefully recruited Irish servants to avoid having African Americans in their home. Elliott has recalled that while his parents were certainly bigoted, 'by the simple force of isolation, everyone in their set was'.³⁴ The situation was so severe across the nation that as late as 1955 no person of colour had even applied for membership of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.³⁵ In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that white Northern editors were ignorant of, or blind to, the injustices of Jim Crow segregation in the South and failed to pursue stories relating to the fight for its destruction.

As the 1950s progressed, however, the issue of desegregation created an increasing number of flashpoints across the South. While reporters in Washington would continue to produce a large number of news stories, the increasing frequency and ferocity of demonstrations encouraged publications to view Southern coverage as worth the considerable logistical and financial investment its pursuit required. Indeed, even the wire press began to 'feel a responsibility to report this type of news in some detail', not only because it was increasingly being picked up by their subscribers, but because they 'felt that justice is more apt to prevail in the light of publicity'.³⁶ By 1962, John Herbers claims, some days would see 'more than half the stories on the wire pertain either directly or indirectly to the race issue'.³⁷ By the early to mid 1960s, even smaller newspapers such as the *Kansas City Star* were sending reporters on secondment to cover the growing demonstrations and violence in the South while major news events – such as George Wallace's stand-off with the federal authorities in June 1963 – drew hundreds of journalists from all over the world.³⁸

As the subsequent chapters demonstrate, while there is a commonly held notion that the Southern movement produced a spontaneous wave of activity that was impossible for the press to ignore, each outlet came to a reasoned and unique decision as to when and how it would cover civil rights action. For instance, while *Newsweek* was the second mainstream publication to open a Southern Bureau, the decision was taken by the racially conservative John Denson, who saw coverage of the unfolding drama in the South as a way of

³⁴ Osborn Elliott, *The World of Oz* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 70.

³⁵ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, p. 65.

³⁶ Herbers.

³⁷ Herbers.

³⁸ Charles W. Gusewelle, 2014.

differentiating the magazine from *TIME* who 'ignored [the civil rights movement] at first and then reported from a distance and with distinct distaste'.³⁹ While Denson may have encouraged coverage primarily for financial reasons, Oz Elliott, who took over as *Newsweek's* editor in 1961 when the magazine was purchased by the Washington Post Company, saw civil rights coverage as more of a moral obligation. While the Atlanta Bureau also benefited from a much wider injection of resources by the new owners, Elliott claims that the Bureau was singled out for improvement because 'race and poverty were paramount concerns, and we covered those matters with compassion and in great depth'.⁴⁰ Describing himself as 'a cheerleader' of Elliott's committed stance on civil rights coverage, Peter Goldman has claimed that 'the decision, the embrace, of the movement was essentially a moral one', with Elliott letting Goldman 'run wild' as *Newsweek's* chief writer on movement stories.⁴¹ For smaller papers, such as the *Kansas City Star*, individual personalities could play an even larger role. Charles Gusewelle, for example, has claimed that the *Star's* decision to send him South as a travelling reporter for three months during the summer of 1963 was tied to a change in management that saw Richard Fowler take over editorship of the newspaper. Unlike the 'coalition of elderly gentlemen' who had led the paper under the direction of Roy Roberts, Fowler not only assigned Gusewelle to report on the South but also took actions to hire the *Star's* first African American reporter. Coverage of the South, however, cannot be equated with a positive outlook on the Southern movement; Gusewelle recalls being told by his managing editor to 'keep your mind open to the possibility that the whole civil rights movement is the invention of the New York Jews'.⁴²

These experiences highlight the need to resist narratives which paint certain civil rights events as innately or inescapably newsworthy, and instead examine the reasons that publications began to cover the movement in the South and the limitations placed on this coverage. Viewing the mainstream media as a series of active and individual outlets rather than a monolithic bloc can also highlight the heterogeneity of mainstream coverage and the atypical

³⁹ Elliott, p. 71; Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p. 12.

⁴⁰ Elliott, p. 58.

⁴¹ Peter Goldman, 2013.

⁴² Gusewelle.

nature of papers such as the *New York Times*. For instance, while hard to fully quantify, the fact that the *New York Times* produced 8,827 articles that combined the word ‘Negro’ with either ‘integration’, ‘segregation’, or ‘civil rights’, in the period 1954-62, compared to just 1,867 in the *Los Angeles Times*, suggests significant differences in mainstream coverage.⁴³ Indeed, Jack Nelson – a reporter for the *Atlanta Constitution* and later the *Los Angeles Times* – has claimed that the *New York Times* was ‘far out front in covering the story, not only focusing on it long before other news organizations, but also devoting more resources and top news space to it and thereby helping make it part of the government’s agenda’.⁴⁴ Given that Nelson’s move to the *Los Angeles Times* in 1965 made him the paper’s first permanent reporter in the South – and the *Washington Post* took until 1970 to make a similar commitment – it is clear that mainstream commitment to racial coverage was not uniform.⁴⁵ A reliance on the *New York Times*’ coverage of the story can, therefore, distort our understanding of the relative importance attached to the black freedom struggle by the white mainstream media. While this is less important for studies examining the influence of the *Times* on official policy, or using it as a record of events in the South, it has major consequences for those using the paper and its readership as a substitute for public opinion or as indicative of a homogenous mainstream media.

I.ii

This varied and limited commitment to coverage of the black freedom struggle can also affect our understanding of the movement’s chronology. As the next chapter suggests, all news stories go through a cycle of popularity that sees the issues they raise wane in significance. For the race beat, however, this process was very specifically tied to the initial conceptions formed

⁴³ These figures were found via a proquest search for the period 01/01/1954 – 31/12/1962 using the search terms: “Negro AND (integration OR segregation OR Civil Rights)”. Only articles, front-page articles, and editorials were counted in the search. Identical searches for the *Boston Globe* and *Chicago Tribune* returned 2,066 and 2,815 respectively, further emphasising the need to question how certain papers such as the *Los Angeles Times* are designated as “mainstream”.

⁴⁴ Jack Nelson, ‘Nieman Reports: Reporting on the Civil Rights Movement’, *Nieman Reports* <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100991/Reporting-on-the-Civil-Rights-Movement.aspx>> [accessed 6 February 2014].

⁴⁵ ‘Killing Jim Crow: The 1964 Civil Rights Act’ (presented at the Civil Rights and the Press Symposium, Syracuse University, 2004) <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/ernest_c_withers_transcript.pdf> [accessed 25 February 2014]; Nelson.

by white editors and publishers about what the civil rights movement was. For instance, talking of ‘the ten-year-old Negro revolution’ in its July 1964 issue, it is clear that those at *Newsweek* saw the *Brown* decision as the major turning point in modern African American history.⁴⁶ As Risa Goluboff has argued, this focus on *Brown* concentrates attention on legal strategies to end school segregation at a federal level, while ignoring the considerable local activism that took place on a much broader range of issues.⁴⁷ Furthermore, while *Brown* was undoubtedly a major landmark and spur to further action, the decision represented the culmination of decades of activism by and for African Americans in the South.⁴⁸

When accompanied by a shift in media logistics that increased the volume of reporting from the South, this process of designation could be self-affirming. Assigning their first permanent reporter to the South less than a year before the Supreme Court decision, *Newsweek’s* increased reporting from the region inevitably gave the impression that *Brown* represented a decisive shift in African American politics. Similarly, while the *New York Times* had been one of the first to invest in Southern coverage, it wasn’t until the sit-in protests of early 1960 that the paper committed more than a single reporter to the Southern beat on a regular basis. For this new batch of Southern reporters, such as Claude Sitton who replaced Popham in 1958, the sit-ins were unlike anything they had seen before. This lack of grounding in the Southern movement led to a view of the black freedom struggle as ‘a protest movement only three-and-a-half years old’ in August 1963.⁴⁹ By equating the start of the civil rights movement with the intensification of their own coverage, mainstream newspapers not only overlooked the achievements of an earlier generation of activists, but also viewed the tactics and strategies of contemporary demonstrators devoid of the historical context in which they were formed.

Such ahistoricism, however, was not mirrored in the African American press, which had been formed as the product of earlier struggles against discrimination. With a long and openly

⁴⁶ Louis Harris, ‘The “Backlash” Issue’, *Newsweek*, 13 July 1964, pp. 24, 27.

⁴⁷ Risa Goluboff, ‘Civil Rights History Before, and Beyond, *Brown*’, in *Why the Local Matters: Federalism, Localism, and Public Interest Advocacy*, pp. 11–19 <<http://www.law.yale.edu/Goluboff.pdf>> [accessed 1 August 2014].

⁴⁸ Glenn Feldman, *Before Brown: Civil Rights and White Backlash in the Modern South* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ Claude Sitton, ‘3 -Year-Old Protest Movement Comes of Age in Capital Rally’, *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, p. 20.

partisan history of covering the black freedom struggle, the African American press often sought to contextualise and historicise protest. Indeed, one series of articles by Lerone Bennett Jr. saw in-depth discussions of African American enslavement, emancipation, and disenfranchisement interspersed between *Ebony's* regular coverage of civil rights activism and the gains being made by leading African Americans in various fields.⁵⁰ To emphasise the importance of this past on present struggles, the last in this eleven part series brought readers up to date with African American activism 'From Booker T. to Martin L.'.⁵¹ Such articles provided importance context for modern day struggles, drawing parallels between King and Frederick Douglas as well as contrasting the black nationalism of Elijah Muhammad's Nation of Islam (NOI) with that of Marcus Garvey's Back-to-Africa movement. Similarly, in the magazine's September 1963 edition, which celebrated the 100th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the *Brown* decision was featured as only number eight in a list of the 'Ten Most Dramatic Events in Negro History' that started with the arrival of Africans into America over 300 years earlier and finished with the riots at Little Rock in 1957.⁵² To readers of *Ebony*, then, African American activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s was not a spontaneous 'revolution', but a further chapter in a long and bitter struggle for equality.

This is not to argue that racial attitudes at mainstream publications were akin to that of segregationist papers in the South. However, while praised for their liberal coverage, mainstream publications were products of a racially divided North that rejected the legal segregation of Jim Crow yet tacitly accepted an often more rigid *de facto* separation of the races. In Los Angeles, for example, the *Los Angeles Times* was sending reporters thousands of miles to report on the latest eruption of violence in cities like Birmingham, Alabama, but paid little attention to the discrimination faced by people of colour in the fifty square mile ghetto that made up Southern LA. Similarly, while racist Southern police officials were vilified in the Northern media, men like LA Chief of Police William Parker – who described rioters in 1965 as

⁵⁰ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'The African Past: Exciting New Discoveries Throw New Light on Dark Continent', *Ebony*, July 1961, pp. 34–40; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Generation of Crisis: Black, White, Abolitionists and Fugitive Slaves Waged 30-Year Cold War Against Slavery', *Ebony*, May 1962, pp. 81–88; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Black Power in Dixie', *Ebony*, July 1962, pp. 84–90.

⁵¹ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'From Booker T. To Martin L.: In Half-Century, Negro Protest Has Increased in Militancy and Effectiveness', *Ebony*, November 1962, pp. 153–62.

⁵² 'Ten Most Dramatic Events in Negro History', *Ebony*, September 1963, pp. 28–38.

‘monkeys in a zoo’ – became ‘almost a deity within the [LA media] Establishment’.⁵³ Recalling that LAPD officers patrolled Watts ‘like an occupying army in a conquered and hostile country’ and used the word nigger ‘as casually as any redneck counterpart in deepest Mississippi’, Karl Fleming – who became *Newsweek’s* LA Bureau Chief in February 1965 – argues that discrimination in the North was overlooked because ‘Watts was as invisible, as remote, and as exotic to white Los Angeles as some country in Africa’.⁵⁴ Indeed, when seeking to understand how LA could have been so taken by surprise by the Watts riots of 1965, journalism professor Jack Lyle argued:

‘The answer in a word was ignorance [...] The organized channels of information – the journalistic media of newspaper, magazine, radio, and television – had failed to perform adequately their function of helping citizens maintain surveillance on this important part of their environment’.⁵⁵

In other words, while perceiving the struggles of African Americans hundreds of miles away to be newsworthy, journalists and editors at Northern outlets reversed the geographic distortions common to news coverage and ignored the lives of African American communities close to home. While stories may have emerged from beats centred in the white community – such as crime – the news nets of journalists at Northern outlets often did not include the social, political, and economic institutions of African American neighbourhoods and, as a consequence, they were unable or unwilling to print stories on developments within this community.

The lack of investment in news relating to the hardship and activism of African Americans in the North – and the hostility of coverage after the urban unrest of the mid-to-late 1960s – represented the crux of the race beat. Namely that while Walter Rugaber of the *Atlanta Journal* doubtless spoke for many when he claimed in 1964 that the Southern movement was

⁵³ Jeanne F. Theoharis, ‘“Alabama on Avalon”: Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black Protest in Los Angeles’, in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 27–54; Karl Fleming, ‘Comment By Karl Fleming’, in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 30–33 (p. 32).

⁵⁴ Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, pp. 6–7.

⁵⁵ Jack Lyle, ‘Introduction’, in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. ix – xviii (p. ix).

the ‘biggest damn story there is’, racism in and of itself was not news in 1960s America.⁵⁶ Marilyn Nissenson, for example, has argued that the liberal Jewish tradition entrenched by owner Dorothy Schiff at the *New York Post* led the paper to pioneer coverage of the movement at a time when even the *New York Times* had not invested in the story.⁵⁷ By 1968, however, Nissenson claims that Schiff ‘had serious reservations about the Kerner report’, feeling that it placed too much blame on white racism and not enough on ‘responsible’ black leadership.⁵⁸ While chapter five demonstrates how this notion of responsible leadership was employed in defence of white supremacy throughout the 1960s, for now it is important to note how this turn away from the movement by Schiff and the *Post* reflected the bias of her predominantly white New York audience rather than the inherent newsworthiness of pre- or post-Watts activism.

Importantly, even when mainstream editors such as Oz Elliott did call for greater inclusion of civil rights coverage in the North, the outcome was still tied to white, Northern conceptions of the black freedom struggle. In November 1967, for example, *Newsweek* published its first ever ‘advocacy issue’ in the wake of the Detroit riots that declared itself ‘a program for action’ on ‘what must be done’ to tackle the continuing problem of racism and discrimination across the United States.⁵⁹ While Elliott and *Newsweek* deserve credit for printing the issue at a time when many other publications were turning away from the black freedom struggle, Elliott admits that the idea came to him not as he surveyed the burning wreckage of Detroit, but while on holiday aboard a yacht off the coast of Croatia.⁶⁰ Consequently, while coverage of the civil rights movement often represented a sincere attempt by white Northern editors to convey major societal issues to their readers, these issues were inevitably considered from the standpoint of a white, privileged America that had little contact with the problems they were attempting to chronicle.

⁵⁶ Walter Rugaber in William Cook to Peter Goldman, ‘Race Reporters’, 26 May 1964, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 10 Folder 10, Manuscript and Rare Books Library, Emory University [Hereafter referred to as MARBL]; For similar sentiments from other journalists and editors see Harrison E. Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: The New York Times and Its Times* (New York: Times Books, 1980), p. 361; Elliott, p. 69.

⁵⁷ Marilyn Nissenson, *The Lady Upstairs: Dorothy Schiff and the New York Post* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007), p. 323.

⁵⁸ Nissenson, p. 325.

⁵⁹ ‘The Negro in America: What Must Be Done’, *Newsweek*, 20 November 1967, p. Front Cover.

⁶⁰ Elliott, p. 83.

As the next three chapters demonstrate, this consideration led editors to make particular decisions about when and how the movement should be covered that greatly influenced the nature of subsequent coverage. However, while mainstream editors and publishers approached the civil rights movement with a variety of different styles and backgrounds, there was at least consensus by 1960 that certain elements of the black freedom struggle were newsworthy. In contrast, approaches to the gay and lesbian community lacked any kind of coherence or uniformity. As a consequence, it is even more important to understand the editorial landscape in which groups like the MSNY and MSW emerged.

II

With demonstrators shouting ‘Make Love Not War’ and San Francisco playing host to a ‘Summer of Love’, the counter-cultural wave that seemed to challenge every facet of American social life in the 1960s is credited with creating a ‘Sexual Revolution’. Indeed, modern portrayals of the decade – from tongue-in-cheek comedy to serious drama – often focus on, and normalise, sexual promiscuity, provocative dress, and an increasingly open attitude towards diverse forms of sexual expression.⁶¹ For many, then, the sixties represent a watershed in American attitudes towards sex and sexuality – a period where freedom battled against the austere, almost Victorian attitudes of the 1950s.⁶² However, just as historians have challenged the narrow periodization of the civil rights movement, this notion of a sudden and dramatic revolution in the 1960s has been challenged by scholars who highlight what Hera Cook has called the ‘Long Sexual Revolution’.⁶³ Building on the work of Alan Petigny and sexologists such as Alfred Kinsey, Eric Schaefer argues that:

What constituted the sexual revolution was not only a change in manners and morals; that had already been occurring discretely in minds and

⁶¹ Jay Roach, *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*, 1997; ‘Mad Men’ (AMC, 2007).

⁶² David Allyn, *Make Love, Not War: The Sexual Revolution, an Unfettered History* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2000).

⁶³ Hera Cook, *The Long Sexual Revolution: English Women, Sex, and Contraception, 1800 - 1975* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

bedrooms across the nation. It was the fact that sex was no longer a private matter that took place behind closed doors.⁶⁴

Historical shifts in attitudes, therefore, have been conflated with the appearance of those shifts in the media. As Schaefer claims, ‘what we have come to understand as the sexual revolution of the late 1960s and early 1970s was actually a media revolution’.⁶⁵

Before the 1950s, strong censorship laws had prevented the publication of anything that could be considered obscene. Authorities carefully policed any discussion or depiction of sexual activity and banned material ranging from pornography to famous works of literature such as *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. In response to these censorship laws, Leigh Ann Wheeler has argued, the ACLU deployed a highly effective narrative of ‘consumer rights’ that ‘inspired members of the public, as consumers, to take censorship personally’.⁶⁶ During the 1950s and 1960s the Supreme Court, and increasingly the lower courts, expanded the material covered by the first amendment. In conjunction with battles in Hollywood that led to the scrapping of the Motion Picture Association of America’s Production Code in 1968, these battles ensured that even hardcore depictions of heterosexual sex could find popular expression in movies such as *I am Curious (Yellow)*.⁶⁷ Legal rulings by the Supreme Court, however, failed to remove the deep hostility and suspicion with which many American citizens viewed public discussions of sex and same-sex relationships in general. Consequently, while more explicit material flourished on the margins of society, the mainstream news media remained remarkably resistant to the legal changes they often covered.⁶⁸ When examining coverage of a community whose members

⁶⁴ Eric Schaefer, ‘Sex Seen: 1968 and Rise of “Public” Sex’, in *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, ed. by Eric Schaefer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 1–22 (p. 3); Alan Cecil Petigny, *The Permissive Society: America, 1941-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶⁵ *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, ed. by Eric Schaefer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. Rear Cover.

⁶⁶ Leigh Ann Wheeler, ‘Publicizing Sex through Consumer and Privacy Rights: How the American Civil Liberties Union Liberated the Media in the 1960s’, in *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, ed. by Eric Schaefer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 351–82 (p. 361).

⁶⁷ For the fight against censorship in Hollywood see Christie Milliken, ‘Rate It X?: Hollywood Cinema and the End of the Production Code’, in *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, ed. by Eric Schaefer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 25–52; Kevin Heffernan, ‘Prurient (Dis)Interest: The American Release and Reception of *I Am Curious (Yellow)*’, in *Sex Scene: Media and the Sexual Revolution*, ed. by Eric Schaefer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 105–25; For a more general overview of changing attitudes towards sex on screen see Rodger Streitmatter, *Sex Sells!: The Media’s Journey from Repression to Obsession* (Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004).

⁶⁸ This may explain the notable absence of news media from Schaefer’s edited collection: Mark Joseph Walmsley, ‘Book Review: Sex Scene - Media and the Sexual Revolution’, *U.S. Studies Online*

were most often defined by their sexual activity, it is important to track how and why sex began to influence narratives emerging from the mainstream media.

As we have already seen, editors were often mindful of their audiences when deciding what news they considered 'fit to print'. Consequently – just as appeals to white Northern audiences militated against in-depth coverage of the battles against racial discrimination – appeals to respectable middle-class readers were seen as requiring an almost puritanical outlook on sex and sexuality. Battles of this nature – between what one could and should print – had been taking place for generations. Writing in the *North American Review* in 1882, for example, George T. Rider argued that journalism had 'lost the old sensitiveness and reserve concerning sex, and has become habitually guilty of indecent exposure of transactions and behavior from which healthy souls shrink in disgust and abhorrence'.⁶⁹ Papers such as the *New York Times* used this popular distaste to position their publications as above the sordid fray of yellow journalism. Indeed, shortly after unveiling their slogan 'All the News that's fit to Print' in 1896 the *Times* ran a competition to encourage other slogans from their readers. Amongst the final four was not only the eventual winner, 'All the World's News, but not a School for Scandal', but also a more illustrative example of Adolph S. Ochs's vision for his newly acquired publication; 'A decent newspaper for decent people'.⁷⁰

Fearing that prostitution and other supposedly immoral activities 'breed from the very telling', Rider claimed that each day 'ten thousand things are taking place [...] which are rightly and necessarily veiled in wholesome secrecy [...] Nature hides the viscera and vital processes, as cities bury sewage and all manner of offensive waste'.⁷¹ Associated with many of the same features that led to the ascendancy of 'objective' reporting, this 'respectable' journalism became the gold standard for news publications and continued into the post-war period.⁷² Marketing itself as a family newspaper, the *New York Times* had refused to carry adverts for

<<http://usstudiesonline.com/book-review-sex-scene-media-and-the-sexual-revolution/>> [accessed 18 August 2014].

⁶⁹ George T. Rider, 'The Pretensions of Journalism', *The North American Review*, 135 (1882), 471–83 (p. 476).

⁷⁰ W Joseph Campbell, 'Story of the Most Famous Seven Words in US Journalism', *BBC.co.uk*, 2012 <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-16918787>> [accessed 3 April 2014].

⁷¹ Rider, p. 477.

⁷² George Sokolsky, 'These Days...: The Moral Switch', *Washington Post*, 30 March 1954, p. 20.

Alfred Kinsey's 1948 work *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*.⁷³ Indeed, *New York Times* journalist John Corry has argued that before Kinsey, 'the topic [of sex] was unacceptable, and the *Times* would not be party to spreading such filth'.⁷⁴ While other mainstream outlets did cover Kinsey's work, their analysis often drew heavily on statistics and steered clear of Kinsey's more provocative conclusions about the nature of human sexuality.⁷⁵

Despite such a muted response from mainstream outlets, however, the popularity of his work, which reached a print run of over 300,000, showed that the American public was very interested in human sexuality. Indeed, one poll in 1950 showed that Kinsey and his work were more familiar to the American public than the Marshall Plan.⁷⁶ With Kinsey's study finding that thirty seven per cent of the men sampled had reached orgasm with another male, as well as exposing high levels of masturbation and pre-marital sex, this popularity played an important role in breaking down misconceptions about sex in America and 'proved to a reluctant public that its notions of normal behavior were nonsense, that secret sins that harried sensitive souls were often general practice'.⁷⁷ In the face of such popularity, even the *Times* carried adverts for Kinsey's second report, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, in 1953.⁷⁸ Claiming that 'if the level of dialogue was not necessarily higher, there was far more of it than before', Corry pinpoints the Kinsey report as an important watershed in attitudes towards the discussion of sex in mainstream newspapers.⁷⁹

Nevertheless, unable to print cuss words unless a necessary part of a quote, editors and journalists at the *Times* were aware that this approach to sex and sexuality was part of a wider

⁷³ Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell Baxter Pomeroy and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co., 1948).

⁷⁴ Corry, *My Times*, p. 153.

⁷⁵ 'Medicine: How Men Behave', *Time*, 5 January 1948

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,794087-2,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2014]; 'Manners and Morals: How to Stop Gin Rummy', *Time*, 1 March 1948

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,794270,00.html>> [accessed 9 March 2015]; Even *Life's* lengthy treatment of the report was only published months later when the popularity of the book and desire to learn more about its contents had been firmly established: 'Report on Kinsey', *Life*, 2 August 1948, pp. 86–90, 92, 94, 97–98.

⁷⁶ Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 22.

⁷⁷ Lyn Pederson [Pseudonym of Jim Kepner], "'A Tribute to Dr. Kinsey", *ONE Magazine*, August-September 1956', in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 127–31.

⁷⁸ Alfred C. Kinsey and Institute for Sex Research, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1953).

⁷⁹ Corry, *My Times*, p. 153.

trend that saw the paper hold itself to a much higher standard of respectability than many in the American media.⁸⁰ Consequently, while greater press and commercial freedoms meant that films such as *The Pink Pussy* were being advertised in neon on the streets of New York by 1964, the *Times* remained reluctant to comment on the growing visibility of sex in American life. Indeed, in 1966, when 'sex was becoming too visible to ignore', Corry has claimed that his short stint covering the topic led to the 'strangest and most protracted' argument he ever had with editors during his time as a journalist.⁸¹ Having been assigned to cover the work of sexologists William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, Corry submitted a piece to his news editor Theodore Bernstein that 'initiated a crisis' in the newsroom and was immediately withdrawn from consideration as a front-page article. While Corry felt he 'had written the piece with great delicacy and tact', the explicit nature of the piece proved too much for his editors.⁸² Despite having already discussed 'vaginal lubrication' as well as 'vaginal and clitoral orgasms', Corry argues that the piece was only approved once he agreed to replace the word 'penis' with the phrase 'genital organ', indicating how confused the paper's policy was on these issues by the late 1960s.⁸³ Indeed, the assignment and subsequent withdrawal of Corry's front-page article demonstrates that while editors were aware of the very real changes taking place in public discussions and consumption of sex, they were unsure of the role that respectable, family orientated newspapers should play in such dialogue. Lacking any formal guidance, the individual judgment of editors wielded much greater influence over what news stories relating to the sexual revolution did and did not make it into the day's news. While tabloid media embraced the shock value of sex for financial gain, reporters at the *Times* found that, 'sexual behavior had to be approached obliquely, through surrogate questions. You had to pretend indifference'.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Frankel, p. 497.

⁸¹ Corry, *My Times*, pp. 152–3, 155.

⁸² Corry, *My Times*, p. 155.

⁸³ John Corry, 'Research Into Sexual Physiology Disclosed After 11-Year Inquiry', *New York Times*, 18 April 1966, pp. 31, 41.

⁸⁴ Corry, *My Times*, p. 155.

II.i

Despite benefitting from more open attitudes towards non-procreative sex in general, it is clear that coverage of gay and lesbian relationships faced additional barriers. While the late 1960s may have been a period in which sex ‘was on display in a way that was unprecedented in American history’, Eric Marcus has argued that ‘people who depended solely on the mainstream media for news [in this period] would hardly have been aware of the gay rights movement’.⁸⁵ In part, this absence was indicative of divergent attitudes towards, and legal restrictions on, sex in society. Targeting readers of *Playboy*, whom the ACLU described in their mailings as ‘sophisticated people’ with the right to view ‘a picture of a divine figure with smasher legs’, much of the campaign against censorship was sexist in its objectification of women and heterosexist in its concentration on images of heterosexual relationships.⁸⁶

While discussion of homosexuality was often far less explicit than that of heterosexuality, homophiles found that the bar of what was considered to be obscene was much lower, with *ONE Magazine* quickly coming under attack by the authorities. In an article entitled ‘You Can’t Print It!’ published in the magazine in October 1954, ONE Inc.’s attorney, Eric Julber, explained to readers why the magazine had recently moderated its more provocative content, writing ‘in our society, visual stimulation of man by woman is tolerated to a far greater extent than attempted visual stimulation of man by man [...] What is permissible in heterosexual literature is not permissible in *ONE’s* context’.⁸⁷ As if to illustrate Julber’s point, the very same issue of *ONE Magazine* was seized by the postmaster general in Los Angeles for violating the 1873 Comstock Act against the distribution of ‘Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use’.⁸⁸ Despite little help from the ACLU and other potential allies in the anti-censorship movement, Julber successfully overturned the decision in the Supreme Court in 1958, establishing that

⁸⁵ Schaefer, ‘Sex Seen: 1968 and Rise of “Public” Sex’, p. 4; *Making Gay History: The Half Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*, ed. by Eric Marcus (New York: Perennial, 2002), p. 204.

⁸⁶ Wheeler, p. 362.

⁸⁷ Eric Julber, ‘You Can’t Print It!’, *ONE*, October 1954
<<http://www.boxturtlebulletin.com/2008/01/13/1273>> [accessed 2 August 2014].

⁸⁸ ‘Comstock Act (United States [1873])’, *Encyclopedia Britannica*
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/130734/Comstock-Act>> [accessed 2 August 2014].

discussions of homosexuality were covered under the first amendment.⁸⁹ However, just as the 1954 *Brown* decision did not suddenly revolutionise American attitudes towards racial discrimination, the removal of legal censorship did not make discussion of homosexuality any more publishable within the mainstream press.

Ironically, it was the Lavender Scare that swept the nation in the 1950s that led to the greatest increase in mainstream discussions of homosexuality.⁹⁰ The inadvertent disclosure by Undersecretary of State John Peurifoy that ninety one individuals had been forced to resign from the State Department in February 1950 on the grounds of their sexuality, rather than their political allegiance, led Senate Minority Leader Kenneth S. Wherry and others to call for an inquiry into the '3,500 perverts [...] employed in government agencies'.⁹¹ Resurrecting the case of Colonel Alfred Redl, an Austro-Hungarian officer who was blackmailed by Tsarist officials because of his sexuality during the First World War, proponents of the scare claimed that these men and women posed a serious safety risk to the United States and its allies.⁹² In response, the State Department began purging employees deemed to be security risks at a rate of over five a week, with a gay man or woman being fired from federal employment every other day.⁹³ These purges attracted attention in the mainstream press, with coverage responding to the figures routinely published by department officials or their Republican (and sometimes Democrat) detractors.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Sten Russell, 'One Symposium: Homosexuality - A Way of Life', *The Ladder*, February 1958, pp. 7–13, 18–23.

⁹⁰ On the important distinctions between McCarthyism and the 'Lavender Scare' see David K. Johnson, "'Homosexual Citizens": Washington's Gay Community Confronts the Civil Service', *Washington History*, 6 (1994), 44–63.

⁹¹ Roy E. Blick, as cited in William S. White, 'Inquiry by Senate on Perverts Asked', *New York Times*, 20 May 1950, section Amusements, p. 8; 'National Affairs: Act of Humiliation', *Time*, 13 March 1950 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,816257,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2014].

⁹² 'National Affairs: Object Lesson', *Time*, 25 October 1950 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,859060,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2014]; 'Perverts Called Government Peril', *New York Times*, 19 April 1950, p. 25; Associated Press, 'Federal Vigilance on Perverts Asked', *New York Times*, 16 December 1950, p. 3.

⁹³ Raymond M. Lahr, 'State Firing 5 a Week As Bad Risks', *Washington Post*, 21 April 1953, p. 12.

⁹⁴ 'The Administration: Rooting Them Out', *Time*, 7 May 1951 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,856739,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2014]; 'State Department Drops 4 Aides In Hong Kong, One for Visa Graft', *New York Times*, 28 March 1951, pp. 1, 5.

Partly as a consequence of entrenched sexism in federal and private hiring practices, which meant that few women were considered qualified for jobs requiring security clearances, this coverage tended to focus disproportionately on gay men. However, given that hundreds of women were dishonourably discharged from the armed forces as a result of Eisenhower's April 1953 Executive Order 10450, this continued absence of lesbians from coverage was also a result of the prevailing sexist attitudes amongst editors and publishers who tended to ignore news relating to women or relegate it to specific, culture related sections of their publications. Claiming in *The Ladder* in 1965 that there was a 'blackout on female homosexuality', L.E.E. argued that the very notion of lesbian identity – located outside of any relationship with men – represented a fundamental challenge to America's patriarchal society and the attitude of journalists such as Corry who argued that 'journalism was a man's game'.⁹⁵ In contrast, L.E.E. argued, gay men could be used to prop up male ego and reaffirm masculinity through group ridicule that positioned gay men as the feminine 'other' against which 'real' men could define themselves.

Limited to occasional religious or cultural references in the preceding decades, discussion of homosexuality – at least in the case of gay men – now entered the political sphere in distinctly negative ways. However, while the *New York Times* claimed that Peurifoy's admission was 'the talk of Washington and of the Washington correspondent corps', many maintained an aversion to frank and open discussion.⁹⁶ For instance, speaking in the House of Representatives, Rep. Miller (R, Nebraska) claimed that he was 'discussing a very delicate subject' and lamented that he could not 'strip the fetid, stinking flesh off of this skeleton of homosexuality and tell my colleagues of the House some of the facts of nature [...] as it would offend the sensibilities of some of you'.⁹⁷ This sentiment was echoed by Republican National Chairman, Guy George Gabrielson, who asserted in a letter partially reprinted in the *New York Times* that, 'the country would be more aroused over this tragic angle of the situation if it were not for the difficulties of the newspapers and radio commentators in adequately presenting the fact, while

⁹⁵ L.E.E., 'The Invisible Woman', *The Ladder*, June 1965, pp. 4–8 (p. 4); Corry, *My Times*, p. 146.

⁹⁶ 'Perverts Called Government Peril.'

⁹⁷ Arthur Miller, as cited in 'Homosexuals in Government', *Congressional Record*, Vol 96 Part 4, 81st Congress 2nd Session, 24 April 1950, pp. 4527–28 <<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/gays-in-govt.html>> [accessed 23 April 2014].

respecting the decency of their American audiences'.⁹⁸ For some in the media, such as syndicated columnist George Sokolsky whose column was published in nearly 300 papers nationwide, even the generally muted conversations about homosexuality represented a moral reversal that he believed 'can only lead to the death of a people'.⁹⁹ Described by a friend as 'the high priest of militant U.S. anti-Communism', Sokolsky's distaste at exploiting the Lavender Scare for political gain was typical of a conservative media class that had no problem with policies that ended the careers and lives of thousands of Americans, but balked at a frank and open discussion of the practices that apparently made them unfit for government service.¹⁰⁰

While the presence of gay men in sensitive government positions was now news, it was clear that disquiet about printing stories on the gay and lesbian community persisted. Jim Kepner, an early Mattachine member and contributor to *ONE Magazine*, has argued that this disquiet about explicitly mentioning homosexuality in news stories relating to the gay and lesbian community is one of the reasons that many underestimate the level of coverage in the 1950s. To identify a bar raided on moral charges as a gay bar, for example, Kepner argues that readers would often have to infer the bar's clientele from the all male or all female nature of those arrested.¹⁰¹ Even in death, gay men and women could expect their sexuality to be denied or ignored in print with long term partners excluded or referred to as simply friends of the deceased.¹⁰² When the *Times* did cover events relating to the gay and lesbian community, then, Managing Editor Harrison Salisbury has argued that there was 'a certain amount of nervousness because it just wasn't the sort of thing the *Times* did [...] That was the general attitude towards homosexuality. It wasn't conscious, but it wasn't brought up and talked about'.¹⁰³ This presents scholars with a major challenge, especially in a digital age that often

⁹⁸ Guy George Gabrielson, as cited in 'Perverts Called Government Peril.'

⁹⁹ Sokolsky.

¹⁰⁰ 'The Press: The Man in the Middle', *Time*, 24 May 1954
<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,823411,00.html>> [accessed 21 January 2015].

¹⁰¹ Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), p. 9.

¹⁰² Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 11; Frankel, p. 484.

¹⁰³ Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 45.

relies on key search terms.¹⁰⁴ Indeed this euphemistic approach may explain why investigations of mainstream coverage, such as Susan Burgess' examination of the *New York Times*, have presented such a major dichotomy between pre- and post-Stonewall coverage.¹⁰⁵

II.ii

In the absence of open and honest discussion of sex, ignorance was common – especially in small towns such as Boise, Idaho, where stories about gay men could provoke panicked responses.¹⁰⁶ As histories of the early twentieth century demonstrate, however, large cities such as New York had longstanding and often vibrant gay and lesbian communities that were known to news executives, law enforcement, and ordinary citizens.¹⁰⁷ Commenting on his time at *Newsweek*, for example, Peter Goldman has claimed that ‘you have to remember that this was Manhattan, where it was nearly impossible for a literate person to exist without having gay friends and at least a rough understanding of gay relationships’.¹⁰⁸ Consequently, while ignorance about the issues affecting the lives of gay men and women certainly abounded in the mainstream media, the almost complete absence of lesbian and gay communities from coverage was a result of what Fred Fejes has termed ‘discreet tolerance’.¹⁰⁹ Resembling the ‘Brown Paper Bag’ strategy used by the police towards open container laws, gay men and women were allowed to exist on the margins of society as long as they did not reveal themselves too obviously or attract unwarranted attention. As Fejes has argued in his investigation of the 1954 homophobic panic in Miami, publications that had previously printed relatively positive stories on the gay community – including reviews of cabaret shows that often acted as a draw for tourists – quickly denied and even denounced the existence of such

¹⁰⁴ While focused on British media data, Charles Upchurch's recent study of key word searching when dealing with the history of sexuality is useful: Charles Upchurch, ‘Full-Text Databases and Historical Research: Cautionary Results from a Ten-Year Study’, *Journal of Social History*, 46 (2012), 89–105.

¹⁰⁵ Burgess devotes less than ten of the nearly 500 pages in her book to pre-Stonewall coverage: Susan Burgess, *The New York Times on Gay and Lesbian Issues* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁶ John Gerassi, *The Boys of Boise: Furor, Vice, and Folly in an American City* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).

¹⁰⁷ George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994).

¹⁰⁸ Peter Goldman to Mark Joseph Walmsley, ‘Re: Your Time at Newsweek’, 25 October 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Fred Fejes, ‘Murder, Perversion, and Moral Panic: The 1954 Media Campaign against Miami's Homosexuals and the Discourse of Civic Betterment’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 9 (2000), 305–47 (p. 307).

communities when highlighted by outside sources.¹¹⁰ In the case of Miami, for example, officials such as Commissioner H. Leslie Quigg reacted strongly to an article in *ONE Magazine* that had praised the city's tolerant attitude towards its gay community. Mirroring George T. Rider's nineteenth-century fears that such communities 'breed from the very telling', Quigg claimed that 'we are just opening the gates to these people when national magazines carry stories that Miami has a lenient policy towards them'.¹¹¹ Quigg and others in Miami, then, were not reacting in surprise to the notion of a gay community in their city, but rather seeking to ensure that coverage of such a community did not attract unwanted attention or undermine the city's reputation. Similar concerns were expressed in San Francisco in 1959, when mayoral candidate Russell Wolden attempted to smear the incumbent George Christopher by publishing an endorsement the latter had received from the Mattachine Society.¹¹² While the attempt backfired on Wolden, who was beaten convincingly, John D'Emilio has argued that, 'the San Francisco press criticized Wolden not because he had attacked a persecuted minority but because, as the *Examiner* put it, he had "stigmatized the city" by suggesting that it tolerated such life-styles'.¹¹³

Editors and publishers in cities like Miami and San Francisco may have worried about their national reputations, but for the most part the 'national' mainstream press was not interested in the gay, or lesbian, communities of other cities. While the *New York Times* occasionally carried short wire press stories relating to such communities, it was not a topic that bureau correspondents were expected to report on.¹¹⁴ Conceived of as a local issue, or more often a local 'problem', coverage of the gay and lesbian community was parochial in outlook. For instance, while the *Times* left out any mention of Wolden's smear tactics in the three articles it

¹¹⁰ Fejes.

¹¹¹ Rider, p. 477; H. Leslie Quigg, as cited in Fejes, p. 336.

¹¹² Jim Kepner claims that the motion to endorse Christopher was actually introduced by William Patrick Brandhove, an SFPD informant and 'Wolden man' who was ordered to introduce the motion for this exact purpose: Dal MacIntire [Pseudonym of Jim Kepner], "'Tangents: The Campaign That Dev-la-Ted" *ONE Magazine*, November 1959', in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 377–85 (p. 382).

¹¹³ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 122; See also Christopher Agee, 'Gayola: Police Professionalization and the Politics of San Francisco's Gay Bars, 1950-1968', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 15 (2006), 462–89 (p. 477).

¹¹⁴ Associated Press, 'Navy Ousts Sex Offender', *New York Times*, 31 August 1952, p. 32; United Press International, 'Homosexuals Stage Protest in Capital', *New York Times*, 30 May 1965, p. 42.

carried on the mayoral election, it did provide coverage of similar clean-up operations during elections in New York that often followed or preceded local elections.¹¹⁵ Similarly, despite the national implications of the fight against federal discrimination spearheaded by the MSW, the *Washington Post* often classified stories on the organisation as local news and placed them in its 'City Life' section.¹¹⁶

This geographical bias in coverage was not unique to the gay and lesbian movement. In their investigation of civil disorders, Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia found that supposedly national outlets were far more likely to cover events that were closer to home, with the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reporting almost seventy per cent of racial disturbances in New York state, but less than thirty per cent of those on the West coast. This disparity was even greater for milder disturbances, with coverage of events in New York state dropping to sixty per cent while the comparable figure for West coast coverage was just five per cent.¹¹⁷ Considering that many of the early homophile groups – including the Mattachine Society, ONE Inc., and the Daughters of Bilitis – were founded and operated on the West coast throughout the 1950s, this geographical distinction in coverage has the potential to distort the historical record.¹¹⁸ As John Howard's *Men Like That* has shown, the experience of gay men in the rural and semi-urban South differed greatly from those in the urban centres of the North.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, local histories of cities such as Philadelphia, San Francisco, and even other communities within New York State have highlighted the heterogeneity of gay and

¹¹⁵ Lawrence E. Davies, 'Spirited Politics in San Francisco: Mayoral Contest Off to Angry Start', *New York Times*, 24 May 1959, p. 53; Lawrence E. Davies, 'San Francisco Fears Giants' New Stadium Won't Be Ready for World Series', *New York Times*, 16 August 1959, section Sports, p. S3; 'Christopher Wins in San Francisco', *New York Times*, 4 November 1959, p. 19; 'State Aids Clean-up of Taverns in City', *New York Times*, 14 October 1959, p. 50; '2 More Bars Closed: Total of 12 Shut Down in State Clean-Up Drive', *New York Times*, 31 October 1959, p. 47; "'Village" Assured of Added Police: Drive Against Undesirables Is Planned by Murphy', *New York Times*, 7 October 1964, p. 49.

¹¹⁶ John M. Goshko, 'House Group Continues Homosexuality Hearing: Not Much Headway', *Washington Post*, 10 August 1963, section City Life in Greater Washington, p. C2; Jean White, 'Homophile Groups Argue Civil Liberties', *Washington Post*, 11 October 1964, section City Life of Greater Washington, p. B10.

¹¹⁷ Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, 'All the Rioting That's Fit to Print: Selection Effects in National Newspaper Coverage of Civil Disorders, 1968-1969', *American Sociological Review*, 69 (2004), 519-43 (pp. 526-31).

¹¹⁸ For a qualitative examination of how this regional bias affected other predominantly West coast groups, see Jane Rhodes, *Framing the Black Panthers: The Spectacular Rise of a Black Power Icon* (New York: The New Press, 2007), pp. 57-90.

¹¹⁹ John Howard, *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

lesbian urban experience.¹²⁰ With some definitions of mainstream failing to include a single publication based outside of Manhattan, concentration on selected outlets such as the *New York Times*, can not only equate the editorial policy of these papers with that of the American media as a whole, but also overlook the significant regional variances in lesbian and gay experience.

II.iii

Projected as a series of unrelated events, news stories on the gay and lesbian community in the United States were not seen as a coherent or relevant news beat, with stories emerging from a variety of different and often only tangentially related beats before sinking back into obscurity. Without any formalised beats or guidance, coverage of the gay and lesbian community was therefore at the whim of individual editors and publishers. As the examination above demonstrated, news editors were a product of their environment, and American society in this period was institutionally homophobic. For instance, the homophobic attitude of editor Abe Rosenthal and publisher Punch Sulzberger dominated the *Times'* coverage of the gay community in the 1970s, with *Times* reporter Nan Robertson claiming that:

Rosenthal never stood in the middle of the newsroom and said, "I hate fags", but the atmosphere led to defensive reporting and defensive editing [...] we censored ourselves. We knew that if we wrote about certain subjects, the stories would probably not appear in the paper. It was very insidious.¹²¹

Promoted to Managing Editor in 1970 and Executive Editor in 1977, Rosenthal's homophobic attitude seriously undermined the paper's coverage of the gay community at a crucial period in its development.¹²² However, in a sign of the importance individual personality could play in

¹²⁰ Marc Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004); Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Stuart Timmons and Lillian Faderman, *Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians* (New York: Basic Books, 2006); Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

¹²¹ Nan C. Robertson, as cited in Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 167.

¹²² Little is mentioned in Alwood's study of Rosenthal's personal feelings towards lesbians. Having attended a DOB conference in 1964, it is certain that Rosenthal felt more comfortable in the presence of

coverage, it was actually Rosenthal's homophobia that led to the *Times'* first front cover story on the topic of homosexuality. Newly promoted to Metropolitan Editor in 1963 after a long time away from New York, Rosenthal was shocked at the city's increasingly visible gay and lesbian community and ordered seasoned reporter Richard Doty to investigate.¹²³ Despite featuring only six and a half paragraphs below the fold, the article represented the first time the paper had covered the gay and lesbian community on its front page.¹²⁴ Furthermore, with over 100 paragraphs taking up almost an entire page within the newspaper itself, the article represented the most in-depth investigation of homosexuality by a mainstream newspaper at that time. Consequently, while the tone of Doty's article was incredibly negative, it nevertheless had important repercussions for wider discussions about homosexuality in this period. With its reputation for presenting 'respectable' news, the *Times'* article acted to legitimise the topic of homosexuality as a valid news story. Indeed, the number of articles printed in 1964 surpassed that of the previous three years combined and continued to grow throughout the decade.¹²⁵ In the latter half of the 1960s, for example, the *Washington Post* would commission a five part series that began on the front page of its 'Outlook' section before moving to the paper's front page where it ran consecutively for the next four days.¹²⁶ Even the more conservative *TIME* would offer their readers a discussion of the lesbian and gay community in 1966, claiming in its opening line that while homosexuality 'used to be "the

gay women than gay men, but there is little evidence to suggest that this resulted in more favourable treatment within the *New York Times*.

¹²³ Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), p. 156; Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 45.

¹²⁴ Robert C. Doty, 'Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern', *New York Times*, 17 December 1963, pp. 1, 33.

¹²⁵ 'The Third Sex', *Newsweek*, 1 June 1964, p. 76; 'Homosexuality in America', *Life*, 26 June 1964, pp. 66-67; Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 50.

¹²⁶ Jean White, 'Those Others: A Report on Homosexuality', *Washington Post*, 31 January 1965, section Outlook, pp. E1, E3; Jean White, 'Those Others II: Scientists Disagree on Basic Nature Of Homosexuality, Chance of Cure', *Washington Post*, 1 February 1965, pp. 1, 16; Jean White, 'Those Others III: Homosexuals Are in All Kinds of Jobs, Find Place in Many Levels of Society', *Washington Post*, 2 February 1965, pp. 1, 12; Jean White, 'Those Others IV: 49 States and the District Punish Overt Homosexual Acts as Crimes', *Washington Post*, 3 February 1965, pp. 1, 19; Jean White, 'Those Others V: Homosexuals' Militancy Reflected In Attacks on Ouster From U.S. Jobs', *Washington Post*, 4 February 1965, pp. 1, 22.

abominable crime not to be mentioned” [...] Today it is not only mentioned; it is freely discussed and widely analyzed’.¹²⁷

The notion that homosexuality was ‘freely discussed’ was certainly an exaggeration. Letters to *Life* magazine, for example, claimed to be ‘nauseated’ by their June 1964 special on homosexuality.¹²⁸ With readers complaining that *Life* should not ‘write about topics which other folks never discuss in polite society’, a large number of Americans no doubt still agreed with Mrs. Donald J. Rice that ‘your report on the problem of homosexuality in this country was not, in my opinion, appropriate for a family magazine’.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, despite such reservations – and the continued hesitancy in the mainstream press to cover events relating to the gay and lesbian community – these in-depth examinations represented an important breakthrough that was helping to pierce the ‘shied of invisibility’ that had previously prevented coverage.¹³⁰ More than two months before the Stonewall riots, for example, the *New York Times* printed an extended article whose very title ‘All They Talk About Is Sex, Sex, Sex’, would have been a cause for alarm a decade before.¹³¹ Focused on the work of the Institute for Sex Research (known as the Kinsey Institute after its first Director) and the Reproductive Biology Research Foundation, the lengthy article not only used previously taboo words like ‘penis’ frequently, but also included lengthy discussions of homosexuality.¹³² Claiming that the work of the two bodies had been ‘influential out of all proportion to their size’, author Tom Buckley characterised the nation as being ‘highly interested in – not to say obsessed by – sex in all its manifestations’.¹³³

This shifting attitude towards sex and sexuality in the late 1960s would seem to support Eric Schaefer’s notion of a ‘media revolution’ in the period.¹³⁴ Indeed, referring to the Institute’s

¹²⁷ ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’, *Time*, 21 January 1966
<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835069,00.html>> [accessed 11 February 2013].

¹²⁸ Arthur Demeritt, ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Life*, 17 July 1964, p. 28.

¹²⁹ Demeritt, p. 28; Mrs. Donald J. Rice, ‘Letters to the Editors’, *Life*, 17 July 1964, p. 28.

¹³⁰ Barbara Gittings, in Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* (First Run Features, 1984; Peadillo Pictures Ltd, 2010).

¹³¹ Tom Buckley, ‘All They Talk About Is Sex, Sex, Sex’, *New York Times*, 20 April 1969, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM 28–29, SM 93–106.

¹³² Buckley, p. SM 29.

¹³³ Buckley, p. SM 28.

¹³⁴ Schaefer, *Sex Scene*, p. Rear Cover.

collection of semi-pornographic and indecent material, Buckley argued that ‘much of the collection, hot stuff only 10 or 15 years ago, is today redolent of lavender and old lace’.¹³⁵ However, this notion of a rapid change in public attitudes in the latter half of the 1960s also lies in the sources that historians are consulting. While magazines such as the risqué *People Today* and *Whisper* were a far cry from the respectable *New York Times* and can hardly act as a ‘Newspaper of Record’, they were covering the public emergence of the gay and lesbian community at a time when mainstream papers refused to do so. For instance, claiming that *People Today* deserved ‘the highest praise’ for their article, ‘Exclusive! Homosexuality is BIG Business’ in April 1959, Mattachine member Gonzalo Segura Jr. informed editors that, ‘little by little, the “curtain of silence” is being lifted, but still precious few national publications have the courage to deal with homosexuality, particularly in a rational way. Your article, therefore, marks another milestone in progress’.¹³⁶

As is often the case, some of the more adventurous and groundbreaking discussions on the topic of homosexuality emerged first from the independent media. Indeed, while the *New York Times* first mentioned the Mattachine Society in 1960 – and then only in the context of President Harold Call’s appearance on British television – local television stations on the West Coast (KTTV-TV) had hosted openly gay members of the Society as early as 1954.¹³⁷ While not widely reviewed, the program nevertheless attracted some praise from magazines such as *The Billboard*, where Ed Velarde claimed the programme had ‘open[ed] the way for mature and penetrating presentations of touchy, controversial and oft-taboo but important problems via this mass medium of information’.¹³⁸ Similar advances were made in public television and radio. For example, the listener supported Pacifica network – which operated out of Berkeley, (KPFA), San Francisco (KPFB), Los Angeles (KPFK), and later New York (WBAI) – produced what many believe to be the first radio show featuring an openly gay guest in 1958 and was years

¹³⁵ Buckley, p. SM 29.

¹³⁶ Gonzalo Segura Jr. to *People Today Magazine*, 8 March 1959, Mattachine Society, Inc. of New York Records [hereafter referred to as MSNY Records, NYPL], Box 4, Folder 4, International Gay Information Center, The New York Public Library [Microfilm. New York: Research Publications International, 1998]; See also this letter from Mattachine President Albert J. De Dion: Albert J. de Dion to *Whisper Magazine*, 19 April 1960, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4.

¹³⁷ Walter H. Waggoner, ‘London TV Puts a Focus on U.S.’, *New York Times*, 28 January 1960, p. 16; The nature of the 1954 broadcast can be reconstructed from oral histories as well as reviews of the programme in print publications: Ed Velarde, ‘Confidential File (TV)’, *The Billboard*, 15 May 1954, p. 10.

¹³⁸ Velarde.

ahead of publications like the *Times* in its approach to the topic.¹³⁹ Similarly, hosting a ninety minute uninterrupted discussion between eight openly gay men in 1962, WBAI was praised by homophile leaders and mainstream journalists alike for broaching a subject that ‘if addressed to coast-to-coast masses of all ages, might pose difficulties for a network’.¹⁴⁰ The programme, as well as the resultant challenge to the station’s FCC licence, established the right of radio broadcasters across the country to tackle what many other media outlets deemed to be taboo. Similarly, San Francisco public television station KQED-TV broadcast *The Rejected* in 1961, which was received favourably by local media outlets and would be re-broadcast on educational networks across the country as late as 1964.¹⁴¹ As Edward Alwood, Steven Capsuto, and Larry Gross have shown, research into this often underutilised aspect of media coverage can provide interesting insights into early homophile activism and the diversity of media approaches towards homosexuality before Stonewall.¹⁴²

Consequently, while the reliance on mainstream papers may exaggerate the commitment of media outlets to the civil rights movement, it underestimates the willingness of some editors and producers to grapple with a new and interesting topic in a positive way. Conversely, it also ignores how certain aspects of the print media were far more willing to exploit public fear and interest in sex and sexuality through sensationalist and graphic headlines. While the *New York Times* and others had ignored or discretely excluded mentions of homosexuality, some papers were quick to jump on stories that, even tangentially, involved homosexuality. As Martin Meeker has argued, while established outlets tended to avoid controversial topics, ‘some of [the] most interesting innovations in content [...] appear first and most fully in communication media that are not the newest or technologically most innovative but that are in danger of

¹³⁹ ‘Mattachine Breaks Through the Conspiracy of Silence’, *The Ladder*, October 1959, pp. 5–8, 16–20; ‘KPFA Broadcast Repeated, Letters Read’, *Mattachine Newsletter: Los Angeles Area Council*, February 1959, p. 2, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 7, Folder 20.

¹⁴⁰ Jack Gould, ‘Taboo Is Broken: Live and Let Live on WBAI Presents Homosexuals Discussing Problems’, *New York Times*, 16 July 1962, section Radio and Television, p. 47; John Leroy, ‘The New Publicity Break: Where Do We Go From Here?’, *The Ladder*, December 1962, pp. 16–17.

¹⁴¹ Stephen Tropiano, *The Prime Time Closet: A History of Gays and Lesbians on TV* (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2002), pp. 5–7.

¹⁴² Edward Alwood, ‘A Gift of Gab: How Independent Broadcasters Gave Gay Pioneers A Chance to Be Heard’, in *Media Q: Media/Queered*, ed. by Kevin G. Barnhurst (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 27–44; Alwood, *Straight News*, pp. 17–98; Steven Capsuto, *Alternate Channels: The Uncensored Story of Gay and Lesbian Images on Radio and Television, 1930s to the Present* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2000), pp. 13–58; Larry Gross, *Up from Invisibility Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America*, E-book (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 21–40.

losing audiences to newer media'.¹⁴³ Finding that they could profit from the public's fear and interest in topics often ignored by mainstream papers, some media outlets used coverage of homosexuality and other topics to attract popular audiences.¹⁴⁴

While the sensationalised coverage of tabloid publications was rarely positive, it can shed light on important battles and events at a time when the archives of more 'respectable' mainstream outlets were conspicuously silent. Indeed, by venerating the *Times* and ignoring tabloids like the *New York Daily News*, historians not only encourage dichotomous histories of the movement centred on Stonewall, but also miss out on some of the most in-depth – and deeply homophobic – coverage of the riots themselves. Referring to the 'Queen Bees' who stood 'bra-strap to bra-strap against an invasion of the helmeted Tactical Police Force', the *Daily News* not only devoted greater coverage to Stonewall, but also suggested – albeit in incredibly patronising terms – that the riots had fundamentally shifted the nature of police–community relations in the city.¹⁴⁵ Historical enquiry into past representations of sex and sexuality that rely on the respectable mainstream press, therefore, are not only limiting their source material, but also ignore a major source of information for millions of Americans.¹⁴⁶ This is especially important given the documented role that even the most negative of articles could play in alerting gay men and women around the country to the presence of a larger community outside of their own isolated existences.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

Focused on the creation or absence of beats within mainstream journalism, these case studies have demonstrated how the regional focus of supposedly national outlets has encouraged the

¹⁴³ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 256.

¹⁴⁴ Meeker, p. 112.

¹⁴⁵ Jerry Lisker, 'Homo Nest Raided: Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad', *New York Daily News*, 6 July 1969 <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/primary-resources/stonewall-queen-bees/>> [accessed 1 August 2014].

¹⁴⁶ Classifying both the *New York Post* and the *New York Daily News* as 'mainstream' – but excluding the *Village Voice*, which they classified as 'alternative' – Armstrong and Crage fail to define the criteria by which these outlets were selected and relegate the full break down of this information to a separate online supplement: Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, 'Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth', *American Sociological Review*, 71.5 (2006), 724–51 (p. 32, fn 8).

¹⁴⁷ Schiller and Rosenberg.

flawed periodization of the civil rights and homophile movements of the “Long 1960s”. Based exclusively in the North, mainstream publications were initially reluctant to commit resources to the South and instead chose to rely on the wire press for coverage of all but the most major of Southern news. Furthermore, when Northern outlets eventually decided to invest in the race beat, this commitment and the news it produced continued to reflect white, Northern conceptions of the black freedom struggle. As the chapter has demonstrated, the race beat has created a false impression that activism in the South emerged spontaneously in the mid-to-late 1950s just as mainstream outlets were conveniently increasing their own coverage. In the process, mainstream coverage not only denies the agency of an earlier generation of activists, but also equates the civil rights movement with a particular set of tactics and events that have artificially limited the nature and scope of the black freedom struggle.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, by concentrating on racial discrimination in the South, mainstream accounts continued to deny legitimacy to the political and social demands of African American communities in the North before the Watts Riot of 1965.

Furthermore, commitments to ‘national’ coverage didn’t change the fact that the *New York Times* and other mainstream outlets on the East coast ‘could not possibly cover California for Californians or Texas for Texans’.¹⁴⁹ This regionality is particularly important given the conception of gay men and lesbians as a local problem to be discreetly tolerated or punitively dealt with by local law enforcement. As a result, coverage of homosexuality rarely qualified as national news and early activism that took place outside of Manhattan and the handful of cities that hosted other mainstream outlets was overlooked. For instance, the *New York Times*, *TIME*, and *Life* failed to carry a single story on the 1954 panic in Miami, hiding the early activism of *ONE Magazine* as well as the repressive attitude taken by officials in the face of such advocacy from their readers. Similarly, despite the attempts of homophile leaders to encourage coverage, the *Times*’ failure to cover the early activities of the Mattachine Society in the 1950s can present the decade as being devoid of homophile activism. In contrast, smaller newspapers such as the *Denver Post* often took greater interest when organisations hosted

¹⁴⁸ Doug McAdam and others, “‘There Will Be Fighting in the Streets’: The Distorting Lens of Social Movement Theory”, *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 10 (2005), 1–18.

¹⁴⁹ Frankel, p. 509.

events in their cities. With homophiles praising all seven articles carried in the *Denver Post* and *Rocky Mountain News* on the Mattachine's 1959 convention for 'presenting, honestly and fairly, the aims of the Society and the homophile movement', a concentration on the *Times* can ignore the positive impact that early homophile activism had in breaking the 'conspiracy of silence' over gay and lesbian lives.¹⁵⁰ Conversely, with several Denver Mattachine organisers facing raids and arrests in the wake of the conference, it also ignores the potential repercussions of such success.¹⁵¹ When dealing with media coverage of the black freedom struggle and the gay and lesbian community, therefore, it is important to recognise the differences between mainstream outlets and other forms of journalism. While obviously still beholden to commercial concerns, the *Times* and other mainstream outlets often saw their job as giving audiences what they needed to know, not necessarily what they wanted to hear. As such, they followed different journalistic styles than tabloid publications that sought to sensationalise the news and titillate their audiences.

For instance, despite being published in 1883, Rider's claim that 'no man may rightly print and publish that which he would not tell his wife and children face to face' was still a core operating principle at the *New York Times* over ninety years later.¹⁵² Indeed, when Cliff Jahr's 1975 investigation of a gay cruise set off a firestorm at the *Times*, it was the publisher's mother, Iphigene Bertha Ochs, who first raised objections to the piece.¹⁵³ Having positioned their publication above the fray of yellow journalism in the late-nineteenth century, Frankel has claimed that the papers owners had 'always insisted on the paper's adherence to "family values"'.¹⁵⁴ Such practices were common to other mainstream outlets that often treated the large gay and lesbian communities in their cities with a mixture of discreet tolerance and quiet contempt. This tendency did not disappear during the 1960s, with Mike Wallace introducing CBS's 1967 investigation of homosexuality by claiming that 'even in this era of bold sexual morays, it remains a subject that people find disturbing, embarrassing, and there is reluctance

¹⁵⁰ 'Mattachine Breaks Through the Conspiracy of Silence.'

¹⁵¹ Emilio, pp. 120–1.

¹⁵² Rider, p. 476.

¹⁵³ Cliff Jahr, 'The All-Gay Cruise: Prejudice and Pride', *New York Times*, 6 April 1975, section Travel And Resorts; For discussions of the fallout from the piece see Alwood, *Straight News*, pp. 162–4; Joseph C. Goulden, *Fit to Print: A.M. Rosenthal and His Times* (Secaucus: L. Stuart, 1988), pp. 396–8; Frankel, pp. 473–4.

¹⁵⁴ Frankel, p. 497.

to discuss it'.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, even in the memoirs of mainstream journalists such as Corry – who claims to have covered the sex beat personally in the late 1960s – this shield of invisibility remains.

The continued silence of the *Times*, however, is especially important because of its reputation amongst other mainstream outlets and influential decision makers. As an editorial in *OutWeek* argued in 1989:

The *Times* is the nation's most influential newspaper, the supreme journalistic court that legitimizes trends, events, and people in our society. Presidents and senators, scientists and philanthropists, editors and opinion makers all read it, and then often act on what they read. Sadly, if it isn't in the *Times*, then it isn't actually real to many in power.¹⁵⁶

With this influence reflected in the frequency with which the record of the *Times* is used in historical research, it is important to note how the unique blend of media logistics and individual prejudice left America's 'Newspaper of Record' years behind other, less respected outlets. While tabloid coverage was rarely positive, a focus on mainstream press data overlooks alternative trends in journalism that can add to our understanding of the barriers faced by the early homophile movement and the lives of gay men and women in this period. Similarly, by overlooking the limited gains that homophile activists made in public television and radio in the 1950s, any concentration on mainstream records ignores the genuine attempts by homophile activists to break down this shield and put across their views to the American public.

In contrast, while the Southern civil rights movement may not have directly impacted the lives of many of their readers, national publications such as *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* felt obligated to explain events to their audience. As Frankel has argued, while some metropolitan newspapers such as the *Chicago Tribune*, 'operated with a geographical state of mind', others defined themselves demographically, attempting to attract an educated class of readers regardless of where they lived.¹⁵⁷ Appealing to a national audience, Frankel claims that these outlets 'featured the national, foreign, cultural, and business news that was shortchanged in

¹⁵⁵ Mike Wallace in 'The Homosexuals', *CBS Reports* (CBS, 1967).

¹⁵⁶ 'The *Times* and Our Lives', *OutWeek*, 7 August 1989, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Frankel, p. 509.

most other newspapers'.¹⁵⁸ Committing considerable financial resources to the story during the 1950s and 1960s, these mainstream publications spent far more time discussing the civil rights movement than local outlets such as the *Kansas City Star*. With many of these smaller outlets reacting negatively when the movement reached the doors and streets of their readers, the mainstream media record can exaggerate the enthusiasm for civil rights activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the subsequent strength of the 'backlash' against such activism in the latter half of the decade.

Finally, this study has also demonstrated the role that individual editors and publishers played in the culture of mainstream journalism and the subsequent decisions about what news was, and was not, 'fit to print'. Importantly, this effect is both personal and unpredictable and requires a detailed examination of cases on an individual basis. For instance, while *Newsweek* Editor Osborne Elliott and *New York Post* owner Dorothy Schiff both pioneered coverage of the Southern movement in the white press, the former continued to secure greater and more positive coverage of the civil rights movement as the decade wore on while the latter increasingly reflected the prejudices of her white Northern audience. By taking such a qualitative approach, studies can highlight the idiosyncrasies of coverage; such as how the same homophobia that erected a 'shield of invisibility' around New York's gay and lesbian community at the *Times* was responsible for the first real crack in that shield in 1963. Indeed, while the homophobia of men like Abe Rosenthal and Punch Sulzberger would rightly begin to be questioned by the *San Francisco Examiner* and other papers in the 1980s, the *Times'* power to legitimise previously controversial topics is an important factor in coverage of the gay men and women in 1960s.¹⁵⁹

Importantly, while gay men would increasingly break through the shield of invisibility in this period, coverage continued to minimise and ignore the contributions of lesbians who were unable to overcome the sexist nature of the mainstream press in this period. While the higher arrest rates for gay men in this period could explain their disproportionate appearance in crime-beat related stories, their dominance of more general examinations of homosexuality

¹⁵⁸ Frankel, p. 509.

¹⁵⁹ 'The *Times* and Our Lives', p. 4.

would suggest that gender-based discrimination played an important role in news coverage. Indeed, whether a result of the wider dismissal of women as news producers, or as a specific response to the threat posed by lesbianism, it is clear that gay men and lesbians did not receive equal coverage in this period. For instance, while Webster Schott's 1967 *New York Times Magazine* article was one of the most positive and lengthy discussions of homosexuality to appear in the paper, it dealt almost exclusively with male homosexuality.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, claiming that his study had been 'confined to male homosexuality', discussion of lesbians in Doty's 1963 article was limited to just two sentences. Indeed, even when coverage of the lesbian community did emerge, it was often confined to sections that news executives deemed to be for a predominantly female audience.¹⁶¹ Such minimisation was not confined to print media. While Wicker's appearance on the *Les Crane Show* in 1964 was considered a breakthrough for homophiles in New York, its focus on gay men was meant to be balanced by a nationally syndicated follow-up episode that would discuss the particular issues facing lesbians. Cancelled in the face of complaints by network affiliates, the show would never air.¹⁶² Progress, therefore, did not reach all members of the community and did not develop in linear or universal ways. Indeed, as the next chapter demonstrates, while the media could encourage certain kinds of spectacular protest, the nature of mainstream coverage often acted to silence particular voices and attach value to certain events while ignoring others with little regard for how these experiences were viewed by those involved.

¹⁶⁰ Webster Schott, 'Civil Rights and the Homosexual: A 4-Million Minority Asks for Equal Rights', *New York Times*, 12 November 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM 44–45, 47–54, 59–72.

¹⁶¹ Enid Nemy, 'The Woman Homosexual: More Assertive, Less Willing to Hide', *New York Times*, 17 November 1969, section Food, Fashions, Family, Furnishings, p. 62; Natalie Jaffe, 'No Male-Female Parallel Found for Homosexuals', *New York Times*, 1 May 1966, p. 116.

¹⁶² 'Homosexual Women Hear Psychologists', *New York Times*, 21 June 1964, p. 54; Barbara Gittings to John Quigley, 21 November 1964, Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen Gay History Papers [hereafter referred to as Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers], Box 63 Folder 1, NYPL.

Chapter Three: News Pegs, Media Waves, and Fatigue

‘Newspapermen [...] pursue a subject only about as far as, and rarely much further than, the passing public interest. They are servants to a fickle public; they must seize its attention by novelty, hold it by new injections of interest, and then move on to something else. A newspaper can risk boring its public at its own peril’
(Thomas Griffith, 1959)¹

‘Alongside any day’s “news”, there is a continuous and evolving *definition of what constitutes news* at any significant historical moment’
(Stuart Hall, 1975)²

While mainstream newspapers carried editorials and syndicated columns that expressed opinions on the major subjects of the day, most news coverage focused on tangible events and did so in a way that rejected forthright and open expressions of opinion or speculation. General reporters working to tight deadlines, for example, often lacked the ability – or the will – to draw wider conclusions from the events they covered. Furthermore, unless directed to by an editor, these journalists were also unlikely to place events within a longer narrative or consider the significance of any event outside of its immediate impact. In contrast, the relationships that experienced beat correspondents built with their sources often granted them an insight into the genesis and impact of particular events and developments. However, occurring off the record or consisting of unsubstantiated rumour, reporters were not able to put much of this ‘unwriteable discourse’ into their articles without fear of libel charges or alienating important contacts.³ Consequently, beat journalists were often on the lookout for particular kinds of events – known as ‘news pegs’ – upon which major trends or ideas could be hung.⁴ These events would then act as a vehicle through which publications could report evolutions in ideas or tactics that actually had a much longer genesis. In the process, news

¹ Thomas Griffith, ‘The Pursuit of Journalism’, *Nieman Reports*, January 1959
<<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102000/1959-The-Pursuit-of-Journalism.aspx>>
[accessed 20 August 2014].

² Stuart Hall, ‘Introduction’, in *Paper Voices: The Popular Press and Social Change, 1935-1965*, ed. by A. C. H. Smith (London: Chatto & Windus, 1975), pp. 11–24 (p. 16). Emphasis in Original.

³ Mark Allen Peterson, ‘Getting to the Story: Unwriteable Discourse and Interpretive Practice in American Journalism’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 74 (2001), 201–11.

⁴ Herbert J. Gans, *Democracy and the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 53.

coverage transformed these events from the mundane to the significant, imbuing them with a symbolic importance that often emerged from journalistic protocol rather than social activism.

If single events could be used as a peg for wider change, the media could also choose to package a number of events together as a sign of a new 'wave' or 'trend' that was developing in society. Importantly, given that the event's participants may not have viewed their actions as part of any larger movement or programme, the significance of each additional story often relied on journalistic practices and editorial interests. In his examination of a reported wave of crime against the elderly in New York, for instance, Mark Fishman has argued that, 'news organizations created the wave, not in the sense that they invented crimes, but in the sense that they gave a determinant form and content to all the incidents they reported'.⁵ Whether attempting to make sense of similar but disparate events or using chosen incidents as a way of introducing new narratives, journalists and their editors were able to give meaning to events that would not necessarily have been recognised or approved of by those involved. This did not mean, however, that activists played no part in this process of signification. Public transformations in action and rhetoric were often consciously planned by organisations who were attempting to influence media narratives. Indeed, while never having full control over the interpretation of their rhetoric and actions, activists were important participants in the discussion.

With limited space available in even the largest publications, editors needed to be sure that any story they published would be of interest to readers. Consequently, when selecting news stories, publications tended to focus disproportionately on large scale and spectacular events. For social activists looking to gain popularity and recognition for their movement and its aims, this trend could be problematic. For instance, with 'reporters [...] accustomed to covering events, not issues', second wave feminists found that 'early calls for increasing gender consciousness were not viewed as newsworthy', whereas spectacles such as the 'trashing of undergarments' during the Miss America Pageant in 1968 received headline coverage.⁶

⁵ Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), p. 10.

⁶ Maryann Barakso and Brian F. Schaffner, 'Winning Coverage: News Media Portrayals of the Women's Movement, 1969-2004', *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11 (2006), 22-44 (p. 27); Charlotte Curtis, 'Miss America Pageant Is Picketed by 100 Women', *New York Times*, 8 September 1968,

Edward Morgan has argued that this focus on spectacle demonstrates how the mainstream media performed ‘a function of entertaining rather than educating its viewers to a broader understanding of themselves and their world’.⁷ Importantly, with stories on particular movements competing with the thousands of other events that took place each day, this focus on entertainment value made some activities intrinsically more publishable than others. Furthermore, with a set amount of column inches to fill each day – commonly referred to as the ‘news hole’ – the definition of ‘newsworthy’ was in constant flux.⁸ As a result, no event could be truly guaranteed coverage – further complicating efforts to quantify why certain events appeared while others did not.⁹ Scholars utilising media data, therefore, need to be aware of the potential distortions in this record.

In an increasingly competitive and global news market, events did not just need to be spectacular, they also needed to be fresh.¹⁰ For instance, in their investigation of the 1969 Santa Barbara oil spill, Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester found that even local papers failed to cover oil-spill related events that were more than one day old.¹¹ A story’s ‘freshness’, however, was not simply judged on the currency of the event itself, but also the wider narrative in which it was set, with the newsworthiness of a particular event decreasing as its frequency or duration increased. Indeed, research by sociologists Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia found that ‘attention cycles reflect changing demands from an audience, which shift from excitement to fatigue as a topic is reported repeatedly’.¹² While exact patterns varied between news stories, this general trend of media fatigue was a constant

p. 81; ‘People: Sep. 13, 1968’, *TIME*, 13 September 1968

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/printout/0,8816,838679,00.html>> [accessed 23 January 2015].

⁷ Edward P. Morgan, ‘The Good, the Bad, and the Forgotten: Media Culture and Public Memory of the Civil Rights Movement’, in *The Civil Rights Movement in American Memory*, ed. by Renee C. Ramano and Leigh Raiford (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), pp. 137–66 (pp. 139–140).

⁸ Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan, *Keywords In News And Journalism Studies* (Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education, 2010), p. 85.

⁹ John T. Woolley, ‘Using Media-Based Data in Studies of Politics’, *American Journal of Political Science*, 44 (2000), 156–73 (p. 159).

¹⁰ Gans, p. 50.

¹¹ Harvey Molotch and Marilyn Lester, ‘Accidental News: The Great Oil Spill as Local Occurrence and National Event’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 81 (1975), 235–60 (p. 242, fn 9).

¹² Daniel J. Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia, ‘All the Rioting That’s Fit to Print: Selection Effects in National Newspaper Coverage of Civil Disorders, 1968-1969’, *American Sociological Review*, 69 (2004), 519–43 (p. 538).

feature of the media landscape. As the cultural theorist Stuart Hall has put it, ‘even the best news stories have only a brief half-life’.¹³

If the focus on the spectacular within the media record exaggerated the large over the small, media fatigue presented social movements through a lens of escalation that ignored the widespread continuation of moderate protest in favour of searching out new and exciting conflicts.¹⁴ Importantly for social movements, journalism professor Jack Lyle also claims that as time and coverage intensity passes, ‘the citizen-reader assumes that the crises have been successfully resolved as they no longer appear in the media’.¹⁵ While this chapter deals with the specific impact of these practices on SNCC, MSNY, and MSW, media fatigue and sensationalism affected all social movements and encouraged a particular type of movement trajectory. This was often not a conscious act on the part of media institutions, but it was something that many activists comprehended and engaged with. Furthermore, when this engagement resulted in greater coverage and publicity, it not only reinforced the need for such escalation, but also helped influence which organisations and movements initially attracted scholarly attention. Taking cues from popular culture and utilising ‘mainstream’ records because of their professed ability to provide an accurate record of events, early historical scholarship created and reinforced powerful narratives that have proven remarkably resistant to the efforts of revisionist scholars.¹⁶

Importantly, the peaks and troughs of the media cycle did not always correlate to the events they were covering. Fishman’s study, for instance, found that news coverage of crimes against the elderly emerged and increased at a time when police statistics showed that these crimes

¹³ Stuart Hall, p. 11; See also Jack Lyle, ‘Introduction’, in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. ix – xviii (p. xii).

¹⁴ For a wider discussion of media fatigue in the 1960s, see G. Ray Funkhouser, ‘The Issues of the Sixties: An Exploratory Study in the Dynamics of Public Opinion’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37 (1973), 62–75.

¹⁵ Lyle, ‘Introduction’, p. xii.

¹⁶ For examples of these narratives, see: Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America* (New York: Free Press, 1989); Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987); The dominance of certain organisations is also a result of who writes these early narratives: Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971); Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973); For a critique of early 1960s historiography more generally, see: Rick Perlstein, ‘Who Owns The Sixties?’, *Lingua Franca*, 1996 <<http://linguafranca.mirror.theinfo.org/9605/sixties.html>> [accessed 24 February 2012].

were actually falling.¹⁷ Importantly, reporters rarely knew – and were not necessarily concerned with – whether media cycles closely followed the actual trajectory of events. Instead, as Fishman argues, ‘for a wave of publicity to have existed there need only have been *some* incidents on the streets and considerable concern about them among those sources the media relied upon’.¹⁸ While speaking specifically about crime, Fishman’s conclusions are replicated in coverage of both the civil and gay rights movements of the 1960s. However, while these movements faced similar struggles, and increasingly had to balance the logistical needs of the press and the purity of their message, the nature of the two movements meant dramatic differences in coverage.

I

As we have seen, understanding how the media used certain events to herald the beginning of a new phase in the black freedom struggle is crucial to understanding the ‘race beat’ and the narrow periodization of the civil rights movement itself. However, while the media was apt to use events such as the *Brown* decision, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, or the sit-ins as pegs upon which the movement’s beginning could be hung, it was also willing to use certain events to signal its demise. Importantly, while scholars such as Stephen Tuck and Jacquelyn Dowd-Hall have demonstrated the longevity of African American activism, many mainstream accounts still view the Voting Rights Act and the Watts Riot of 1965 as a decisive break in the movement that came to an end with the murder of Martin Luther King Jr.¹⁹

For SNCC this decisive break is normally dated to the election of Stokely Carmichael in May 1966 and the March Against Fear a month later. The brainchild of James Meredith – who had

¹⁷ Fishman, p. 5.

¹⁸ Fishman, p. 12.

¹⁹ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, ‘The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past’, *The Journal of American History*, 91 (2005), 1233–63; Stephen Tuck, ‘“We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left Off”: The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43 (2008), 637–54; This notion of a ‘Long 1960s’ has since expanded to include a variety of social protest movements. For examples see Simon Hall, ‘Protest Movements in the 1970s: The Long 1960s’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43 (2008), 655–72; Dan Berger, *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2010); For examples of recent works that still subscribe to traditional periodisations see Diane McWhorter, *A Dream of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement from 1954 to 1968* (New York: Scholastic, 2004); Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996).

been the main protagonist in the desegregation of Ole Miss in 1962 – the original March Against Fear was a one-man mission from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi. While initial coverage was fairly muted, the March made national and international headlines after Meredith was shot crossing the border into Mississippi on the second day of his journey in June 1966.²⁰ In a pattern that had repeated itself throughout the 1960s, activists within SNCC and CORE responded to white violence by pouring resources and personnel into the March. Although the SCLC also decided to join the March, the NAACP and the Urban League refused to co-operate with the Louisiana based Deacons for Defense – a group of army veterans who had been brought in to protect marchers.²¹ The public division between civil rights organisations – as well as the open use of armed self-defence – led many in the media to present the March as a decisive break in a previously non-violent and unified Southern movement. Furthermore, representing the first time that SNCC had articulated its Black Power slogan in such a popular forum, the responsibility for this division was most often laid at the door of Carmichael and other militants who pushed too far and too fast for the more ‘responsible’ African American leadership. Such narratives also dominated early histories of the civil rights movement which, historian Peniel Joseph argues, ‘differed more in their level of condemnation than in their analysis of the Black Power movement’s self-destructive impact’.²²

As decades of revisionist research has shown, however, SNCC’s conduct on the Meredith March, including its espousal of the slogan ‘Black Power’, was not new. Instead it was the

²⁰ Again, the *New York Times* gave far greater coverage than other mainstream outlets, running a number of small articles before publishing a front-page (below-the-fold) story on the day of the march itself: ‘Meredith Sets Walk to Help Negro Vote’, *New York Times*, 23 May 1966, p. 27; ‘Meredith to Start Mississippi March’, *New York Times*, 1 June 1966, p. 24; Edward C. Burks, ‘Meredith Begins Vote March Today: Leaves Memphis on 220-Mile Hike Through Mississippi’, *New York Times*, 5 June 1966, p. 78; Roy Reed, ‘Meredith Begins Mississippi Walk to Combat Fear’, *New York Times*, 6 June 1966, Late City edition, pp. 1, 27; In contrast, *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *TIME* only covered the March after Meredith had been shot and SNCC, CORE, and the SCLC had joined the March: ‘A Walk in the South to Conquer Old Fears’, *Life*, 17 June 1966, pp. 30–35; ‘Civil Rights: Heat on Highway 51’, *TIME*, 17 June 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,899204,00.html>> [accessed 7 February 2015]; ‘The Meredith March Began’, *Newsweek*, 20 June 1966, pp. 27–31.

²¹ For more, see Lance E. Hill, *Deacons for Defense* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

²² Peniel E. Joseph, ‘The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field’, *The Journal of American History*, 96 (2009), 751–77 (p. 751); For examples of works that condemn Black Power see: Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, 2nd edn (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1996); Fairclough.

accumulation of changes that had been going on throughout the organisation, and indeed the movement, for years.²³ As Carmichael later argued:

We certainly did not change the entire direction of the black movement or the attitudes of black American merely by combining two simple words at a rally in Greenwood, Mississippi [...] The movement had been growing and changing. It had changed, was changing, needed to change, and would change, independent of any single thing SNCC – or anyone else – said or did. Period. That’s inevitable. That’s politics.²⁴

Importantly, much of this change was known to seasoned race beat reporters. Indeed, the underlying tension between Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and activists within SNCC had been present since the sit-ins of 1960 and was not a secret to anyone familiar with the movement.²⁵

As political commentator and journalist Walter Lippmann has argued, however, the stylistic form of journalism required that ‘something definite must occur that has unmistakable form’.²⁶ For many race beat journalists, this ‘unmistakable form’ was the Meredith March.

While the March was certainly not the first time that the mainstream press had covered movement division, it was the first time that division was the main focus of their coverage. The *New York Times*, for example, argued that the Meredith March was ‘plagued with discontent and arguments among leaders almost from the start’, while *TIME* claimed that the debate over Black Power, ‘all but overshadowed the Mississippi March’.²⁷ Indeed, the focus on division was such that Meredith complained to the *New York Times* that ‘from what you’ve seen on television and what you have read in the newspapers you might assume that I had

²³ Aram Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014); Hasan Kwame Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Charles M. Payne, *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

²⁴ Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 524.

²⁵ Clifton Daniel to Harold Farber, 8 May 1961, New York Times Company Records, National Desk Records, Box 2 Folder 21, NYPL.

²⁶ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1922; repr. New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1997), p. 215.

²⁷ United Press International, ‘Dr. King’s Group Plans Solo Drive’, *New York Times*, 29 June 1966, p. 29; ‘Civil Rights: The New Racism’, *TIME*, 1 July 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835847,00.html>> [accessed 11 October 2014].

been shot by a Negro, since all you've been hearing is about the Negroes being divided'.²⁸ Arguing that 'dissension was a sought-after theme', journalist Paul Good has claimed that fellow reporters purposefully positioned the Meredith March as a peg for longer standing tensions.²⁹ Covering the March for the Southern Regional Council's journal the *New South*, Good has recounted how mainstream journalists spent much of their time in news trucks before running 'like flushed quail' when tensions arose.³⁰ In doing so, journalists helped portray movement unity as having been 'shattered by the rising cry of "Black Power"' and overemphasised the role that the slogan played in movement division.³¹ As Good argued a year later, by using the Meredith March as a peg for growing division the media obscured the fact that, 'the movement like a gem scored for cutting, had long been ready to come apart and Black Power supplied the final tap'.³² Importantly, while this critique appeared in the *New York Times*, it was carried within the paper's Sunday magazine, while the earlier stories on division had been carried on the front page of both the main paper and the editorial section.³³

Pointing to the importance of definable and reportable breaks in the movement, Fred Powledge argued in *Life* in 1972 that, 'it never really was news that all the big civil rights leaders distrusted one another. It is news only when one of them acknowledges the frictions and tries to explain what caused them'.³⁴ However, while division was 'sure to arise', because civil rights organisations were 'downright poor and competing for contributions', it was often

²⁸ Gene Roberts, '12,000 End Rights March to Jackson', *New York Times*, 27 June 1966, pp. 1, 29.

²⁹ Paul Good, *The Trouble I've Seen: White Journalist/Black Movement* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1975), pp. 256–7.

³⁰ Paul Good, "'The Meredith March'", *New South*, Summer 1966', in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 495–515 (p. 500).

³¹ 'Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy', *New York Times*, 10 July 1966, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E1; 'Civil Rights: At the Breaking Point', *TIME*, 15 July 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835991,00.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013]; 'Civil Rights: Ahead of Its Time', *TIME*, 30 September 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,836425,00.html>> [accessed 3 June 2013].

³² Paul Good, 'Odyssey of a Man - And a Movement', *New York Times*, 25 June 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM3, 44–47 (p. SM3).

³³ Good, 'Odyssey of a Man - And a Movement', pp. SM3, SM44–7; M. S. Handler, 'Wilkins Says Black Power Leads Only to Black Death', *New York Times*, 6 July 1966, pp. 1, 14; 'Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy', p. E1.

³⁴ Fred Powledge, 'From Little Rock to Here and Now', *Life*, 1 September 1972, p. 20; For scholarly discussions of these tensions see: Nancy J. Weiss, 'Creative Tensions in the Leadership of the Civil Rights Movement', in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. by Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), pp. 39–55.

denied by civil rights organisations, thereby starving these stories of publishable material.³⁵ For instance, despite Wilkins' negative feelings towards King being known even to officials in the White House, his vigorous assertion on national television in July 1963 that 'anybody who bets on a Negro split is going to lose a bundle' helped to deflect stories that had pointed out the tensions arising from the Birmingham Campaign.³⁶ With King also claiming that 'we are more united than ever before', this united front was a calculated attempt to prevent the kind of lurid headlines that James Farmer complained had painted honest tactical discussions as 'warfare'.³⁷

Despite being the focus of many stories about division within the movement, SNCC also participated in this united front. In July 1963, Julian Bond told supporters that SNCC was 'as concerned as you are with seeming differences between the major civil rights groups', going on to assure them that, 'the differences we may have are differences in method and technique, not in our goals'.³⁸ This public show of unity was also enforced within the organisation, with a 1964 communication manual instructing field workers that 'no one should ever depreciate the work of any organization or individual in Mississippi or elsewhere'.³⁹ While coverage of division – which often cited anonymous civil rights leaders and activists – was not rare, this official policy restricted the damage that such reporting could cause. For instance, *Newsweek* correspondent Joe Cumming told his New York office that during preparations for the Selma March in 1965 there was 'a sub-theme that ran almost unnoticed through the week – a rivalry between SCLC in Selma with its clergy and SNCC in Montgomery with [its]

³⁵ 'Integration: Who Won What?', *Newsweek*, 1 January 1962, pp. 13–14 (p. 14); See also 'Integration: Hotter Fires', *Newsweek*, 1 July 1963, pp. 19–21.

³⁶ David J. Garrow, 'Commentary', in *The Civil Rights Movement in America*, ed. by Charles W. Eagles (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1986), pp. 55–64; *Transcript of National Educational Television's 'Freedom Now'*, *National Educational Television and Radio Center*, 23 July 1963, p. 446, Series A.IV.134, Reel 6 Slide 440–54, SNCC Papers.

³⁷ *Transcript of National Educational Television's 'Freedom Now'*, *National Educational Television and Radio Center*, pp. 446–7; 'Explosion in Alabama', *Newsweek*, 20 May 1963, pp. 25–27; For other examples see: 'Civil Rights: What Next?', *Newsweek*, 23 November 1964, pp. 36–37; Joanne Grant, 'Negro Rights Groups Divided on Tactics', *National Guardian*, 27 February 1965, Series A.VIII.283, Reel 22 Slide 1077, SNCC Papers.

³⁸ Horace Julian Bond, July 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 6, SNCC Papers.

³⁹ *Printed Communication Manual*, Summer 1964, p. 984, Series A.VII.4, Reel 14 Slide 983–93, SNCC Papers.

students'.⁴⁰ However, Cumming also claimed that this division was 'hard to prove because on the surface they present a solid front'.⁴¹ This didn't mean that *Newsweek* or other mainstream outlets ignored division. Indeed, the *New York Times* even went as far as Washington D.C. to find an SCLC affiliated leader willing to openly criticise SNCC's activism during the Selma campaign.⁴² However, while Cumming felt that there was 'enough evidence to make the assertion', division in Selma was not made the major peg of mainstream coverage.⁴³

In contrast, official, on-the-record quotes taken from Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young during the Meredith March allowed mainstream reporters to extensively report on the open division within the movement. Indeed, in a number of articles, the *New York Times* cited the former calling Black Power 'the father of hatred and the mother of violence' and dismissing SNCC's programme as, '[offering] a disadvantaged minority little except the chance to shrivel and die'.⁴⁴ Again, open division was not entirely new, especially when emerging from Wilkins, who had criticised and even red-baited SNCC and other militant organisations earlier in the decade.⁴⁵ The scale and ferocity of Wilkins' attacks in the wake of Black Power, however, helped cement the idea that the slogan and its proponents represented a major break with the 'mainstream' of the movement.

The animosity created by the role that Wilkins and Young played in subsequent coverage is clear in Carmichael's autobiography, in which he states that:

Had they "washed their hands" of the march in private and kept their mouths shut about what, after all, were principled disagreements *within*

⁴⁰ Joe Cumming, 'Re Civil Rights', 19 March 1965, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 43 Folder 13, MARBL.

⁴¹ Cumming, 'Re Civil Rights.'

⁴² Robert B. Semple, 'Aide of Dr. King Scores Student Rights Group: Pastor in Capital Criticizes S.N.C.C. for "Radicalism"', *New York Times*, 22 March 1965, p. 27.

⁴³ "'An American Tragedy'", *Newsweek*, 22 March 1965, pp. 18–21; 'On to Montgomery', *Newsweek*, 29 March 1965, pp. 21–22.

⁴⁴ Roy Wilkins, as cited in 'Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy', p. E1; Roy Wilkins, as cited in Handler, 'Wilkins Says Black Power Leads Only to Black Death', p. 1.

⁴⁵ 'Races: Confused Crusade', *TIME*, 12 January 1962

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,828904,00.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013]; 'Integration: Hotter Fires', p. 20; John Herbers, 'N.A.A.C.P. Weighs Quitting Council: Decision to Be Made on Affiliation in Mississippi', *New York Times*, 1 December 1964, p. 44; Fred Powledge, 'N.A.A.C.P. to Hold Citizenship Clinics', *New York Times*, 5 January 1965, pp. 1, 20; Fred Powledge, 'Dispute on Mississippi Struggle Threatens to Split Rights Drive', *New York Times*, 6 January 1965, p. 28; 'Civil Rights: Waving the Red Flag', *Newsweek*, 12 April 1965, pp. 30–31 (p. 31).

the movement, the sensation-seeking press may not have run hog wild the way it did in reporting the march.⁴⁶

Carmichael and SNCC, however, are clearly implicated in popularising and cementing the idea of a clear divide between civil rights groups. While critiquing the media for creating a ‘battle of [the] slogans’ in which he and King were reduced to the role of ‘high school cheerleaders’, Carmichael overlooks the fact that SNCC and SCLC workers on the March actively played such roles – attempting to get the crowd to embrace their organisations’ slogans by chanting across one another during rallies.⁴⁷ Indeed, Carmichael’s condemnation of Wilkins and Young is further complicated by his admission to journalist Milton Viorst that he had purposefully alienated the two leaders during pre-March negotiations; ‘I started acting crazy, cursing real bad...we wanted to let them know it would be impossible to work with us...Young and Wilkins fell completely into the trap and stormed out of there’.⁴⁸ Consequently, while Carmichael criticises Young and Wilkins for airing the movement’s dirty laundry in public, the unusually strong condemnation of Black Power must be seen in the context of similarly strong and personal attacks launched by Carmichael and SNCC before the March.

Importantly, when Wilkins and the NAACP eventually realised both the damage that this rift had caused and the popularity of the Black Power slogan amongst its own membership, they attempted to extinguish a story that they had done so much to ignite.⁴⁹ However, while deleting a proposal critical of cooperation with other groups – for fear of giving the press another story of division within the movement – the Association found their belated attempts at projecting unity were relegated to the inside pages of mainstream papers such as the *Times*.⁵⁰ A similar fate awaited attempts by Martin Luther King to explain his more nuanced opposition to the Black Power slogan. With headlines exaggerating his position and focusing on division, reporters often opened with the most negative and divisive elements of King’s

⁴⁶ Carmichael and Thelwell, p. 499.

⁴⁷ Carmichael and Thelwell, p. 409.

⁴⁸ Stokely Carmichael, as cited in John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 393.

⁴⁹ For an examination of the popularity of black power within the NAACP see: Simon Hall, ‘The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969’, *The Historian*, 69 (2007), 49–82.

⁵⁰ M. S. Handler, ‘N.A.A.C.P. Deletes Rift Statement: Allusion to Dispute With 2 Rights Groups Omitted’, *New York Times*, 9 July 1966, p. 8.

critique, while relegating positive statements to inside pages or later paragraphs.⁵¹ For instance, linked to a statement condemning Black Power that had been drafted by the NAACP and other civil rights organisations, King's reported critique of the slogan was the focus of coverage on page fourteen of the *New York Times* as well as dominating a by-lined article that ran in a highly visible spot across the top of page twenty seven.⁵² Disagreeing strongly with the characterisation of his stance in this coverage, King penned a long letter to the *Times* in which he argued that, 'we cannot abandon militancy in the effort to disassociate ourselves from riots. We will have to have confidence that intelligent white allies can perceive the difference'.⁵³ However, the *Times* not only failed to comment on much of the letter's contents, but also spread the piece thinly across the page and relegated it to page forty two.⁵⁴ Such practices were not new. Indeed, when King had heavily criticised the media's use of anonymous 'spokesmen' to emphasise division in 1962, coverage in the *Times* chose to focus on his wider calls for unity within the movement rather than acknowledge their own role in causing such splits.⁵⁵

To use the Meredith March and Black Power as a peg for movement division, the media emphasised certain aspects of the movement that fit a largely pre-determined narrative. In the process, they helped create a simplistic version of movement tensions that ignored divisions and developments that they had reported on years earlier. However, while the reaction to the Meredith March and Black Power was undoubtedly influenced by the prerogatives of a white-owned and white-produced media, it was also the function of media logistics. Requiring solid evidence of division before they could break major stories, the public unity of the civil rights movement – however strategically useful in the short term – created a

⁵¹ United Press International, 'Dr. King Deplores "Black Power" Bid: Supremacy by Either Race Would Be Evil, He Says', *New York Times*, 21 June 1966, p. 30; Gene Roberts, 'Dr. King Declares Rights Movement Is "Close" to a Split', *New York Times*, 9 July 1966, pp. 1, 8.

⁵² 'Dr. King Endorses Racial Statement: Backs Negro Repudiation of Black Power Concepts', *New York Times*, 15 October 1966, p. 14; Thomas A. Johnson, 'Negro Leaders Issue a Statement of Principles Repudiating "Black Power" Concepts', *New York Times*, 14 October 1966, p. 27.

⁵³ Martin Luther King Jr. to John B. Oakes, 15 October 1966, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Records, Box 335 Folder 1, MARBL.

⁵⁴ 'Dr. King Clarifies His Racial Stand: Says He Backs Only Part of Black Power Statement', *New York Times*, 17 October 1966, p. 42.

⁵⁵ Claude Sitton, 'Dr. King Asks End to Rights Discord: Tells N.A.A.C.P. Outsiders Cause Rift in Movement', *New York Times*, 6 July 1962, p. 23.

facade that many in the media were anxiously waiting to expose.⁵⁶ Consequently, while the formal division between SNCC and the NAACP was not really news to anyone within the race beat, the decision by members of both organisations to publicly articulate their differences afforded the media a chance to expose these tensions to their audiences. Strategically useful, this united front in the early 1960s helped to exaggerate the role that Black Power and Carmichael's leadership of SNCC had on the movement. As chapter five outlines in greater detail, this was not carried out in an objective or neutral manner, but it did seek to explain very real differences that had been present but largely unreported in previous struggles.

Pegs, then, are crucial to our understanding of civil rights periodization. However, pegs were also a common logistical device that were used in far more mundane ways and had a variety of different impacts on the civil rights movement and SNCC in particular. Importantly, the use of pegs varied across news publications. Requiring much greater background knowledge, in-depth stories were more common in larger news magazines and papers, such as the *New York Times*, that could afford to invest the considerable resources needed to obtain such information. For instance, writing to Managing Editor William Turner Catledge in April 1960, Assistant Managing Editor Clifton Daniel claimed that:

In the conversation with Sitton it was emphasized to him, as it has been to all other regional men, that we want him to concern himself with big situations and trends, and not with routine coverage. The point was illustrated by stressing our interest in community attitudes in the South toward the segregation issue, as distinguished from the police-beat kind of news.⁵⁷

While less time-sensitive, even these in-depth pieces required some sort of peg before they could be published. Expressing hesitation at providing in-depth coverage of the kneel-in movement that was attempting to desegregate churches across the South in 1960, for example, National Editor Ray O'Neill argued that 'there is some danger, if we should try to anticipate this movement with big stories, that we would be open to the accusation of

⁵⁶ Fleming, for example, used his exposure of division - specifically the use of King's derogatory nickname 'De Lawd' among SNCC members - as a sign of his objectivity: Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p. 347.

⁵⁷ Clifton Daniel to Mr. Catledge, 8 April 1960, New York Times Company Records, National Desk Records, Box 2 Folder 21, NYPL.

encouraging and perhaps promoting it with publicity before it even occurred'.⁵⁸ Inevitably, then, coverage became reactive, responding to developments that had gained enough ground to be deemed 'big stories'. Once this tipping point had been reached, even small scale events could be used by journalists and mainstream editors to explain much greater underlying phenomena. When looking to inform their readers about SNCC's Summer Project in 1964, for example, *Newsweek's* Joe Cumming suggested that while the story offered a few good angles:

The problem is when. The infusion of college students is not likely to reach a peak until July. On the other hand we certainly need to give it some treatment before that. I have no firm suggestions at the moment beyond waiting and watching for a peg for an early story – say in the next month.⁵⁹

Demonstrating just how arbitrary this process could be, William Cook – Cumming's colleague in *Newsweek's* Atlanta Bureau – suggested that they simply 'peg a piece to one of these lower level political meetings [MFDP precinct meetings] in Mississippi, cover it, and use the peg to tell the whole Mississippi Project story'.⁶⁰

This style of reporting meant that certain events could be given significance through media coverage that was entirely the result of reporting practices rather than any definable shift in movement tactics or beliefs. Discussing a piece written by Claude Sitton on the growing dissatisfaction amongst younger civil rights activists in 1961, Clifton Daniel argued that while the piece was good:

The essential facts of Negro militancy have been known for months, and I venture to say that this story could have been written for us as well in 1960, after the sit-in movements were well launched, as in 1961. We already had evidence then that there was dissatisfaction with the "Dr. Toms" and the relatively moderate attitude of the NAACP.⁶¹

Running less than a week later, Sitton's piece did credit earlier developments, but its front-page headline nevertheless referred to a 'Wave of Negro Militancy Spreading Over the

⁵⁸ Ray O'Neill to Clifton Daniel, n.d., New York Times Company Records, National Desk Records, Box 2 Folder 21, NYPL.

⁵⁹ Joe Cumming to Peter Goldman, 18 March 1964, *Newsweek* Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 17 Folder 12, MARBL.

⁶⁰ William Cook, 'Mississippi Project Background', 17 March 1964, *Newsweek* Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 17 Folder 3, MARBL.

⁶¹ Daniel to Farber.

South'.⁶² With *Newsweek* chronicling the rise of a 'New Breed' of 'Militant Negro' a few weeks later, it is important to note how stories like this could echo across national media outlets with each additional article seemingly confirming a trend that owed more to media logistics than movement developments.⁶³

This kind of media echo chamber was not unique to civil rights reporting or even mainstream publications. As Fishman has argued:

As journalists notice each other reporting the same news theme, it becomes established within a community of media organizations. Journalists who are not yet reporting a theme learn to use it by watching their competition. And when journalists who first report a theme see others beginning to use it, they feel their original news judgment is confirmed.⁶⁴

In other words, particular trends in reporting could emerge and be sustained not by the validity of the trend itself, but the ubiquity with which it was used in the media. Given the unusual camaraderie, mentorship, and cooperation between race beat journalists, this echo chamber effect was particularly strong in civil rights coverage and can act to both homogenise and distort the media record.

I.i

According to SNCC Communications Director Julian Bond, journalists deciding which events should receive national coverage often had 'a tendency to look for the spectacular rather than the significant'.⁶⁵ With SNCC's day-to-day work typified by the long and repetitive process of door-to-door canvassing, the organisation often struggled to secure the same level of coverage as rivals in SCLC whose larger scale events fit neatly into the process of mainstream news construction. By focusing on SCLC's large mobilisations in towns such as Birmingham and Albany, however, this interest in the spectacular has helped to distort our understanding of

⁶² Claude Sitton, 'Wave of Negro Militancy Spreading over the South', *New York Times*, 14 May 1961, Late City edition, pp. 1, 76.

⁶³ 'A New Breed - The Militant Negro in the South', *Newsweek*, 5 June 1961, p. 21.

⁶⁴ Fishman, p. 8.

⁶⁵ Julian Bond in William Cook to Peter Goldman, 'Race Reporters', 26 May 1964, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 10 Folder 10, MARBL; See also: John C. McKinney and Linda Brookover Bourque, 'The Changing South: National Incorporation of a Region', *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), 399-412 (p. 400).

the Southern movement. Often aimed at achieving specific changes to local or national legislation, the mobilisation efforts of SCLC have obscured the work that SNCC, CORE, and local NAACP groups were doing to cultivate indigenous leadership in the Black Belt that could pursue a more radical social, political, and economic programme.⁶⁶

Focus on the spectacular, then, has associated Southern activism with nonviolent marches against segregation, rather than a more radical tradition of grassroots organising for economic and political liberty.⁶⁷ Similarly, it has ignored the differing experiences of millions of African Americans in the South who experienced this period very differently. For example, while claiming that he and others in the segregated community of Piedmont, West Virginia, took every opportunity to learn about the movement as it unfolded, Henry Louis Gates Jr. has argued that ‘whatever tumult our small screen revealed, though, the dawn of the civil rights era could be no more than a spectator sport in Piedmont. It was almost like a war being fought overseas’.⁶⁸ While the violence of Mississippi and Alabama attracted the cameras and notebooks of mainstream reporters, many communities across the South were either quietly ignoring or quietly complying with *Brown* in a way that defied a uniform expression. As the growing number of local studies have demonstrated, while an increasingly common phrase in mainstream reporting from 1963, there was not a singular ‘Civil Rights Movement’ and coverage of major flashpoints obscures the reality of this period in a number of different and problematic ways.

Importantly, what was considered to be ‘spectacular’ was also in a constant state of flux.

Writing to the *Harvard Crimson* in August 1963, Julian Bond explained that ‘activity has

⁶⁶ This focus has also overshadowed the considerable work carried out by SCLC members such as Septima Clark and Dorothy Cotton, whose Citizenship Education Programme played a vital, but often overlooked, role in the organisation’s civil rights strategy: Katherine Mellen Charron, *Freedom’s Teacher: The Life of Septima Clark* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Dorothy F. Cotton, *If Your Back’s Not Bent: The Role of the Citizenship Education Program in the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Atria Books, 2012).

⁶⁷ This type of grassroots activism remains a part of Southern politics, as evidenced by the election of the late Chokwe Lumumba to the Mayor’s office of Jackson, Mississippi, in 2013: Amy Goodman and Juan González, ‘Civil Rights Veteran Chokwe Lumumba Elected Mayor of Jackson, Miss., Once a Center of Racial Abuses’, *Democracy Now!*, 2013
<http://www.democracynow.org/2013/6/6/civil_rights_veteran_chokwe_lumumba_elected> [accessed 22 January 2015].

⁶⁸ Henry Louis Gates Jr., ‘Prime Time, Colored People, 1994’, in *Voices in Our Blood: America’s Best on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Jon Meacham (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 154–61 (p. 160).

increased in the South to the point that only the crises – killings, really outrageous brutality or shootings – get any national attention’.⁶⁹ For instance, despite being a major hub of civil rights activity, SNCC’s work in Greenwood only began to appear in the *Times* when field secretary James Travis was shot just outside the town in late February 1963.⁷⁰ Furthermore, while mentioning the attempted murder of Travis, the *Times* failed to cover the shooting itself and instead used a national statement by CORE, SCLC, SNCC, and the NAACP as a peg for their story and followed up when two white men were arrested for the shooting.⁷¹ While activity in the city continued throughout March – resulting in the arrest of a lawyer for the Civil Rights Commission and an arson attack on SNCC’s city headquarters – the *Times* preferred to rely on wire press coverage as Claude Sitton was busy covering developments in Albany, Georgia.⁷² Indeed, major coverage of the city only returned when activity there produced another unique and interesting spectacle, this time in the form of the first documented use of police dogs on civil rights demonstrators.⁷³ With a picture of the incident producing the first front-page story on the Greenwood movement in the *Times*, and its first mention in *Newsweek*, this coverage highlights how extreme acts of violence against African Americans could not always guarantee coverage unless they also offered a unique or interesting news angle.⁷⁴ Indeed, for other mainstream publications, such as *Life* and *TIME*, even the use of police dogs was not considered enough to warrant exposure, with both magazines only covering Greenwood after

⁶⁹ Julian Bond to Steven Roberts, 1 August 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 45, SNCC Papers.

⁷⁰ Claude Sitton, ‘Negro’s Shooting Spurs Vote Drive’, *New York Times*, 2 March 1963, Western edition, p. 4; Claude Sitton, ‘Race Affray Laid to Mississippians: 2 Whites Held in Shooting of Negro on Vote Mission’, *New York Times*, 6 March 1963, p. 4.

⁷¹ Sitton, ‘Negro’s Shooting Spurs Vote Drive.’

⁷² Associated Press, ‘Civil Rights Aide Seized in South’, *New York Times*, 16 March 1963, Western edition, p. 4; Associated Press, ‘Negro Group Office Is Burned in South’, *New York Times*, 26 March 1963, Western edition, p. 7; Claude Sitton, ‘New Racial Technique: Trend in South Toward Flexible Laws Complicates Rights Cause’, *New York Times*, 12 March 1963, Western edition, p. 6; Claude Sitton, ‘Negro “Victory” Fades in Georgia: Albany’s Repeal of Racial Law a Mere Legal Move’, *New York Times*, 14 March 1963, Western edition, p. 7.

⁷³ Claude Sitton, ‘Police Break Up Negroes’ Rally: 11 Jailed in Demonstration at Greenwood, Miss.’, *New York Times*, 28 March 1963, Western edition, p. 4; Claude Sitton, ‘Police Loose a Dog On Negroes’ Group: Minister Is Bitten’, *New York Times*, 29 March 1963, Western edition, pp. 1, 4; Claude Sitton, ‘8 Negroes Jailed in Mississippi: Sentenced to 4 Months and \$200 Fines in Greenwood’, *New York Times*, 30 March 1963, p. 8.

⁷⁴ Sitton, ‘Police Loose a Dog On Negroes’ Group’, p. 1; ‘Integration: “Mind on Freedom”’, *Newsweek*, 8 April 1963, pp. 25–26.

the arrival of famous comedian Dick Gregory.⁷⁵ Given that *Ebony* magazine's coverage of Greenwood also focused entirely on Gregory's appearance in the town, however, this omission cannot simply be dismissed as the failure of a racist press to report the abuse of African American men and women.⁷⁶ Indeed, while *Ebony*'s sister magazine *Jet* featured a number of articles on Greenwood in the same period, coverage continued to focus on major instances of brutality and was undoubtedly influenced by the arrest of Associate Editor Larry Still by Leflore County police in late February.⁷⁷

Importantly, while SNCC activists may have criticised the mainstream media's indifference, members recognised that the escalation of violence meant that publicising formerly newsworthy events would no longer be enough. For instance, Betty Garman told Friends of SNCC groups in the North in September 1964 that, 'cross burnings [in McComb, Mississippi,] are so frequent an occurrence they are no longer newsworthy' and called on these groups to highlight the seven known murders in the area since December 1963 as well as the 'four bombings in the last 90 hours'.⁷⁸ Similarly, Ilene Strelitz claimed that the roundup reports produced by the Communication Section, which kept a running catalogue of all violent incidents, had 'proven the single most valuable – or at least the most requested – piece of material for new press people as well as those who have been here from the start of the summer'.⁷⁹ Claiming that over 500 of the round-up reports had been mailed to news outlets across the globe, Strelitz simultaneously highlighted the emphasis placed on spectacular violence by the media as well as SNCC's willingness to produce press materials that ultimately helped distort popular conceptions of its activism in the South. Indeed, requiring local groups to send regular reports of such violence, SNCC's Bookkeeping Department argued that

⁷⁵ 'Nation: Yankee, Go Home', *TIME*

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,828078,00.html>> [accessed 29 January 2015]; 'In Greenwood, Gregory Takes a Hand', *Life*, 12 April 1963, p. 28.

⁷⁶ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'The Mood of the Negro', *Ebony*, July 1963, pp. 27–34, 38 (p. 30); Allan Morrison, '100 Years of Negro Entertainment: Rate of Progress Onstage Reflects General Race Struggles', *Ebony*, September 1963, pp. 122–28 (p. 128).

⁷⁷ "'They Still Pester Me...But I'm Not Afraid...'", *Jet*, 21 February 1963, pp. 18–20; 'Jet Editor Jailed in Miss. While On Assignment', *Jet*, 21 February 1963, p. 20; 'Burnings, Jailing, Shooting Reported in Greenwood, Miss.', *Jet*, 14 March 1963, pp. 8–9; 'Cop Dog Bites Minister: U.S. Sues to Aid Voters', *Jet*, 11 April 1963, p. 5; Larry Still, 'The Fury of White Man's Hate Fortifies Greenwood Negroes', *Jet*, 18 April 1963, pp. 20–27.

⁷⁸ Betty Garman, *Newsletter to Friends of SNCC: McComb Background*, September 1964, Series A.VII.3, Reel 13 Slide 795-811, SNCC Papers.

⁷⁹ Ilene Strelitz, *Communications*, Summer 1964, Mary E. King Papers, Box 1 Folder 14, WHS.

'information and stories derived from the [Wide Area Telephone Service] line is key to the survival, fundraising, and promotional base of the organization'.⁸⁰ This view was reinforced by Forman who argued that 'the WATS line must remain primarily the tool of the NEWS AND PROMOTION DEPARTMENT', because reports were 'important to the exploitation of news and crimes against us and the sheer survival of the organisation'.⁸¹

As Calvin Trillin argued in his examination of the Summer Project in August 1964 for the *New Yorker*, 'one reason for emphasizing violence to the press, apparently, is that, in the unceasing effort to draw the nation's attention to Mississippi, violence has proved to be all that the nation responds to'.⁸² While tactically sound, however, this focus on violence not only ignored other aspects of SNCC's programme, but also aided the geographical focus of mainstream coverage and popular understanding of what the Southern movement was. Indeed, following the Summer Project, William Cook claimed that sources in SNCC's Atlanta office and the Southern Regional Council, 'can't get anyone interested in going to any state but Mississippi', because the state had 'somehow taken on an unnatural glamor among America's youth'.⁸³ This experience demonstrates the power that mainstream coverage could have on contemporary understandings of the movement and the symbiotic effect it would have on the movement's future direction.

As violence escalated, and readers began to get tired of reading stories about shootings, beatings, and arson attacks, reporters continued to look for different angles on Southern activism. In a letter to *Newsweek* headquarters in New York, correspondent Joe Cumming illustrates the extent to which news reporters in the South were conscious of the need for presenting new and exciting stories to their audiences. Discussing the Birmingham campaign in May 1963, Cumming claimed that:

Certainly the quality of what we in the press like to call "violence" is not, so far, significant because there are no white hoods. Fire hoses have been used from Little Rock in 1959, in Chattanooga, in New Orleans; dogs in Miss.

⁸⁰ *Letter to Atlanta Office Staff and Others*, n.d., Series A.VI.24, Reel 12 Slide 769, SNCC Papers.

⁸¹ James Forman, *Letter to Staff*, n.d., Series A.VI.24, Reel 12 Slide 768, SNCC Papers.

⁸² Calvin Trillin, 'Letter From Jackson', *The New Yorker*, 29 August 1964, Series A.VIII.283, Reel 22 Slide 1054, SNCC Papers.

⁸³ William Cook, 'Negro Roundup', 13 November 1964, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 59 Folder 6, MARBL.

Two weeks ago Negro and white youths were hurling rocks at each other and even getting in fights in Macon, Georgia. And wasn't there some fire hosing in St. Louis this week?⁸⁴

In other words, while racist police officers and vigilantes may have been terrorising the local African American population in Birmingham, this wasn't seen as inherently newsworthy to many in the mainstream press.⁸⁵

I.ii

While *Newsweek* Editor Osborne Elliott has claimed that 'heavy cover stories' could only run for so long before editors felt the need to 'get off the reader's back', media fatigue with the Southern movement was compounded by the detached nature of the mainstream white audience.⁸⁶ Highlighting the difficulty of the race beat in 1968, Jack Lyle told a conference of journalists, activists, and academics that, 'there is and will be difficulty in making the "Negro story" understandable to white readers. But even before that, there is the problem of making it of importance to them so that they will read it'.⁸⁷ Consequently, John Poppy of *Look Magazine* spoke for many Northern whites when he wrote in May 1963 that, 'Americans have read so much about lynchings, torture and murders that many of us, I suspect, are no longer troubled by an occasional atrocity. "There goes Mississippi again", we sigh, and move on after a moment's regret'.⁸⁸

Requiring a way to protect its workers in the South, SNCC could not afford the same level of indifference. When seeking ways to alleviate this danger, organisers found that the inclusion of a large number of white volunteers during the Freedom Vote of 1963 actually reduced segregationist violence. Indeed, Bob Moses recalled:

⁸⁴ Joe Cumming, 'Birmingham, Possible Cover', 5 May 1963, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 3 Folder 13, MARBL.

⁸⁵ Cook also cites similar ideas from Nelson Benton of CBS News, demonstrating that this wasn't just a common feature of mainstream print news: Cook to Goldman.

⁸⁶ Osborne Elliott, *The World of Oz* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 58.

⁸⁷ Jack Lyle, 'Epilogue', in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 82-83 (p. 83).

⁸⁸ John Poppy, 'The South's War Against Negro Votes', *Look Magazine*, 21 May 1963, Series A.VIII.134, Reel 20 Slide 309, SNCC Papers.

That was the first time that I realized that the violence could actually be controlled. Turned y'know, on and off. That it wasn't totally random. I realized that somewhere along the line, there was someone who, even if they didn't actually order it to happen, could at least send out word for it to stop.⁸⁹

Rather than representing the success of interracial brotherhood or philosophical nonviolence, this reduction in brutality was the consequence of increased media coverage, with SNCC finding that 'wherever its white sons and daughters went, intense interest would follow'.⁹⁰ Produced for a white audience, the mainstream media focused on events in the South that involved white volunteers, especially white Northerners, and would often go to lengths to mention white participants.⁹¹ While the unusual nature of interracial organising was a factor in the disproportionate attention given to the presence of white volunteers, it is clear that dominant racial attitudes also played a part in coverage, with one *New York Times* article naming the three white participants before reporting that 'the seven others were Negroes'.⁹² Indeed, although the assassination of high profile leaders such as Medgar Evers received considerable coverage, it was not until James Chaney was murdered alongside white activists Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner that the death of an African American civil rights worker became major national news. Nor did Chaney's death begin a shift in coverage. Charles Evers, for instance, claimed in 1968 that forty five African Americans had been murdered in Mississippi since the death of his younger brother in 1963, 'But you don't report that. It's not important'.⁹³ Such instances made it clear to observers such as journalist Calvin Trillin of the *New Yorker* that 'no sophisticated study of public opinion is needed to establish the fact that in the United States, North or South, a white life is considered to be of more value

⁸⁹ Bob Moses in Carmichael and Thelwell, pp. 353–4.

⁹⁰ Fred Powlledge, *Free at Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), p. 560.

⁹¹ Claude Sitton, 'Racial Problems Put to President: Negro Student Chiefs Urge Him to Act', *New York Times*, 18 April 1960; Claude Sitton, 'Negro Groups Split on Georgia Protest', *New York Times*, 18 December 1961, pp. 1, 31; 'Mississippi: The Attack on Bigotry', *Look*, 8 September 1964, Series A.IX.4A, Reel 23 Slide 1167-76, SNCC Papers.

⁹² Associated Press, '10 Indicted in Virginia', *New York Times*, 22 June 1963, p. 10; 'Mississippi: The Attack on Bigotry'; 'Mississippi: Terror on Schedule', *Newsweek*, 5 October 1964, pp. 71–72; "'An American Tragedy'"; Inevitably, such a focus was mirrored in early accounts of the Mississippi Summer Project, including Elizabeth Sutherland's *Freedom Summer: 'Mississippi: That Summer'*, *Newsweek*, 31 May 1965, p. 22.

⁹³ Charles Evers, 'Comment By Charles Evers', in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 68–70 (p. 70).

than a Negro life'.⁹⁴ In order to protect workers during the Summer Project, then, Doug McAdam has argued that SNCC, 'found themselves in the distasteful position of having to exploit the very racism that they had been victims of'.⁹⁵ Importantly, this discovery meant that white involvement, at least en masse, became inextricably tied to its capacity to increase media coverage and temporarily reduce segregationist brutality.⁹⁶ Unfortunately for SNCC, this concentration on the actions of white volunteers was further exaggerated by the nature of the race beat's news cycle. As journalist Andrew Kopkind identified in 1965, 'one of the continuing problems of the civil rights movement is the maintenance of momentum. Public pressure [...] always dissipates after a major battle, and it takes months to bring it up to 96 point headline size again'.⁹⁷ Complaining that August would see 'the state [of Mississippi...] "abandoned" by most of our correspondents and special network people', Communication Section worker Ilene Strelitz highlighted how this cycle followed a predictable pattern that emphasised the notion of a 'long hot summer' of civil rights activity in which white volunteers were disproportionately present.⁹⁸

However distasteful they may have found this situation, SNCC's Communication Section actively used the presence of white volunteers to boost its media exposure and secure 'the limited protection that publicity affords'.⁹⁹ A news release in August 1962, for instance, reported that a particular event had included 'nineteen students, including two whites and two field secretaries'.¹⁰⁰ By only naming the latter four activists, SNCC's Communication Section thus placed white volunteers and those in positions of authority above others involved in its activities.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, repeatedly requesting that workers submit and update biographical profiles as activity increased in 1963, SNCC's Communication Section matched white Northern volunteers to their local and state newspapers and would send detailed

⁹⁴ Trillin.

⁹⁵ Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 103.

⁹⁶ Similar sentiments were expressed by Charles Sherrod, SNCC's Field Director in South-West Georgia: Stephen G. N. Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), p. 165.

⁹⁷ Andrew Kopkind, 'Boycotting Alabama', *New Republic*, 17 April 1965, Series A.VIII.283, Reel 22 Slide 1103, SNCC Papers.

⁹⁸ Strelitz; 'Violence in the South', *New York Times*, 12 July 1964, section 4: Editorials, p. E10.

⁹⁹ *Printed Communication Manual*.

¹⁰⁰ SNCC Communication Section, *News Release*, 16 August 1962, Constance W. Curry Papers, ca. 1951-1997, Box 2, Folder 12, MARBL.

¹⁰¹ SNCC Communication Section.

reports when any volunteer was arrested, beaten, or otherwise involved in ‘newsworthy’ activities.¹⁰² This use of white volunteers as a local hook for Northern outlets meant that, although rarely as blatant as that exhibited by mainstream outlets, SNCC’s press releases could also disproportionately focus on and humanise white volunteers. Predictably, this situation generated resentment amongst the African Americans on staff who, McAdam argues, felt that ‘it wasn’t black Mississippians or even the abstract concept of civil rights that concerned white America but simply the safety of its sons and daughters’.¹⁰³

While SNCC’s Statement of Purpose claimed that the ‘integration of human endeavor’ was the ‘crucial first step’ on the road to a ‘social order of justice permeated by love’, the reality of SNCC’s ‘beloved society’ was never as clear-cut.¹⁰⁴ Although associated with Black Power, the expulsion of whites from SNCC had its foundations in longstanding tensions between interracial commitments and the psychological and practical needs of African Americans.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, Stokely Carmichael has argued that the idea Black Power ruined some form of ‘interracial Eden’ within SNCC is typical of the ‘reductive, simplistic, media-driven version of history’ clear in early accounts.¹⁰⁶ This is not to argue that SNCC’s commitment to an interracial ‘beloved community’ was a falsehood perpetrated for the sake of positive publicity, but rather that the organisation’s media strategies during the summers of 1963 and 1964 created a misleading impression of the scale and nature of this commitment. Before 1963 only a handful of whites were on SNCC’s payroll, with those such as Jane Stembridge, William Hansen, and Robert Zellner agreeing that, ‘whites in the freedom struggle should and would be, as far as leadership is concerned, in a secondary role’.¹⁰⁷ Largely Southerners, these early

¹⁰² Horace Julian Bond to Julie Prettyman, 13 August 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 54, SNCC Papers, 1994]; Barbara Brandt, *Memo to Coworkers*, 20 November 1964, Series A.VII.4, Reel 14 Slide 841, SNCC Papers, 1994].

¹⁰³ McAdam, p. 103.

¹⁰⁴ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Founding Statement*, 17 April 1960 <<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc1.htm>> [accessed 2 August 2014].

¹⁰⁵ Mary Aickin Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982); McAdam; Jennifer Jensen Wallach, ‘Replicating History in a Bad Way? White Activists and Black Power in SNCC’s Arkansas Project’, *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 67 (2008), 268–87; Jeffries.

¹⁰⁶ Carmichael and Thelwell, p. 306.

¹⁰⁷ Hansen, for example, who had become the second white person in SNCC ever to be promoted to field director when he was chosen to head the Arkansas Project in 1962, soon stepped down from his leadership role and became co-director of the Project with local African American leader James Jones in

white activists often had as much invested in the movement as the African Americans with whom they worked.¹⁰⁸ Unlike Northern volunteers – whom SNCC worker and future Georgia State Senator Nan Grogan claimed ‘went home to be heroes [and] had dinners given in their honor’ – white Southerners who joined the movement could expect to ‘go home to ostracism and pain’, and were often disowned by family members and targeted for violence as ‘race traitors’.¹⁰⁹ With their participation requiring a much greater commitment than a single summer between semesters, it was no coincidence that Southerners such as Zellner and Grogan were the ones who piloted SNCC’s limited efforts to build coalitions with working class Southern whites, while Stenbridge – SNCC’s first paid staff member – voluntarily gave up her position to allow African Americans to take a public lead in the organisation.

The increase in the number and nature of SNCC’s white membership, however, undermined this radical vision of a tight-knit, ‘beloved community’. Writing in a field report in November 1963 about a Northern white volunteer under his command, Charles Cobb argued that ‘I know that we are all brothers, and that whites have a role in this “movement”, but I can’t really escape thinking that Negroes are reacting to his whiteness, or completely accept the idea of a white directing Negroes to freedom’.¹¹⁰ Indeed, while superficially successful, many in SNCC saw the use of whites in Southern African American communities as fraught with potential dangers. Attributing previous success to the fact that ‘black people are doing it themselves, in their own way, and articulating their own demands’, staffers such as Cobb feared that the educated and trained white volunteers would undermine the fledgling leadership that SNCC was encouraging in the rural South.¹¹¹ Believing that mass white involvement risked ‘losing the one thing where the Negro can stand first’, the majority of African American members at a November 1963 meeting in Greenville voted against the use of whites in the upcoming Summer Project.¹¹² According to James Forman, this opposition was eventually overturned by

1964: Bob Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek: A White Southerner in the Freedom Movement* (Montgomery: NewSouth Books, 2008), p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ Zellner, p. 293.

¹⁰⁹ ‘The Accents Are Southern: Experiment in Virginia’, *Southern Patriot*, September 1965, Series A.VIII.134, Reel 20 Slide 827, SNCC Papers; See also Zellner.

¹¹⁰ Charles Cobb, *Field Report*, 8 November 1963, Series A.IV.81, Reel 5 Slide 968, SNCC Papers.

¹¹¹ Cobb.

¹¹² Ivanhoe Donaldson in Dittmer, p. 209; In deference to African American leadership of the movement, whites at the meeting abstained.

a rare display of personal leadership from Bob Moses, who declared, 'I will not be part of a racist organisation'.¹¹³ Moses has since admitted, however, that a desire to force federal involvement strongly motivated his stance. Indeed, he has argued that the murder of Louis Allen in Liberty, Mississippi, in January 1964 convinced him 'that we had to do something, something big, that would really open the situation up. Otherwise they'd simply continue to kill the best among us'.¹¹⁴

Consequently, when Betty Garman told the Executive Committee in a meeting in April 1965 that, 'we must begin to interpret to northern students why they can't come' she was calling for a return to previous practice rather than a revolution in SNCC's *modus operandi*.¹¹⁵ While early white activists had often filled technical positions, such as typists, radio broadcasters and print setters, the recruitment of more African American students from campuses in the South following the Summer Project meant that SNCC no longer relied on the technical expertise of whites and could be more selective in their hiring policies. Furthermore, by 1965 the growth in local leadership meant that many of those who had benefited from interaction with whites in the early stages of the movement had, according to African American SNCC staffer Dorothy Dewberry, 'grown beyond that experience'.¹¹⁶ These tensions were not unique to the organisation. Indeed, when SNCC voted to bar whites from organising in the African American community in May 1966, an aide to Dr King told the *New York Times* that, 'we can understand why SNCC no longer will let whites organize in rural areas', adding that while SCLC would not make such a blanket rule they were 'becoming more selective about the whites we use'.¹¹⁷

However, while reservations about the use of whites were widespread by early 1964, Charles Cobb has argued that SNCC members – and the movement more widely – were 'victims of [our] own rhetoric, because at the same time, we were arguing desegregation, integration ...

¹¹³ James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: Open Hand, 1985), p. 374.

¹¹⁴ Bob Moses in Carmichael and Thelwell, 355; Moses also advocates this view in Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, eds., *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s Through the 1980s* (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), 184.

¹¹⁵ Betty [Garman], as cited in Sherron Jackson, *Executive Committee Meeting, 27 April 1965*, Mary E. King Papers, Box 1 Folder 17, WHS.

¹¹⁶ Dorothy Dewberry, 'Letter to the Editor of the *Michigan Chronicle*', n.d., Series A.IX.131, Reel 33 Slide 932, SNCC Papers.

¹¹⁷ Anonymous aide, as cited in Gene Roberts, 'Whites' Role Splits Leaders of March: Northern Whites Divide Marchers', *New York Times*, 12 June 1966, pp. 1, 82.

so you couldn't argue that you were opposed to white people coming down'.¹¹⁸ Even internally, this issue was one with which many SNCC staffers struggled. Talking at a staff meeting on the eve of the Summer Project, for example, Dona Moses argued that during previous discussions, 'we didn't really grapple with the problems because people were ashamed of admitting their feelings'.¹¹⁹ Once again, then, while Black Power drew on the legitimate concerns of activists with years of experience at the vanguard of the movement, it represented a rhetorical shift in language that gave explicit form to a previously implicit grievance. As such, it provided mainstream outlets with the chance to explain these shifts to readers at a time when attitudes towards the movement were much more hostile than when these shifts first appeared. Importantly, while SNCC's move would be dismissed as racist by the mainstream press, it echoed the concerns of commentators in the African American community such as journalist Louis Lomax, who argued in August 1965 that 'white liberal money and bodies have moved in and taken over every national civil rights organization with the exceptions of [...] CORE, and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee'.¹²⁰

From the outset, SNCC's approach to white participation depended on a complex and highly variable process that prioritised the needs, both psychological and physical, of the local African American community. Indeed, white volunteer Larry Rubin, who worked as a voter registration worker for SNCC in Georgia from 1962 until 1965, argues that while there were always whites in SNCC, 'their role was always a question. And it was answered differently in different places'.¹²¹ SNCC's communication output, however, while legitimately aimed at raising awareness, contributed to the notion that white northern volunteers were taking the lead in the southern movement. In doing so, it demonstrated how the interaction between activists, media logistics, and racial prejudice could combine to generate narratives of the Southern struggle that laid the foundations for dichotomous depictions of the decade that

¹¹⁸ Charles Cobb in Howell Raines, *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: Penguin, 1983), p. 287.

¹¹⁹ Dona Moses in "SNCC Staff Meeting Minutes, June 9-11, 1964", Vertical File, Box 159-14 Folder 7, *Civil Rights Documentation Project Material*, Moorland-Spingarn Research Centre, Howard University (Copy in author's possession).

¹²⁰ Louis E. Lomax, 'The White Liberal', *Ebony*, August 1965, pp. 60-62, 64, 66, 68 (p. 60).

¹²¹ Larry Rubin, "Transcript of interview with Larry Rubin, 11 Nov. 1995, Interview conducted by John Rachal", Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive, McCain Library & Archives, University of Southern Mississippi, <<http://digilib.usm.edu/u/?coh,9831>> [Accessed 20 August 2011].

retain popular currency to this day. Importantly, the extent to which SNCC was able to engage with and influence media practices should not be underestimated. For other social movements and organisations, this interaction – or lack thereof – produced very different results.

II

As previously discussed, mainstream media outlets often avoided talking directly about homosexuality and approached stories on the gay and lesbian community from other, more traditional beats. Having already covered the Wolfenden Report in 1957, for instance, journalists were able to report on British law reform efforts and use developments in the UK as a peg to discuss the impact similar changes might have at home. Operating at a safe level of abstraction from domestic reform efforts, writers in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *TIME* were thus able to discuss the legal or religious implications of similar legislation in the US without openly advocating for such changes or waiting for their official enactment.¹²² Similarly, medical reports from the UK, such as the report of a three-man medical team in the *British Medical Journal* in June 1958 could be used to discuss ‘just what a homosexual is’ by *TIME* without directly referencing America’s gay and lesbian community.¹²³ Indeed, at a time when the mainstream press were generally hesitant to print stories about gay and lesbian Americans, locating those conversations across the Atlantic allowed *TIME* and others to feature risqué news while respecting conservative domestic audiences.¹²⁴

In other outlets, however, British reform efforts were used as a peg for more overt and open calls to improve conditions for gay men and women in the USA. Following the passing of the

¹²² John Cogley, ‘Religion: Morality and the Law’, *New York Times*, 30 May 1965, section 4, p. E12; John Grigg, ‘Is Homosexuality A Crime?’, *New York Times*, 27 June 1965, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM6–7, 48; Karl E. Meyer, ‘Lords Debate Easing of Homosexual Curbs’, *Washington Post*, 13 May 1965, section General News, p. D5; Robert L. Mott, ‘Winds of Change in Britain: Commons Passes Controversial Bills’, *Washington Post*, 16 July 1967, p. 34; ‘Great Britain: Shame Is Enough’, *TIME*, 14 July 1967 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,899629,00.html>> [accessed 22 January 2015].

¹²³ ‘Medicine: What Is a Homosexual?’, *TIME*, 16 June 1958 <<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,863496,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2014].

¹²⁴ ‘Foreign News: The Unspeakable Crime’, *TIME*, 16 November 1953 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,819240,00.html>> [accessed 9 March 2015].

Sexual Offences Act in Britain in 1967, the *New York Post* published an editorial that claimed ‘the time has come for the American state legislatures to grow up and face the same issue’.¹²⁵ Using British developments as a peg for its story, the *Post*’s editorial strongly mirrored discourse in the homophile movement that made references to the Wolfenden Report and what they saw as more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality in the UK. In a letter to New York District Attorney Frank S. Hogan in 1966, for example, MSNY President Dick Leitsch used reform efforts in Britain to argue that it was ‘time for a new approach to a very old problem’ and claimed that the ‘increasing number of articles’ on the subject had ‘prepared the public for such a change’.¹²⁶ Importantly, while using British reform as a peg, the *New York Post* also foregrounded domestic homophile militancy, claiming that in contrast to intransigent lawmakers, ‘the homosexuals themselves are taking the first steps to remedy this long-range problem by organizing publicly to demand some modicum of respect and acceptance’.¹²⁷ In this context, British law reform was not a proxy through which papers could tackle a difficult subject, but an example of good practice that ought to be followed – and openly advocated for – in the US. Once again, then, any concentration on mainstream records ignores more enlightened attitudes at other outlets and the impact this could have had on – in this particular case – New York based audiences.

While comparisons to the UK could prove useful, the majority of news stories on the gay and lesbian community were, as we have already seen, parochial in outlook and focused on criminal behaviour.¹²⁸ Avoiding the lurid details that would dominate the pages of the tabloid press, mainstream coverage of bar raids or entrapment practices were largely euphemistic and descriptive, making any kind of detailed or thorough investigation unlikely. Exceptions to this strategy, however, did exist. For instance, when high-profile men were arrested on morals charges, such as presidential aide Walter Jenkins in October 1964, mainstream publications

¹²⁵ ‘Humanity and Homosexuality’, *New York Post*, 6 July 1967, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 11, Folder 1.

¹²⁶ Dick Leitsch to Frank S. Hogan, 8 March 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12; This rhetoric had a much longer heritage within the movement and was also a feature in the 1950s. For examples see Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s’ Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 209–16, 255–8.

¹²⁷ ‘Humanity and Homosexuality.’

¹²⁸ This is not to ignore that the word “homosexual” appeared most regularly in reviews of plays and literature that included gay and lesbian characters or same-sex relationships. Instead, this claim distinguishes between coverage of contemporary culture and the concept of “news” items that appeared in the main sections of the paper.

often provided more in-depth coverage.¹²⁹ Indeed, despite the story competing with the detonation of China's first atomic bomb and the deposing of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, coverage of the scandal in the *Times*' and other mainstream papers lasted over a week and included a number of front-page articles.¹³⁰ However, focused on the impact of the scandal on high ranking political officials, rather than detailing the actual morals charge itself or involving any larger discussion of homosexuality, it was clear that such coverage was unlikely to lead to major shifts in reporting.¹³¹ Indeed, the only article on the Jenkins scandal to discuss the nature of homosexuality and its relevance to holding federal office in any depth was placed much further back in the newspaper.¹³²

Perhaps the most obvious example of criminality being used as a peg for wider discussion of the gay community was Richard Doty's front-page story for the *New York Times* in December 1963.¹³³ Commissioned by Metropolitan Editor Abe Rosenthal, and the result of over a month of work by Doty, it was always likely that the paper intended to publish the piece, but required some form of news 'peg' on which to hang the story. Choosing to use the decision by the State Liquor Authority (SLA) to revoke the licenses of two 'homosexual haunts' that were 'notorious congregating points for homosexuals and degenerates', therefore, highlights the popular association made at the *New York Times* between homosexuality and criminal degeneracy.¹³⁴

With discussions of the raids and quotes from police officials populating the small front-page

¹²⁹ Max Frankel, 'President's Aide Quits on Report of Morals Case: Jenkins Was Arrested Last Week in Capital Y.M.C.A. - Is Sent to Hospital', *New York Times*, 15 October 1964, pp. 1, 31; 'Nation: The Senior Staff Man', *TIME*, 23 October 1964 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,897301-2,00.html>> [accessed 22 January 2014]; 'The Jenkins Report', *Newsweek*, 2 November 1964, pp. 26–27.

¹³⁰ 'Newspapers: The Week the Dam Broke', *TIME*, 23 October 1964 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,897334,00.html>> [accessed 22 January 2015].

¹³¹ Tom Wicker, 'Johnson Denies Jenkins Cover-Up: Sets F.B.I. Inquiry', *New York Times*, 16 October 1964, pp. 1, 20; Wallace Turner, 'Miller Sees Jenkins as Security Peril', *New York Times*, 21 October 1964, p. 32; Tom Wicker, 'Jenkins Cleared of Security Slip in F.B.I. Report: No Evidence Is Uncovered That Ex-Presidential Aide Compromised Nation', *New York Times*, 23 October 1964, pp. 1, 31; 'Johnson Says Eisenhower Had Aide Like Jenkins', *New York Times*, 29 October 1964, p. 26; 'Nation: Johnson & the Jenkins Case', *TIME*, 6 November 1964 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,876371,00.html>> [accessed 22 January 2015].

¹³² 'Jenkins Defended by Mental Group', *New York Times*, 22 October 1964, section Food, Fashions, Family, Furnishings, p. 45.

¹³³ Robert C. Doty, 'Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern', *New York Times*, 17 December 1963, pp. 1, 33. As outlined in chapter two, the use of 'gay', rather than 'gay and lesbian', here is deliberate and reflects the almost complete absence of any discourse on lesbians within the piece.

¹³⁴ Doty, pp. 1, 33.

section of the article, this peg also allowed the *Times* to confine any in-depth discussion of homosexuality to its inside pages.

As previously discussed, the timing of this article was not the function of concerted community action in Greenwich Village and other areas where gay men and women had been operating at the margins of society for decades. Instead, it was the direct result of Abe Rosenthal's return to New York and the disjuncture between the realities of Manhattan and his memory of the city.¹³⁵ This is not to deny a slow development in the gay and lesbian community of New York in the late 1950s and early 1960s, or the increasing number of bars and clubs that discreetly catered to gay and lesbian patrons, but to point out that the decision to cover this 'growth' in 1963 was not a function of either movement or community action. Given that this piece encouraged other mainstream outlets to provide similarly in-depth stories – that also focused disproportionately on bar culture – the interaction between medial logistics, community action, and editorial authority is even more important.¹³⁶

Carrying a large image of homophile pickets that took place on 4 July 1967, even the most in-depth piece to appear on homophile activism in this period was not pegged to any specific homophile action.¹³⁷ Published in the *New York Times* in November 1967, the piece simply referred to the picket as 'a protest sponsored by homosexual organizations in Philadelphia', ignoring both the symbolism of the Independence Day protests and the concerted regional and national effort that had produced it. Appearing in the *Times*' Sunday magazine and by-lined by literary critic Webster Schott, the piece was given a freedom of discussion that undoubtedly influenced the relatively positive nature of the article. However, by failing to attribute this changing mood to a specific action – or peg – it reduced the possibility for homophile activism to take on the same kind of landmark significance that would be given to the Stonewall riots in future coverage. Furthermore, as a freelance piece, the article's positive tone was not

¹³⁵ Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 45; Charles Kaiser, *The Gay Metropolis: 1940-1996* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), p. 156.

¹³⁶ 'Homosexuality in America', *Life*, 26 June 1964, pp. 66–67.

¹³⁷ Webster Schott, 'Civil Rights and the Homosexual: A 4-Million Minority Asks for Equal Rights', *New York Times*, 12 November 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM 44–45, 47–54, 59–72.

indicative of a shift in the paper's overall treatment of the gay and lesbian community and failed to signal any uptick in coverage of homophile activism.

Unable, then, to influence the timing of even the most positive of pieces, it is clear that MSNY and MSW activists did not enjoy the same success as their compatriots in SNCC. This difference is even starker given that East Coast homophiles had consciously borrowed from the tactics and rhetoric of the civil rights movement. For instance, while often castigated as timid and reserved, the militant homophile movement spearheaded by the MSW, and later the MSNY and Philadelphia DOB, actively tailored its new strategy of demonstrations and symbolic pickets to play on patriotic and rights based themes that had proved so useful to the civil rights movement.¹³⁸ Furthermore, while small in scale, these activities were meticulously planned and intended to have symbolic resonance. Indeed, the MSW's Committee on Picketing and Other Lawful Demonstrations formally declared in its regulations that all demonstrations 'must have a well-defined purpose' and that 'the location of the demonstration must be clearly relevant to the purpose of the demonstration'.¹³⁹

Importantly, starting with the first MSW demonstration on 17 April 1965, the pickets signified a considerable departure from previous homophile activity and were by no means uniformly popular. While more recently dismissed as respectable, middle-class affairs, this was not how they were perceived by many within the community who feared that such public and political demonstrations would undermine the reputation they had been trying to build in professional circles. Having to defend their actions against those who viewed the pickets as 'patently offensive', demonstrators saw themselves – and were seen by others – as a militant wing of the movement.¹⁴⁰ Proving instantly popular with a section of the East Coast homophile community, it was no coincidence that May 1965 saw a militant faction sweep the MSNY leadership elections against conservative opponents who disapproved of these new tactics.

¹³⁸ For a discussion of this process as it applied to the wider movement see: Craig J. Konnoth, 'Created in Its Image: The Race Analogy, Gay Identity, and Gay Litigation in the 1950s-1970s', *Yale Law Journal*, 119 (2009), 316–72.

¹³⁹ The Mattachine Society of Washington, *Committee on Picketing and Other Lawful Demonstrations: Regulations for Picketing*, n.d., Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 13, NYPL.

¹⁴⁰ 'Reaction by Homosexuals...', n.d., Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 13, NYPL; Franklin E. Kameny, 'Does Research into Homosexuality Matter', *The Ladder*, May 1965, pp. 14–20; Kay Tobin, 'Picketing: The Impact and the Issues', *The Ladder*, September 1965, pp. 4–8.

Nevertheless, these demonstrations were largely ignored by the *Washington Post* and other mainstream outlets, with the *Washington Afro-American* one of the only publications to cover the first protest in Washington on 17 April 1965.¹⁴¹ Acknowledging that the minimal publicity for this first picket may have resulted from the demonstration being ‘planned and staged in less than 24 hours’, later efforts were ‘extensively announced in advance’, with ‘180 press releases having been sent to communication outlets, newspaper columnists, embassies, and sightseeing services’.¹⁴² In developing such an extensive list of potential news outlets, the MSW was clearly trying to exploit the same kind of communication techniques that had worked so well for SNCC in the Deep South. These efforts, however, were largely met with silence in the mainstream press, with the *New York Times* publishing only two wire press articles on the many pickets in Washington during this period.¹⁴³ Even when Secretary of State Dean Rusk was asked in a televised press briefing about an upcoming protest in August 1965, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and *New York Times* failed to provide any coverage.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, while appearing in some news outlets, the peg for stories on the episode remained the actions and words of Rusk, rather than that of the MSW.¹⁴⁵

So used to being ignored, it is clear that homophile activists were happy with any news coverage that managed to break through. Indeed, when the MSW’s picket of the White House was picked up by UPI, who reproduced some of the marcher’s slogans, excited letters came in to the MSNY Office from as far away as Orlando, Florida.¹⁴⁶ While such enthusiasm could be seen as naïve or unambitious, it also demonstrates the disconnection between the passion

¹⁴¹ Mattachine Society of Washington, ‘News’, *The Insider*, April 1965, p. 1, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 8, Folder 6.

¹⁴² Mattachine Society of Washington, *News Bulletin*, April 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 8, Folder 5; Mattachine Society of Washington, *Information Bulletin*, November 1965, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 13, NYPL; For examples of such materials, see: Mattachine Society of Washington, *News Release: Homosexuals to Picket U.S. Civil Service Commission*, 24 June 1965, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 14, NYPL; Mattachine Society of Washington, *News Release: Homosexuals to Picket Pentagon*, 29 July 1965, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 14, NYPL; *Why Are Homosexuals Picketing the U.S. Civil Service Commission?*, 1965, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 14, NYPL.

¹⁴³ United Press International, ‘Homosexuals Stage Protest in Capital’, *New York Times*, 30 May 1965, p. 42; Associated Press, ‘Pickets Aid Homosexuals’, *New York Times*, 5 July 1967, p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* (First Run Features, 1984; Peadarillo Pictures Ltd, 2010).

¹⁴⁵ ‘Rusk Refuses to Meet With Homosexuals’, *Chicago Tribune*, 28 August 1965, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ Warren D. Atkins [Pseudonym of Jack Nichols] to Dick Leitsch, 2 June 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 8, Folder 5; United Press International, ‘Homosexuals Stage Protest in Capital.’

these pickets engendered among homophiles and the almost complete lack of coverage in the mainstream press. Claiming that he ‘had a ball passing out the news releases on the Thursday afternoon before the picket’, and had ‘loved every minute of it’, the personal correspondence of MSW activist Jack Nichols demonstrates how homophiles viewed these early demonstrations as significant and self-affirming life events.¹⁴⁷ With other picketers feeling that ‘a weight dropped off my soul’, or describing their participation in similar events as ‘the proudest day of my life’ when they ‘lost the last bit of fear’, it is clear that the lack of coverage given to homophile pickets was out of sync with the importance placed on such events by participants.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, claiming (incorrectly) that the picket on 17 April 1965 had ‘made history’ as ‘the first time [...] group picketing of homosexuals took place’, MSNY and MSW activists both individually and collectively assigned great significance to these actions.¹⁴⁹ While having very different effects on the two movements, therefore, the media’s ability to signify certain events as ‘newsworthy’ has distorted the goals and programmes of activists.

II.i

To explain this disconnection, it is important to understand the context in which media logistics acted to sideline homophile action. Having previously covered the attempt by Texas Congressman John Dowdy to ban the organisation from soliciting charitable donations in the District, the *Washington Post*’s failure to carry stories on MSW pickets was not because journalists and editors at the paper were unaware of the organisation or its work.¹⁵⁰ However, neither was this earlier coverage indicative of anything other than an interest in an unusual case involving federal officials. In other words, while the MSW had been news, they were not themselves inherently newsworthy. Instead, as outlined above, newspapers were only likely to publish stories on the organisation and its efforts if its activities involved large numbers of

¹⁴⁷ Warren D. Atkins [Pseudonym of Jack Nichols] to Leitsch.

¹⁴⁸ Tobin, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ Mattachine Society of Washington, ‘News.’

¹⁵⁰ John M. Goshko, ‘“Morality” Talk Slows Sex Hearing’, *Washington Post*, 9 August 1963, section City Life in Greater Washington, p. C2; John M. Goshko, ‘House Group Continues Homosexuality Hearing: Not Much Headway’, *Washington Post*, 10 August 1963, section City Life in Greater Washington, p. C2; ‘2 Groups Object to Ban On Mattachine Soliciting’, *Washington Post*, 9 November 1963, p. 3; Paul A. Schuette, ‘Dowdy Bill Attacked by 9 in House’, *Washington Post*, 21 March 1964, section City Life in Greater Washington, p. B2.

participants or had some other kind of angle that could be used as a hook for disinterested or even hostile news audiences. Given that only ten people took part in the first picket in Washington in April 1965 – which required picketers to carry the fifteen placards in shifts – it is not surprising that such a small demonstration failed to catch the eye of national news desks.¹⁵¹ Indeed, this failure is even more understandable when placed in comparison not just to general levels of activism during the decade, but even demonstrations that took place that day in the capital. With anti-war organisers bringing over 15,000 demonstrators to Washington D.C. on the same day, it is not hard to understand why this – and not the small but historically important activism of homophile picketers – made the front pages of papers such as the *New York Times*.¹⁵² Similarly, while Frank Kameny saw the exchange with Rusk as one of the biggest boons for homophile publicity in the period, journalists at the *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, and *New York Times* – all of whom ran prominent stories on the press conference – understandably viewed the Secretary of State’s comments on the ongoing negotiations with the North Vietnamese as the most important element of the story.¹⁵³

As previously discussed, the media often covered protest movements through a lens of escalation that required events to be larger, more unusual, or more spectacular than what had gone before. While claiming a number of landmarks in publicity, activism, and even legal gains in this period, homophile activists were often several steps behind the achievements of their compatriots in other movements. Given the context of an almost unprecedented level of social activism in the 1960s, such a neophyte movement was always going to struggle to gain the kind of coverage its members felt appropriate. For instance, targeting the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia on Independence Day as ‘a symbolic act’ that enabled potential participants to ‘Work for your Rights!’, homophile pickets drew on patriotic imagery and rhetoric that was specifically designed to generate coverage.¹⁵⁴ Asking the Philadelphia chapter of the DOB to

¹⁵¹ Mattachine Society of Washington, *News Bulletin*.

¹⁵² ‘15,000 White House Pickets Denounce Vietnam War’, *New York Times*, 18 April 1965, pp. 1, 3.

¹⁵³ Richard Reston, ‘Rusk Says U.S. Would Consider Halting Raids’, *Los Angeles Times*, 28 August 1965, pp. 1, 14; Murrey Marder, ‘Rusk Denies Hanoi Hints Peace Move: “Key Signal” From Reds For Viet Negotiations Still Awaited, He Says’, *The Washington Post*, 28 August 1965, pp. A1, A8; Max Frankel, ‘Rusk Is Awaiting “Signal” on Talks’, *New York Times*, 28 August 1965, p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Work for Your Rights!’, *Daughters of Bilitis (DOB): New York Chapter*, May 1968, p. 5, Reel 14, Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter Collection, (Primary Source Media, Thompson Gale, 2006, Microfilm Edition); For more on how social movements, including the gay liberation movement, used

compile a list of all local newspapers, regional news offices, radio, and TV stations in order to ‘cover the immediate geographical area of a demonstration fully and completely’, organisers followed many of the same tactics employed by SNCC.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, claiming that in 1969 ‘at least 1500’ copies of the 5th Annual Reminder handbill were produced for distribution on the picket line and 275 press releases were sent to news publications across the nation, homophile activists displayed a sophisticated understanding of media logistics.¹⁵⁶ However, while Kay Tobin claimed that front-page coverage of the first Annual Reminder protest in local papers in 1965 – as well as coverage on local CBS-TV – meant that ‘picketing had drawn public attention to long-hidden injustices’, homophile demonstrations failed to gain any significant national coverage.¹⁵⁷

Importantly, these developments were not unexpected. Leaflets distributed at the first Annual Reminder on 4 July 1965, for instance, included repeated references to the ‘second-class’ citizenship of gay men and women and informed observers that action was being taken in part because ‘the homosexual American citizen [...] finds the newspapers and other media of communication shut to him, leaving him with no means for presentation of his case’.¹⁵⁸ Neither were homophiles unaware of the gap between their activism and that of other movements during the decade. While participation in the Annual Reminder protests continually broke records for the largest demonstrations by gay men and women ever recorded in the US – beginning with forty four men and women in 1965 and growing to 150 in 1969 – homophiles realised that it would take more significant numbers before ‘the barriers of prejudice and discrimination will crumble’.¹⁵⁹

patriotism to further their goals, see: Simon Hall, *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

¹⁵⁵ Franklin E. Kameny to Daughters of Bilitis (Philadelphia), 18 May 1968, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 16, NYPL.

¹⁵⁶ Franklin E. Kameny to Lee Highlander, 12 June 1969, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 16, NYPL; to Edna, 26 June 1969, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 16, NYPL.

¹⁵⁷ Tobin, p. 8; It seems subsequent protests also drew coverage from local papers in Philadelphia: Rose DeWolf, ‘The Passing Scene: Another Minority Bids for Equality’, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 6 July 1967, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 14, NYPL; ‘150 Homosexuals Parade Before Independence Hall to Protest Maltreatment’, *Philadelphia Tribune*, 12 July 1969, p. 5, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 14, NYPL.

¹⁵⁸ Tobin, pp. 6–7.

¹⁵⁹ Tobin, p. 4; ‘150 Homosexuals Parade Before Independence Hall to Protest Maltreatment’, p. 5; Dick Leitsch to Lonnie H. Eubanks Jr., 2 July 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

However, while demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of certain media practices, the homophile pickets and demonstrations of the mid-to-late 1960s failed to recognise the importance of ‘news holes’ to mainstream journalism. As the previous chapter showed, the establishment of a particular subject as ‘newsworthy’ was something that often evolved over time and differed across outlets. Furthermore, even once particular topics had been accepted as ‘news’, relevant events still needed to compete with the hundreds of other legitimate stories emerging on any given day. With the amount of news carried by each outlet dictated by commercial logistics, rather than editorial principle, definitions of ‘newsworthiness’ were rarely stable, particularly outside of established beats. It was no coincidence, for instance, that some of the *New York Times*’ most in-depth coverage of the gay and lesbian community appeared on a Sunday.¹⁶⁰ In part this was a result of more relaxed attitudes by editors at the paper’s Sunday magazine, but it also reflected the much larger news hole that was created when few, if any, bureaucratic or routine events had taken place the previous day. With courts, legislative chambers, and other major institutions closed on Saturdays, coverage in Sunday editions were often geared towards ‘soft’ news that did not have the same expiry date as more traditional, event-led reporting.¹⁶¹ In response, Peter Goldman has claimed, some civil rights groups would purposefully arrange demonstrations on particular days to increase the likelihood that they would be covered.¹⁶² In contrast, with much of their activism taking place on special occasions (4 July) or in locations already saturated with news (Washington D.C.) homophile demonstrations were much less likely to gain significant coverage, however symbolic or well organised they appeared.

When comparing the almost complete silence that greeted the frequent, symbolic, and well organised pickets with that given to the attempted sip-in by MSNY activists in Greenwich Village in April 1966, the impact of media logistics becomes even clearer. Consciously mirroring the sit-ins of the civil rights movement, this effort by MSNY members was a far cry from the polished pickets organised by ECHO. Indeed, finding the first bar closed, and

¹⁶⁰ Schott; Tom Buckley, ‘All They Talk About Is Sex, Sex, Sex’, *New York Times*, 20 April 1969, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM 28–29, SM 93–106; Nor did this end with Stonewall: Merle Miller, ‘What It Means To Be a Homosexual: A “Fag” Is a Homosexual Gentleman Who Has Just Left the Room’, *New York Times*, 17 January 1971, pp. SM9–11, SM48–49, SM57, SM60.

¹⁶¹ Fishman, pp. 143–7.

¹⁶² Peter Goldman, 2013.

receiving drinks without complaint at the next two establishments, Leitsch has recalled that it was the journalists in attendance who were most adamant that the group kept going to Julius' Restaurant where they were eventually refused service; 'the reporters felt like they had been on a wild goose chase and wanted a story out of this thing'.¹⁶³ Accompanied by a journalist from the *New York Times* the protest not only secured coverage in the mainstream press, but also gained follow up coverage when the SLA refused to take action against Julius' or other bars that discriminated against gay men and women.¹⁶⁴ Given that Leitsch and MSNY ally William H. Booth – who chaired the city's Commission on Human Rights and was part of the local leadership of the NAACP – were heavily cited in this coverage, the sip-in can be considered one of the organisation's most successful pre-Stonewall publicity events. Yet, with just three participants and an almost comic lack of planning, this demonstration was by no means the most significant or spectacular of the many homophile actions in this period. Instead, as chapter two noted, the New-York-centric nature of much 'national' news – especially when dealing with a topic more typically thought of as a local issue – meant that a sip-in several blocks from the newsroom qualified as newsworthy in a way that a picket hundreds of miles away did not. Indeed, with reporters from the *New York Post*, *Herald Tribune*, and the *Village Voice* also following the protestors on their protracted efforts to be denied service, the sip-in was treated in much the same way as outlets in Philadelphia treated the Annual Reminder protests – a local curiosity that warranted a general news story.¹⁶⁵

Once again, then, the elevation of 'national' news outlets such as the *New York Times* risks elevating certain events at the expense of others with important potential impacts on movement historiography. For instance, Elizabeth Armstrong and Suzanna Crage's work on the 'Stonewall Myth' has demonstrated the existence of other resistance events prior to the June 1969 riots that could have given rise to a similar birthing legend.¹⁶⁶ With many of these

¹⁶³ Alwood, p. 60.

¹⁶⁴ Thomas A. Johnson, '3 Deviates Invite Exclusion by Bars', *New York Times*, 22 April 1966, p. 43; Charles Grutzner, 'S.L.A. Won't Act Against Bars Refusing Service to Deviates', *New York Times*, 26 April 1966, p. 55; A further article mentioning the sip-in was printed when Julius' Bar was cleared of earlier charges that it had allowed solicitation on the premises: Charles Grutzner, 'Court Annuls S.L.A. Penalty in a Morals Case', *New York Times*, 9 March 1967, p. 33.

¹⁶⁵ Dick Leitsch to Sheila Paine, 29 April 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

¹⁶⁶ Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, 'Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth', *American Sociological Review*, 71 (2006), 724–51.

events happening on the West Coast, however, they were much less likely to be published in Manhattan based mainstream outlets. For example, while the police raid of a New Year's Eve benefit sponsored by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual in San Francisco in 1965 was covered by the local *Chronicle* and *Examiner* – who published six articles over the course of two weeks – the story was not picked up by the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*.¹⁶⁷ In contrast, with the Stonewall Inn only blocks away from the offices of many mainstream outlets, it is unsurprising that the riots received much greater coverage than any of the other possible birth events that Armstrong and Cragge discovered.¹⁶⁸ Whether or not something was 'spectacular' enough to be newsworthy, then, relied on a series of inter-related factors that defy easy quantification and scholars must be careful not to equate coverage with the level or significance of activity.

II.ii

While the geographic concentration on Manhattan may have played a part in the Stonewall myth's creation, however, it is important not to overlook the important role that future activism played in the signification process. Featuring only two short articles on the riots themselves, it is clear that initial coverage in the *New York Times* didn't match the significance given to the riots in future articles or the wider historiography.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, while footage of homophile pickets taken from CBS archives allowed the dress of these demonstrators to be critiqued in the documentary film *Before Stonewall*, the complete lack of footage of the riots forced PBS's *Stonewall Uprising* to present recreated or repurposed footage interspersed with photographs from personal and archival collections.¹⁷⁰ This absence of coverage is emphasised

¹⁶⁷ Armstrong and Cragge, p. 732 fn 8.

¹⁶⁸ Claiming that there were twelve articles on the Stonewall riots, Armstrong and Cragge missed an earlier article in the *Washington Post*. However, it is fair to presume that any outlying articles will not bridge the gap between these events: Associated Press, 'N.Y. Homosexuals Protest Raids', *The Washington Post*, 1 July 1969, section City Life, p. E2; Classifying both the *New York Post* and the *New York Daily News* as 'mainstream' – but excluding the *Village Voice*, which they classified as 'alternative' – Armstrong and Cragge fail to define the criteria by which these outlets were selected and relegate the full break down of this information to a separate online supplement: Armstrong and Cragge, p. 732 fn 8.

¹⁶⁹ '4 Policemen Hurt in "Village" Raid: Melee Near Sheridan Square Follows Action at Bar', *New York Times*, 29 June 1969, p. 33; 'Police Again Rout "Village" Youths: Outbreak by 400 Follows a Near-Riot Over Raid', *New York Times*, 30 June 1969, p. 22.

¹⁷⁰ Schiller and Rosenberg; Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, *American Experience: Stonewall Uprising* (PBS Distribution, 2011).

by the level given a couple of days later to the deforestation of a small area of parkland in Queens by a group of vigilantes who were angered by its use as a gay male cruising spot. With this act of petty vandalism receiving no fewer than six articles over a two week period – including one front-page article that carried a large picture of the now barren parkland – the muted coverage given to Stonewall means that even New Yorkers who were interested in news relating to the gay and lesbian community could be forgiven for overlooking what many now see as the most iconic event of twentieth-century LGBT history.¹⁷¹

This lack of coverage continued well past the immediate aftermath of the riots and influenced the reception given to post-Stonewall groups such as the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). Formed in the direct aftermath of the riots, independent GLF groups were active in cities across the US and consciously allied themselves with various other radical organisations. However, while the GLF and its rhetoric are perhaps the ultimate symbol of the supposed shift in community feeling during this period, the groups were barely mentioned in the mainstream press in the year following Stonewall, managing to elicit just two *New York Times* articles that focused on their activities.¹⁷² Once again, geographic biases played a role, with the *Times* ignoring GLF protests in other cities that were covered by closer outlets in the mainstream and local press.¹⁷³ Having started in Manhattan, however, the GLF's initial absence from the *Times'* record cannot be explained by geographic bias alone. Indeed, with GLF groups only receiving passing mention in sixteen articles printed in the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* in this period, mainstream outlets were clearly slow to recognise the significance of the emerging gay liberation movement.

This is not to argue that some sort of shift did not take place. Featuring on a Newsfront TV Special in June 1970, it is clear that these organisations were becoming known to others

¹⁷¹ David Bird, 'Trees in a Queens Park Cut Down as Vigilantes Harass Homosexuals', *New York Times*, 1 July 1969, pp. 1, 29; David Bird, 'Queens Resident Says the Police Stood By as Park Trees Were Cut', *New York Times*, 2 July 1969, p. 38; 'Police Did Answer Call on Cut Trees', *New York Times*, 3 July 1969, p. 29; David Bird, '2d Witness Tells of Park Tree-Cutting', *New York Times*, 4 July 1969, p. 25; 'Arboreal Vandals in Queens', *New York Times*, 7 July 1969, p. 32; David Bird, 'Police Continuing Inquiry on Trees: Have Not Yet Queried Man Linked to Queens Mystery', *New York Times*, 16 July 1969, p. 50.

¹⁷² 'Homosexuals Hold Protest in "Village" After Raid Nets 167', *New York Times*, 9 March 1970, p. 29; Associated Press, 'Homosexuals Disrupt Psychiatrists' Parley', *New York Times*, 15 May 1970, p. 38.

¹⁷³ Reuters, 'Protesting Homosexuals Seize City Hall in S.F.', *Washington Post*, 1 November 1969, p. 2; Reuters, 'San Francisco Homosexuals, Police Clash', *Chicago Tribune*, 1 November 1969, p. N3; '100 Protest Harassing of Homosexuals', *Chicago Tribune*, 17 April 1970, p. 11.

outside of the mainstream media.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, while hardly positive coverage, the GLF even featured in a routine by popular comedian David Frye, who used the organisation to poke fun at President Nixon's promise to 'bring everyone together'.¹⁷⁵ For the mainstream press, however, this early stage in the 'Modern Lesbian and Gay Rights Liberation' movement passed with very little notice. Instead, it was the first Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade (CSLDP) in 1970 that saw the biggest transformation in mainstream treatment of the growing gay liberation movement and launched it to a wider audience.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, while only seventeen articles in the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, and the *Washington Post* referenced 'gay liberation' in the first year after the Stonewall riots, ninety articles did so in the year following the first CSLDP.¹⁷⁷

With conservative police estimates putting attendance at more than 1,000, the CSLDP dwarfed any previous efforts at mobilising the gay and lesbian community behind political goals.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, with organisers claiming between 3,000 and 20,000 participants, it is likely that more gay men and women were involved in the CSLDP than the Stonewall riots themselves. Introducing the GLF as a 'homosexual organization that has held small demonstrations in Greenwich Village in the past year', Lacey Fosburgh's article hinted at the importance this increased size played in positive coverage of the CSLDP as well as the absence of previous GLF protests from the paper.¹⁷⁹ However, while the numbers present at the CSLDP were certainly a key factor in its unprecedented coverage, the parade also fit into wider media narratives and demonstrates the importance of news cycles.¹⁸⁰ In contrast to the way that wider activism had detracted from coverage of the homophile pickets, the size, tenor, and even dress of those on the CSLDP encouraged comparisons with a wider counter-cultural wave that was emerging

¹⁷⁴ 'Television', *New York Times*, 24 June 1970, p. 93.

¹⁷⁵ Hollie I. West, 'David Frye Pokes Fun at the President: Rhythm Mode', *Washington Post*, 4 January 1970, section Style/Entertainments, p. H8.

¹⁷⁶ For example, while GLF groups would be formed in Canada and the United Kingdom, it is perhaps not a coincidence that both emerged several months after the first CSLDP in November and October of 1970 respectively.

¹⁷⁷ These figures were found via a proquest search of the named outlets using the search term 'Gay Liberation'. Only articles and front-page articles were included in the search.

¹⁷⁸ Lacey Fosburgh, 'Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park', *New York Times*, 29 June 1970, pp. 1, 29 (p. 29).

¹⁷⁹ Fosburgh, 'Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park', pp. 1, 29.

¹⁸⁰ As subsequent coverage of gay liberation demonstrations proved, even uneventful protests could receive coverage if numbers were high enough: '500 Homosexuals Stage a Protest', *New York Times*, 3 October 1971, p. 66.

from the nation's youth. Indeed, while receiving little coverage of their own activities in the year between Stonewall and the CSLDP, the GLF were often listed in connection with other protest movements – even if only to signal the ‘kookiness’ of those involved.¹⁸¹ This tendency to associate gay liberation groups with a larger wave of radical protest continued to influence coverage following the first CSLDP, with some articles even noting their absence from radical gatherings.¹⁸² Picked up by smaller news outlets in a way that only increased the usage of this news wave, it was clear that gay liberation activists were now seen as part of a wider radicalisation of American society.¹⁸³

In many ways, this association was fully deserved. While the MSNY and MSW had been campaigning to join federal employment – especially in areas requiring security clearances – radicals were rejecting the authority of such institutions to make decisions about their lives and the lives of those they affected abroad. Similarly, news releases relating to the pickets outside the Pentagon in 1966 had claimed that:

It should be noted that this demonstration will take a firmly neutral, “hands-off” position in regard to any aspect whatever of the Vietnam conflict and controversy; and also, in regard to the merits of the draft itself, or other aspects of military service.¹⁸⁴

At a time when ‘militant’ political movements in the country were burning draft cards and calling the President a war criminal, it is not hard to see why this kind of neutral rhetoric failed to make a huge impression on newsmakers looking for sensational headlines. With their language, demeanour, and approach much more aligned to the late 1950s and early 1960s, homophiles were never likely to be included in the mass wave of protests that accompanied their demonstrations in the mid-to-late 1960s. In contrast, with gay liberation activists embracing the politics and dress of the counter-culture, their activities were far more aligned

¹⁸¹ Wallace Turner, ‘More Than 100,000 on Coast Demonstrate in Moderate Vein’, *New York Times*, 16 November 1969; Tom Wicker, ‘In The Nation: Ideology, Yes; Idealism, No’, *New York Times*, 5 February 1970, p. 38.

¹⁸² Lacey Fosburgh, ‘The “Gay” People Demand Their Rights’, *New York Times*, 5 July 1970, p. 100; ‘Delegates to U.N. Youth Assembly See a Black Militant’s Harlem’, *New York Times*, 17 July 1970, p. 10; Will Lissner, ‘New Left Groups in Session Here’, *New York Times*, 19 July 1970, p. 33; Herbert G. Lawson, ‘A Sonic Bust In A Stunned Seattle, Only Radicals See Good in Rejection of SST’, *Wall Street Journal*, 7 December 1970, pp. 1, 13.

¹⁸³ Kristi Witker, ‘Limp Wrists and Clenched Fists’, *Boston Globe*, 19 August 1970.

¹⁸⁴ *News Release: Homosexual Citizens to Picket at White House and Pentagon*, 19 May 1966, Gittings and Tobin Lahusen Papers, Box 102 Folder 13, NYPL.

with the zeitgeist of the times. In doing so, the free-wheeling spirit and radical rhetoric of gay liberation achieved by accident what the carefully designed and planned homophile pickets had tried so hard to accomplish; rather than competing with larger and more established news waves, radical gay men and women were now able to use these waves to further their own agendas and raise their own media profiles. While it is difficult to directly link this association with the rise in reporting on gay liberation activities, it is clear that groups such as the GLF benefited from the association and subsequent exposure.

As with all news waves, however, these gains were eroded over time. Emerging towards the end of a counter-cultural revolution that would face serious challenges in the early 1970s, this new found ability to secure coverage would begin to wane as the process of media fatigue required events to be increasingly spectacular if they wished to secure coverage. Unfortunately for the GLF and other radical gay groups, this fatigue with radicalism coincided with an increase in activity as gay men and lesbians who had been active in various other movements during the decade left to establish organisations that better suited their needs. As a consequence of this late emergence, John D’Emilio argues, the gay liberation movement has not been fully accepted into narratives of the 1960s and remains ‘the forgotten – perhaps, even, the unwanted – stepchild of the era’.¹⁸⁵

Conclusion

While a number of landmark events signify genuine and hard fought shifts in movement history, others owe their historical significance to media logistics, organisational strategy, or a combination of the two. Known as pegs, certain events – such as the Meredith March – could become symbolic of changes that had much longer and complicated histories. Combining an interest in the spectacular with a desire to simplify complicated narratives, this process of pegging major developments to particular events or occurrences is a common media tool. Consequently, any attempt to equate the level of media coverage with the ‘success’ or ‘significance’ of a particular event is highly problematic. Indeed, as this chapter has shown,

¹⁸⁵ John D’Emilio, *The World Turned: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 24.

this association can downplay or ignore the importance of significant events that take place outside of the media's gaze or interest, while simultaneously elevating events that were really just a step in a much longer process.

Importantly, this process is neither stable nor predictable. Unlike small scale, local newspapers – who can find it difficult to fill their pages with suitably newsworthy stories on a regular basis – national scale media outlets have literally thousands of events each day which could potentially be considered 'fit to print'. Despite the media being described by journalism professors as a 'voice for the voiceless', this competitive atmosphere tended to encourage a disproportionate focus on the spectacular, elevating a particular style of activism while simultaneously silencing the voices and everyday practices of millions of Americans fighting for their freedom.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, quantitative research conducted by Daniel Myers and Beth Schaefer Caniglia has found that 'the selection process [exaggerated] the typical amount of violence in civil disorders by emphasizing intense outbreaks and ignoring mild ones, leading to a distorted view of protest among policymakers, the public, and scholars'.¹⁸⁷

The notion of a liberal press that 'stared down shotgun barrels and crawled out of ditches under gunfire to get stories', then, risks portraying civil rights coverage as somehow above the logistical, editorial, and commercial processes that dominate news production.¹⁸⁸ Even at publications such as *Newsweek*, where Peter Goldman claims that Editor Osborne Elliott ensured civil rights stories 'were likeliest to survive the juggling and cutting process', decisions still had to be made about what Southern news stories were 'fit to print' and which ones were not.¹⁸⁹ By lionizing the mainstream media and making assumptions about the depth of its record, scholars risk ignoring the fact that civil rights coverage conformed to journalistic processes which meant 'that the more intense an event, the more likely it is to be covered by newspapers'.¹⁹⁰ This has resulted in a narrative of the civil rights movement that concentrates

¹⁸⁶ Charlotte Grimes, 'Debate: Civil Rights and the Press', *Journalism Studies*, 6 (2005), 117–34 (p. 117).

¹⁸⁷ Myers and Caniglia, p. 538; See also Kenneth T. Andrews and Michael Biggs, 'The Dynamics of Protest Diffusion: Movement Organizations, Social Networks, and News Media in the 1960 Sit-Ins', *American Sociological Review*, 71 (2006), 752–77.

¹⁸⁸ Melvin N. Coffee in Grimes, p. 126.

¹⁸⁹ Goldman.

¹⁹⁰ Aside from intensity, Ortiz et al. argue that 'event duration, presence of violence including injuries and deaths, presence of police or other repressive social agents, number of arrests, and property

on a specific type of activism – and the violence it provoked – while ignoring longer term grassroots efforts that often had a much longer lasting impression on communities once churches were rebuilt and burning crosses were removed from lawns. Indeed, with media fatigue requiring greater and greater acts of violence before events would make the news, only certain areas of the Deep South got any coverage at all. As a result, the diverse ways in which Southern communities experienced and fought against racism in the post-war era were ignored as campaigns in Birmingham and Selma concentrated focus on Alabama, while coverage of the Summer Project elevated Mississippi to a state of almost mythical violence.

Far from a ‘voice for the voiceless’, then, the media actively rewarded those voices that could make the most noise. For SNCC, this concentration on the spectacular encouraged the development of particular projects that distorted the organisation’s main focus while simultaneously bringing more publicity than ever before. Receiving worried letters from allies, which claimed that ‘there is nothing in the paper these days about Snick’, the organisation increased the participation of Northern white volunteers in order to increase media attention and consequently protect its members from segregationist violence.¹⁹¹ However, while the limited early involvement of whites in SNCC was embraced as part of the organisation’s ‘beloved community’, their mass involvement in the summers of 1963 and 1964 helped create a misleading image of interracial organising. Predicated on the publicity it brought, rather than any firm ideological commitment, it was inevitable that mass white involvement would decline when the organisation began to question the benefits of mainstream coverage. However, when SNCC eventually attempted to limit white participation to activities in the white community, this idealised image of interracial cooperation helped the organisation’s opponents accuse it of racist Black Nationalism and obscured the fact that this was a return to

damage’ also influence the likelihood of coverage: David G. Ortiz and others, ‘Where Do We Stand with Newspaper Data?’, *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 10 (2005), 397–419 (pp. 398–399).

¹⁹¹ Dan Schechter to Horace Julian Bond, 10 February 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 668, SNCC Papers; Charles Wingfield to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 7 October 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 166, SNCC Papers; Julie Prettyman to Horace Julian Bond, 11 March 1964, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 359, SNCC Papers.

previous practice that was also being adopted by other civil rights organisations across the South.¹⁹²

In contrast to the spectacular demonstrations and violence that accompanied a range of social movement activity in the 1960s, it is easy to see why early homophile demonstrations have been criticised as weak and timid affairs. Unable to draw large numbers of participants and adopting tactics that had become increasingly commonplace, there was little to attract the attention of a generally hostile press. Furthermore, while attempting to learn from the symbolism and power of civil rights protests, the location and timing of MSNY and MSW demonstrations failed to comprehend the competition they would face from larger, more socially legitimised news stories. To ignore the impact of these pickets on the homophile movement, however, would be to underestimate the radical departure they represented from previous activism. By openly and proudly advocating for their rights, MSNY and MSW demonstrators were challenging mainstream narratives that relegated them to second-class citizenship. Adopting slogans – such as ‘Gay is Good’ – that would be associated with the post-Stonewall era, these picketers and their allies helped to create a narrative and history of activism that would inform future protests.

Importantly, to characterise these demonstrations as outdated conforms to a particular narrative of social movement trajectory that mirrors the lens of escalation present in media accounts. While the street theatre and noisy rallies of the gay liberationists did a much better job of conforming to the sensationalist needs of the mainstream media – especially after the first CSLDP – it would be wrong to characterise this as the only ‘authentic’ version of activism. Indeed, by comparing the gay and lesbian rights movement to others with much longer histories, attempts to include gay liberation within narratives of the decade can be problematic. For example, D’Emilio has argued that:

The “sixties” are less about a time period bound by the start and the end of a decade than they are about an era organically bound together by events,

¹⁹² In one of the movement’s many ironies David Danzig charges that white NAACP Defense Fund head Jack Greenburg was asked not to attend the NAACP conference at which Roy Wilkins denounced Black Power as racially divisive: David Danzig, ‘In Defense of Black Power’, Commentary, September 1966, SNCC Papers, A.VIII.134, Slide 837; For a discussion of Black Power within the NAACP see Simon Hall, ‘The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969.’

outlook, and mood. My guess is that for many gay men and lesbians, the sixties happened in the seventies.¹⁹³

While D'Emilio's attempt to widen 1960s historiography has a number of merits, this conception of the sixties as a decade which can be accurately represented by a particular set of 'events', or even more nebulously a particular 'outlook, and mood', risks foregrounding a certain type of experience that was not shared by a significant portion of the American population. Indeed, by 'placing gay in the sixties' in a way that associates it with later, more radical activism, D'Emilio seems to be denying the existence of 'true' sixties activity in the decade itself – drawing a clear line between the activism he catalogued in his seminal work *Sexual Politics* and the struggles he personally identifies with as a founding member of the Gay Academic Union in 1973.¹⁹⁴ While homophile activism was certainly not on the size or scale of civil rights activism during the 1960s or gay liberation activity in the 1970s, to require social movements to conform to a certain format of 'events, outlook, and mood' risks replicating media narratives that homogenised and sensationalised complex minority movements into digestible stories for white, heteronormative audiences. Indeed, just as the failure to cover homophile activity that declared 'gay is good' does not mean that all gay men and women lived 'furtive, closeted, miserable lives', neither does the increased coverage of gay liberation activities in the early 1970s mean that many in that period could afford to 'be free and open'.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Emilio, *The World Turned*, p. 24.

¹⁹⁴ Emilio, *The World Turned*, p. 23; John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).

¹⁹⁵ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, 'Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of Pre-Stonewall Lesbian History', *Radical History Review*, 1995 (1995), 59–79 (p. 66).

Chapter Four: Sourcing Practices and the Quest for Legitimacy

‘On grounds of both personal belief and professional codes, the staffer has the option of selection at many points. He can decide whom to interview and whom to ignore, what questions to ask, which quotations to note, and on writing the story which items to feature (with an eye toward the headlines), which to bury, and in general what tone to give the several possible elements of the story’
(Warren Breed, 1955)¹

‘The individual journalist may have the duty, but often does not have the opportunity, to tell the truth as he sees it. He is a hired man, and because he is, his is not a profession’
(Thomas Griffith, 1959)²

Unlike syndicated columnists, who advanced their reputations by offering forthright and personal opinions, straight news reporters established their authority through the selection of socially legitimised sources, with journalists relying on the words of others to express opinion, contest evidence, or offer information that could not be independently verified.³ Sourcing quotes and ideas from conflicting experts, this system of reporting was designed to ‘balance’ competing ideas and ensure that news coverage was ‘objective’ in appearance.⁴ As we have already seen, however, the lofty rhetoric of ‘objective’ journalism often broke down under the dual pressures of commercial logistics and individual prejudice.

The role that journalistic sources play in news accounts is crucial to understanding how activists attempted to influence news agendas. Given the limited time reporters had to research and write their stories, they relied on their sources for information and clarification, giving these sources a great deal of power over the process of news construction. Indeed, John R. Zaller has claimed that ‘reporters will regard as newsworthy that which their

¹ Warren Breed, ‘Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis’, *Social Forces*, 33.4 (1955), 326–35 (p. 333).

² Thomas Griffith, ‘The Pursuit of Journalism’, *Nieman Reports*, January 1959
<<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102000/1959-The-Pursuit-of-Journalism.aspx>>
[accessed 20 August 2014].

³ Mark Allen Peterson, ‘Getting to the Story: Unwriteable Discourse and Interpretive Practice in American Journalism’, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 74.4 (2001), 201–11.

⁴ For an overview of sourcing practices, see Iain Reeves and Richard Lance Keeble, *The Newspapers Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 96–101.

“legitimate” sources say is newsworthy’.⁵ While in some cases there was a distinct and socially influenced hierarchy that dictated who could speak with authority and on what issues, the personal attitudes of journalists and their editors inevitably affected the ‘experts’ they consulted and consequently the ‘truth’ they reflected.

For instance, when confronted with the disorder of social movements, the media often sought out and legitimised a small number of individuals to act as spokespeople and distil complex debates into quotable sound bites.⁶ In the process, journalists acted as arbiters of legitimacy between a diverse set of possible authorities, giving socially accepted actors positive coverage while ignoring or sidelining views that did not fit media narratives crafted by white, heteronormative journalists and editors. However, as sociologist William Gamson and others have argued, when it comes to the construction of news, ‘even an uneven contest on a tilted playing field is a contest’.⁷ To concentrate on media failings, therefore, is to ignore how activists were consciously looking to influence the process of news construction and often adapted their actions and public communications to better fit the daily habits and professional practices of the journalists they were trying to persuade. This activism not only influenced immediate coverage, but also changed the balance of news construction itself, producing long-lasting changes that were not always felt in the periods in which they were first fought for and won.

With a superior knowledge of their particular area of expertise, beat journalists had much greater authority over what stories they chose to cover. Indeed, journalist Warren Breed has argued that once established on a beat, ‘it is clear that the function of the reporter changes’.⁸ The ability to decide what events became newsworthy, and when, however, was not just a freedom, but also a responsibility. Expected to generate a regular number of printable stories and ensure that they were not scooped by rivals at other outlets, journalists established a

⁵ John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 315.

⁶ Edward P. Morgan, ‘Media Culture and the Public Memory of the Black Panther Party’, in *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement*, ed. by Jama Lazerow and Yohuru R. Williams (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 324–74 (p. 327).

⁷ William A. Gamson and others, ‘Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18 (1992), 373–93 (p. 382).

⁸ Breed, p. 333.

'news net' that divided their beat into a set of daily or weekly routines.⁹ This process of routinisation meant that reporters relied on a smaller number of news sources and institutions to gather what they deemed to be the most newsworthy elements of their beat. Inevitably, this practice encouraged the coverage of some activities and individuals, while ignoring or undermining others. As Mark Fishman has argued, 'because journalists cannot detect something they are never aware of, it is necessary to look at how reporters systematically expose themselves to occurrences'.¹⁰ Firstly, therefore, this chapter examines how journalists covering the race beat in the South went about constructing their beat and how their personal experiences and prejudices shaped the coverage they produced. In contrast, the second section of the chapter will show how the news net of reporters on other beats – such as medicine, religion, and crime – acted to side-line the voices of homophile activists, requiring them to influence mainstream narratives in different and more indirect ways. Examining this process not only allows for a reinterpretation of the oft criticised interaction between homophobic public figures and homophile organisations, but also highlights the attempts made by activists to speak on behalf of their own community.

I

In what Gordon Mantler has called the 'scholar's virtual lionization of journalists', there has been an outpouring of support for race beat reporters such as Claude Sitton of the *New York Times*.¹¹ It is important, however, not to mirror faults present in wider narratives of the civil rights struggle and perpetuate a false dichotomy between a liberal Northern press and their segregationist Southern counterparts. To do so would not only hide the important and sometimes courageous work of liberal Southern reporters, but also ignore the fact that many of the mainstream journalists first assigned to the South were born and raised in the communities that they covered.¹² While outside reporters of any kind would quickly become suspect in the Deep South, the ability to 'talk the cracker talk and walk the plowboy walk'

⁹ Gaye Tuchman, 'The News Net', *Social Research*, 45.2 (1978), 253–76.

¹⁰ Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), pp. 32–4.

¹¹ Gordon Mantler, "'The Press Did You In': The Poor People's Campaign and the Mass Media", *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, 3 (2010), 33–54 (p. 34).

¹² For a series of case studies on Southern reporters see: *The Press and Race: Mississippi Journalists Confront the Movement*, ed. by David R. Davies (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001).

retained certain advantages.¹³ For instance, confident that he ‘could bluff and brazen myself out of danger in a crowd’, correspondent Karl Fleming – a North Carolinian who joined the *Newsweek* Atlanta bureau in 1961 – described Northern colleague Peter Goldman as ‘not the kind of instantly recognizable Yankee, frankly, I wanted to have by my side when the rednecks erupted’.¹⁴ Beyond simple safety concerns, however, Northern editors such as Osborne Elliott also felt that these reconstructed Southern liberals were uniquely placed to understand the movement as it unfolded.¹⁵ Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Bill Emerson of *Newsweek* claimed that the home-grown complexion of Southern race beat journalists was instrumental to their understanding of the events they covered:

[We] weren’t “segs” but we also weren’t “nigger lovers”. We were a rueful, sadder, but wiser bunch who had gone through a lot of the process ourselves and understood the primordial blocks, snags, blind spots, hang-ups etc., in the Southern mind and conscience.¹⁶

Almost exclusively white and male, the prejudices, concerns, and beliefs of their time undoubtedly influenced the work of Southern reporters and moderated their interactions with the local white and African American communities as well as the hundreds of activists who travelled to the Deep South. Born into segregated communities, correspondents such as Fleming grew up in an environment where racist interactions with local African Americans – during which, ‘these interlopers called us “soda crackers” and we called them “niggers”’ – appeared natural to those who ‘had no idea what racism was’.¹⁷ Indeed, Fleming’s first equal exchange with a black person came at the age of thirty four when, as a stringer for *Newsweek*, he interviewed James Forman of SNCC.¹⁸ Discussing later attempts to host interracial dinner

¹³ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p. 298; Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times* claims this was also Managing Editor Turner Catledge’s rationale for assigning stories to ‘reporters with Southern accents’: Harrison E. Salisbury, *A Time of Change: A Reporter’s Tales of Our Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 45.

¹⁴ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 298; 277.

¹⁵ Osborn Elliott, *The World of Oz* (New York: Viking Press, 1980); Similar feelings existed at other Northern outlets such as the *New York Times*: Harrison E. Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor: The New York Times and Its Times* (New York: Times Books, 1980), p. 362.

¹⁶ Bill Emerson in Elliott, p. 73.

¹⁷ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 99.

¹⁸ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 229.

parties, Fleming claimed that this was 'all new territory for white people with zero experience of meeting Negroes on an equal or social footing'.¹⁹

This is not to argue that there was no division between Southern journalists working for major Northern titles and the segregationist editors of the lily white Southern press. Indeed, for white journalists in the South, association with Northern papers like the *New York Times* was enough to mark one out as radical. However, in ways very similar to the FBI, early race beat reporters were not only based in the Southern communities which they were investigating, but also relied on the cooperation of the white power structure when conducting much of their business. This dependence on officialdom was not unique to race beat journalists, with all reporters relying to some extent on established figures within their particular beats.²⁰ It was clear, however, that when identifying 'newsworthy' sources, early race beat reporters in the South were more inclined to rely on the traditional white power structure than the leaders emerging from the local African American community in the wake of the Second World War. Craig Flournoy, for instance, has found that all ten of the people cited in the *Times'* only front-page article on the Emmet Till story in 1955 were white, with Southern Correspondent John Popham only twice including the testimony of African American witnesses in his coverage and ignoring the local black community entirely.²¹

Furthermore, during the trial of Till's murderers, Popham used his contacts to convince the judge that he should act 'as [a] go-between with the national press corps' and local officials.²² By 'riding herd on the northern reporters to ensure they complied with southern customs, racial and otherwise', Popham was undoubtedly attempting to defuse tensions and help his fellow journalists, but it also meant that Northern correspondents were reliant on the same locally approved sources of information and remained divorced from the African American

¹⁹ Even these token efforts were enough to arouse interest, with other Southern journalists, such as Ralph McGill of the *Atlanta Constitution* phoning him for tips: Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, pp. 245–6.

²⁰ Herbert J. Gans, *Democracy and the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 45–68.

²¹ Craig Flournoy, 'Reporting the Movement in Black and White: The Emmett Till Lynching and the Montgomery Bus Boycott' (Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 2003), pp. 98–100.

²² Douglas Martin, 'John Popham, 89, Dies: Journalist Was Noted for Perceptive Coverage of South', *New York Times*, 14 December 1999, p. B13.

community.²³ This lack of contact between mainstream journalists and African American sources in the South was further compounded by the edict of Sheriff H. C. Strider, who barred the twelve African American reporters in attendance from mixing with their white counterparts.²⁴

In contrast to Popham and other white journalists, Simeon Booker and a small number of other African American reporters played an active role in the trial as it unfolded. Working with local leaders to track down and locate a number of individuals who claimed to have witnessed the abduction of Till, Booker and others provided the prosecution's strongest evidence linking Roy Bryant and John William Milam to Till's murder.²⁵ In a further illustration of the distance between local African American communities and the supposedly liberal Northern press, local leaders did not turn over this information to Popham or any of the other journalists from Northern papers; instead it was Clark Porteous of the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* that they trusted with their lives.²⁶ While the appearance of these witnesses obviously created a stir amongst those covering the trial, Popham and other white journalists failed to credit Booker and others for locating the "surprise" [...] "new witnesses".²⁷

As the nature of the civil rights struggle changed, however, so did the nature of race beat reporting and the composition of its cadre. Having neglected coverage of the South for years, the unfolding civil rights movement had mainstream publications scrabbling to cover what editors such as Turner Catledge saw as 'the biggest sociological story in American history'.²⁸ By the beginning of the 1960s, men like Popham and Bill Emerson had been replaced by a newer

²³ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, The History of American Journalism, 6 (Westport: Praeger, 2006), p. 71.

²⁴ Simeon Booker, 'A Negro Reporter at the Till Trial', *Nieman Reports*, January 1956 <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100547/1956-A-Negro-Reporter-at-the-Till-Trial.aspx>> [accessed 20 August 2014].

²⁵ Booker; Given the nature of Southern law enforcement and the lack of enthusiasm shown by white reporters for investigative journalism, the Emmet Till case was not the only instance where African American journalists were alone in attempting to find out what had happened to black victims: Hank Klibanoff, 'L. Alex Wilson: A Reporter Who Refused to Run', *Media Studies Journal*, 14.2 (2000) <<http://www.freedomforum.org/publications/msj/courage.summer2000/y10.html>> [accessed 20 August 2014].

²⁶ Booker.

²⁷ For some reason Popham only ever used the terms 'surprise' and 'new witnesses' within quotation marks, giving the impression that these witnesses were neither a surprise nor new: John N. Popham, 'State Rests Case in Youth's Killing: Mississippi Witness Places Negro Boy With Defendant on Morning of Kidnapping', *New York Times*, 23 September 1955, p. 15.

²⁸ Turner Catledge, as cited in Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor*, p. 361.

generation of reporters who owed their presence in the South almost wholly to the unfolding civil rights story. Indeed, Barry Gottehrer, an editor at *Newsweek's* New York office, wrote in 1964 that, 'in [the] past two or three years, the continuing nature of [the] civil rights story has prompted many newspapers to increase staff to handle it', while *Newsweek* reporter Joe Cumming claimed that 'since Little Rock there has been an almost complete change of faces'.²⁹

Having already established that a Southern accent could save journalists from a certain amount of hostility, Harrison Salisbury claims that *New York Times* Managing Director and Southerner Turner Catledge 'tried to keep *Times* coverage in the hands of reporters with Southern accents'.³⁰ Often, the *Times* and other publications, including *Newsweek*, offered contracts to former stringers such as Karl Fleming, John Herbers, and Roy Reed who were native Southerners and had worked previously for local and wire press outlets in the region. However, as the movement grew and events were taking place in more and more cities and towns across the South, Northern editors found that 'there weren't enough Southern accents to go around'.³¹ More importantly, while Popham and others who had covered the early Southern movement for the mainstream press had embedded themselves in Southern life, this new cadre of journalists spent much of their time flying from one racial crisis to another, never staying long enough to establish strong connections with locals on either side of the conflict.³² Consequently, they often relied on national contacts or other journalists to introduce them to the beat and guide at least their initial investigations. Charles Gusewelle of the *Kansas City Star*, for example, claims that the paper's management was so 'out of touch' with the realities of the South, that he initially relied on the instructions of a reporter at *The Call*, an African American owned publication in Kansas City, to guide his coverage.³³ Other journalists have shared similar experiences, with Jack Nelson attributing his ability to 'find my way around a

²⁹ Barry Gottehrer, 'Telegram to Atlanta and Houston', 11 May 1964, *Newsweek* Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 10 Folder 9, MARBL; Joe Cumming, 'Race Beat', 25 May 1964, *Newsweek* Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 10 Folder 10, MARBL.

³⁰ Salisbury, *A Time of Change*, p. 45.

³¹ Salisbury, *A Time of Change*, p. 45.

³² Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor*, p. 362.

³³ Charles W. Gusewelle, 2014.

confusing and sometimes dangerous situation' in 1965 to the help of 'superb reporter' John Herbers.³⁴

This kind of mentoring was not unique to the race beat, with new reporters often copying the routines and actions of their more experienced colleagues until they could establish their own particular rhythms.³⁵ However, given the vast distances race beat reporters were expected to cover – and the temporary nature of many of the assignments – more experienced colleagues wielded much greater influence. Remembering the expertise of Bill Minor, the Mississippi Bureau chief for the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* and stringer for *Newsweek* and the *New York Times*, Nelson has claimed that:

If you were going to Mississippi and you were covering a story, a major civil rights story, you'd be crazy if you didn't check with Bill first and ask him, "Well, what's the angle here, what's the situation? What do you see?" Because he knew it, he knew where all the bodies were buried, you know he knew every rock to turn over.³⁶

Minor and others undoubtedly imparted such advice in good faith, but this pattern of coverage gave experienced reporters a great deal of power to dictate which stories should be covered and how. With out of town reporters often reliant on their local counterparts, it also ensured that certain elements of the South were not covered in mainstream news. In response to a request by Columbia University for information on the segregationist Southern press, for instance, Harold Farber told Sitton in 1961, 'I can't see how anyone who lives in the region can do a story critical of other reporters, newspapers, or other media with whom he will have to work later on'.³⁷

While cooperation on stories was not common in journalism, reporters on the race beat often shared information and contacts with one another.³⁸ Partly for security and partly for

³⁴ Jack Nelson, 'Nieman Reports: Reporting on the Civil Rights Movement', *Nieman Reports* <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100991/Reporting-on-the-Civil-Rights-Movement.aspx>> [accessed 6 February 2014].

³⁵ Fishman.

³⁶ Jack Nelson, 2004 <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/jacknelson_oral_essay.pdf> [accessed 28 September 2013]; Others agree with Nelson's assessment: Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 329; Peter Goldman, 2013.

³⁷ Harold Farber to Claude Sitton, 14 October 1961, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, New York Times Company Records, National Desk Records, Box 2 Folder 21.

³⁸ Nelson, 2004.

company, journalists such as Karl Fleming and Claude Sitton would routinely travel together, cooperating on news stories that they reported back to their respective publications.³⁹ This camaraderie was even formalised by some race beat reporters who established their own tongue-in-cheek organisation – initially named the ‘Southern War Correspondents Club’ before becoming the more easily abbreviated ‘Southern Correspondents on Racial Equality Wars’ (SCREW) – that printed business cards during the 1963 Birmingham Campaign as a badge of honour for its members.⁴⁰ While Cumming claims that there was some distinction between the more conservative local reporters and ‘the mainstream boys’, this *esprit de corps* amongst race beat journalists generally cut across political and geographic lines.⁴¹ As such, this comradeship and mentoring did not necessarily homogenise the content of race beat stories – with publications such as *Newsweek* and *TIME* covering stories from very different angles – but it did ensure that certain events received widespread coverage and others, conversely, did not. Indeed, Fred Powledge has claimed that the authority of Sitton was such that, ‘reporters from other publications used his presence or absence to measure the importance of an occasion’.⁴² Sitton’s expertise and strong relationship with activists in the South often vindicated this follow-my-leader approach, but it also encouraged mainstream outlets to concentrate on a particular set of events and thus overlook action occurring elsewhere.

I.i

While early Southern journalists like Popham had been well respected in Southern white officialdom, this new generation of race beat reporters were received with increasing hostility. Following the Little Rock crisis of 1957, which saw more than 225 reporters from across the globe descend on the town, Bob Allison of CBS news claimed that ‘the northern newspaper reporter has been definitely tied in with the machinery of enforcing integration. [...] Apparently now there is a solidified conviction in the South that the reporter from the North is

³⁹ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 299.

⁴⁰ Cumming, ‘Race Beat’.

⁴¹ Cumming, ‘Race Beat’.

⁴² Fred Powledge, *Free at Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), p. 514.

going to do everything wrong'.⁴³ By 1962, UPI reporter John Herbers claimed that this feeling even extended to wire service operators, with distinctions between outlets becoming blurred in the face of growing hostility to news reporters in general.⁴⁴ It was no coincidence, for example, that of the two people killed during the Ole Miss riots in 1962, one was journalist Paul Guihard, a reporter for the French *Agence France-Presse*. Hostility to the media was popular across the South, with Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety, Eugene 'Bull' Connor arguing that 'the trouble with this country is communism, socialism, and journalism'.⁴⁵

Consequently, while elected officials and law enforcement officers are perhaps the archetypal journalistic source, race beat reporters in the South found that this usually fruitful relationship was complicated by racial tensions and increasing hostility towards Northern influence of any kind. Physically attacked by law enforcement officers and publicly denounced by elected officials, reporters for mainstream publications could not expect the same level of cooperation or honesty from officials in the South as they would enjoy in New York, Los Angeles, or Washington D.C.. Even established reporters such as Fleming felt that being 'an alien reporter in the remote towns of Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana [...] was to be almost totally isolated behind enemy lines', claiming that in some areas his Southern accent, 'made it even worse. Not only was I a troublemaker, I was a traitor as well'.⁴⁶ For African American journalists, this hostile racial atmosphere was considerably worse. Despite coming much earlier to the story, black reporters would be regularly excluded from press conferences, snubbed or patronised by white officials, and would often have to 'shed their suits and ties and put on dusty bib overalls and a low-headed shuffle in order to slip into a Southern town and start reporting'.⁴⁷ Lacking their normal sources for collecting and validating information, race beat journalists were therefore uniquely receptive to the communications output of civil rights

⁴³ Bob Allison, as cited in Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, p. 73.

⁴⁴ John Herbers, 'The Reporter in the Deep South', *Nieman Reports*, April 1962
<<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102051/1962-The-Reporter-in-the-Deep-South.aspx>>
[accessed 20 August 2014].

⁴⁵ Eugene 'Bull' Connor in David Greenberg, 'The Idea of "The Liberal Media" and Its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement', *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, 1 (2008), 167–86 (p. 176).

⁴⁶ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, pp. 19–20; Similar sentiments were expressed by white activists in SNCC: Joan C. Browning, 'Shiloh Witness', in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, ed. by Constance Curry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 37–84 (p. 63); Bob Zellner, *The Wrong Side of Murder Creek: A White Southerner in the Freedom Movement* (Montgomery: NewSouth Books, 2008).

⁴⁷ Klibanoff.

organisations active in the South. Consequently, just as crime beat reporters would spend much of their daily routine checking in with various sources in police departments and legal offices, working the race beat ‘meant cultivating contacts in the young but expanding civil rights movement and aggressively checking in with them on a regular basis for possible stories’.⁴⁸

This increased capacity for influence encouraged rapid and significant changes in the way that SNCC structured their organisation.⁴⁹ During the years 1962-4, SNCC’s Communication Section underwent a process of expansion and professionalisation that allowed it to produce press releases that J. Donald Porter of the *New Jersey Chronicle* praised for being ‘of tremendous interest to readers’.⁵⁰ Indeed, Communication Section worker Mary King claimed in 1963 that the Southern Regional Council – a body established in 1944 to promote racial equality and discourage racial violence in the South – had endorsed SNCC’s press releases as the ‘most careful and accurate record of events available’.⁵¹ Stressing that press releases to local journalists ‘must be factual, honest, accurate’, the organisation established such a reputation with race beat journalists that Communication Section worker Ilene Strelitz claimed ‘the press has come to trust and respect us as sources of news and feature tips in a way that one can observe increasing from week to week’.⁵² By 1964, Mary King argued that ‘SNCC is listened to today, as it once was not. SNCC’s program forced the press and the nation to listen. Greater sophistication and better methods for dealing with the press nationally have been developed. We are listened to more attentively’.⁵³

In taking on this role, SNCC essentially established itself as an alternative wire press in the South, with Julian Bond instructing colleagues in SNCC’s Washington Office to act as a ‘source

⁴⁸ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 229.

⁴⁹ For a thorough examination of these changes see Vanessa Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights: The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Use of Public Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Leigh Raiford, ‘“Come Let Us Build a New World Together”: SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement’, *American Quarterly*, 59 (2007), 1129–57.

⁵⁰ J. Donald Porter to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 1 October 1964, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 511, SNCC Papers.

⁵¹ Mary King to Dean Gottehrer, 25 September 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 117, SNCC Papers.

⁵² *Press Proceedings*, n.d., Series A.VII.5, Reel 14 Slide 1062, SNCC Papers; Ilene Strelitz, *Communications*, Summer 1964, Mary E. King Papers, Box 1 Folder 14, WHS.

⁵³ Mary King, ‘To Atlanta Office Staff’, 1964, Mary E. King Papers, Box 1 Folder 14, WHS.

for information' for journalists on stories that 'they're too lazy to look up themselves'.⁵⁴ In doing so, SNCC also highlighted the pervasiveness of passive reporting, which is the practice of covering prescheduled publicity events or responding to press releases and other materials from organisations.⁵⁵ While Kevin Barnhurst and Diana Mutz claim that this style of news has decreased in more recent times, Leon Sigal found that almost fifty per cent of *New York Times* and *Washington Post* articles still depended on such practices in 1973.⁵⁶ Crucially, passive reporting gave SNCC much greater control over the image that was projected through the mainstream media. Instructing all volunteers to refer journalistic enquiries to Project Directors during the 1964 Summer Project, the Communications Section was able to better control what information made it to the press and, more importantly, what did not.⁵⁷ Indeed, the success of this strategy was clear in the Project's coverage, with Mary King claiming, 'it was almost embarrassing this past summer to pick up newspapers from across the country and read line for line the news reports that were written in the Jackson communications office'.⁵⁸

By 1964, then, SNCC's communication output was being regularly included in the news nets of reporters working for a wide range of mainstream, local, and specialist news agencies. However, given the nature of straight reporting, SNCC reports not only needed to contain valuable information, but also needed to be attributable to specific, well respected sources. While citing unnamed organisational spokespeople was not uncommon, journalists preferred named individuals, preferably with a rank or title that seemed to confer some form of legitimacy on the person concerned. This format is important for journalists as, according to Daniel Hallin, 'official sources fill an important void left by the ethic of objectivity: they fill the vacuum of meaning left by the journalist's renunciation of the role of interpreting reality'.⁵⁹ When it came to the civil rights movement, this convention was particularly strong and could

⁵⁴ Horace Julian Bond to Cynthia Washington, 14 December 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 256, SNCC Papers.

⁵⁵ Gans, pp. 50–5.

⁵⁶ Kevin G. Barnhurst and Diana C. Mutz, 'American Journalism and the Decline in Event-Centered Reporting', *Journal of Communication*, 47.4 (1997), 27–53; Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials: The Organization and Politics of Newsmaking* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1973), p. 115.

⁵⁷ Horace Julian Bond to Bruce Hanson, 16 May 1964, Series A.VII.3, Reel 14 Slide 470, SNCC Papers.

⁵⁸ Mary King, 'Working Paper', n.d., Mary E. King Papers, Box 1 Folder 14, WHS.

⁵⁹ Daniel C. Hallin, *The 'Uncensored War': The Media and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 68.

have a reductive effect on who was able to speak in the mainstream press and why. Indeed, Southern journalist Hodding Carter Jr. III argued in 1968 that:

Another one of the stereotypes that we white folks of the press have fallen into is that Negroes are supposed to have leaders. We think you should be able to go to Martin Luther King or somebody and he will be able to tell you what Negroes are thinking, what they are going to do.⁶⁰

While Martin Luther King's leadership role in the civil rights movement is not to be underestimated, his appointment by the *New York Times* as the 'Spokesman for Negroes' in 1962 was not the result of any democratic process or quantifiable show of support from African Americans.⁶¹ Heading the SCLC by appointment, King was not even the elected leader of his own organisation. Instead, the focus on King resulted from a combination of media logistics and a white press that had little connection to the African American community. While this may have attracted jealousy and derision from other civil rights leaders in the South, it created even more serious problems when King and other Southern leaders were called upon to represent Northern cities with very different priorities and needs.⁶²

Given SNCC's approach to local autonomy and intra-organisational democracy, this practice of seeking out leaders proved to be problematic. Believing that top-down leadership structures contravened the group's sense of participatory democracy, SNCC members rejected the cult of hero-worship that emerged around King – whom many sarcastically referred to as 'De Lawd'.⁶³ As a result, SNCC's first three chairmen received comparatively little coverage and were rarely elevated to the position of national spokesman. Indeed, despite the apparent appetite for SNCC's communication material by 1964, a *New York Times* poll in September of that year found that only nine per cent of white Americans knew SNCC's third and longest serving Chairman, John Lewis, by name. Given that similar results for King and Malcolm X were ninety four per cent and eighty two per cent respectively – with an entirely fictitious name receiving three per cent – it is clear that increased coverage of the organisation did not automatically

⁶⁰ Hodding Carter Jr. III, as cited in 'Discussion: Session Two', in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 42–50 (p. 44).

⁶¹ 'Spokesman for Negroes: Martin Luther King Jr.', *New York Times*, 16 July 1962, p. 47.

⁶² William G. Weart, 'Dr. King's Philadelphia Visit Assailed', *New York Times*, 1 August 1965, p. 59; Donald Janson, 'CORE Leader Vows New Chicago March Despite Dr. King', *New York Times*, 6 September 1966, p. 27.

⁶³ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 347.

lead to the elevation of its leadership to widespread fame.⁶⁴ Indeed, while titular head of the organisation, the Chairman spent most of their time travelling campuses and liberal venues in the North raising money for the organisation.⁶⁵ Consequently, when communicating with SNCC's headquarters in Atlanta, it was often Executive Secretary James Forman, with whom journalists had the most direct contact – especially as all media requests had to be approved by Forman or Julian Bond before they would be accepted.⁶⁶ In January 1962, for instance, while Chuck McDew was officially SNCC Chairman, *TIME* claimed that 'Snick is led by a Chicagoan, James Forman'.⁶⁷ Describing Forman as 'a contact I needed to cultivate', Fleming's appreciation for Forman and his perceived importance to coverage in the South may explain why, in April 1965, *Newsweek* described him as 'SNCC's strong man and elder statesmen' and even went as far as calling Lewis 'the far less influential chairman' of the organisation.⁶⁸ Indeed, Forman was the only SNCC member included in *Ebony's* list of 'America's 100 most influential Negroes', which featured in their special September 1963 issue on the 100th Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.⁶⁹

This approach to organisational structure had an impact on who was cited in stories relating to the organisation, with SNCC's leadership sharing the limelight to a far greater extent than other civil rights leaders. Indeed, while Lewis was still the SNCC leader most heavily mentioned by the *New York Times* – featuring in at least eighty articles between May 1963 and April 1966 – Forman was not far behind (sixty two articles in the same period), while Bond also featured relatively highly (twenty eight).⁷⁰ Perhaps most striking, however, was the relative absence of any of these leaders from coverage of SNCC. With just over thirty one per cent

⁶⁴ 'Results of Key Questions on Whites' Attitudes', *New York Times*, 21 September 1964, p. 26.

⁶⁵ Horace Julian Bond to Phillip Johnston, 14 June 1962, Series A.VII.1, Reel 12 Slide 928, SNCC Papers; Ruby Doris Smith to Dan Schechter, 19 September 1962, Series A.VII.1, Reel 12 Slide 975, SNCC Papers.

⁶⁶ Mary King, *Job Description*, n.d., Doris Adelaide Derby Papers, Box 3, Folder 21, MARBL.

⁶⁷ 'Races: Confused Crusade', *TIME*, 12 January 1962

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,828904,00.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

⁶⁸ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 230; 'Civil Rights: Waving the Red Flag', *Newsweek*, 12 April 1965, pp. 30–31 (p. 31).

⁶⁹ 'America's 100 Most Influential Negroes', *Ebony*, September 1963, pp. 228–32 (p. 229); See also: 'Integration: Hotter Fires', *Newsweek*, 1 July 1963, pp. 19–21.

⁷⁰ These figures were found via a proquest search using the search term: (SNCC OR "student nonviolent coordinating committee" OR "student non-violent coordinating committee" OR "S.N.C.C.") AND "Relevant Leader's Name". Only articles, front-page articles, and editorials were included in the search. James Forman's name was also searched under 'James Foreman' as this was a common spelling error made in coverage.

(150 out of 477) of articles mentioning the organisation also referencing Lewis, Forman, or Bond, SNCC's leadership featured far less prominently than their counterparts in other organisations. For instance, the same period saw Martin Luther King Jr. referenced in over seventy one per cent (396 out of 557) of *New York Times* articles which mentioned SCLC, while his lieutenant Hosea Williams featured in less than four per cent (twenty out of 557).⁷¹ Indeed, having featured in over twenty six per cent (120 out of 449) of articles to mention SNCC in the same period, King was mentioned in more articles referencing SNCC than the organisation's own chairman.

This greater egalitarianism within SNCC, however, had a notable blindspot. While women such as Mary King, Cynthia Washington, and Jane Stembridge were actively involved in the production of SNCC's communication output from the very founding of the organisation, the overt sexism within the Atlanta Office restricted their participation, denying them the senior titles that were a pre-requisite to being cited as sources in the *Times* and other mainstream newspapers.⁷² Indeed, as Belinda Robnett has argued:

Titled positions, for women, often translated into less power. This was not true for men such as Julian Bond or James Forman, whose titled positions often translated into greater power to make decisions. If a woman was titled, this usually meant that her duties would be restricted to clerical activities. On the other hand, when she participated without a title, her activities could stretch beyond the bounds of her otherwise stated duties. In other words, it was unsuitable for a woman to hold a titled position with an undue amount of power. So women, cognizant of the fact that titles restricted one's leadership opportunities, chose to participate in a different context.⁷³

⁷¹ This figure was found via a proquest search using the search term: (SCLC OR "Southern Christian Leadership Conference") AND ("Martin Luther King" OR "Dr. King"). Jr. was left out of the search as it was found that reporters often mistakenly printed King's name. It is unlikely that this figure is affected to any considerable degree by false results referencing Martin Luther King Jr.'s father. Only articles, front-page articles, and editorials were included in the search.

⁷² Belinda Robnett, 'African-American Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965: Gender, Leadership, and Micromobilization', *American Journal of Sociology*, 101.6 (1996), 1661–93.

⁷³ Robnett, p. 1675.

Consequently, while recent works have highlighted the contribution that women made to SNCC's work in the South through these informal channels, the nature of this participation militated against their inclusion as named sources in contemporary media accounts.⁷⁴

This erasure from coverage was aided by the chauvinistic atmosphere that dominated the newsrooms of America's mainstream press and caused reporters such as John Corry to claim that 'journalism was a man's game'.⁷⁵ Likening the South to a warzone, race beat journalists created an atmosphere of masculine bravado that female journalists and activists found difficult to penetrate.⁷⁶ Indeed, many outlets – including *Newsweek* – did not have a single female reporter on staff in this period, while others restricted women to particular beats and would not have considered sending them on dangerous assignments in the rural South. Consequently, when race beat reporters, such as Hodding Carter Jr. III, attempted to find leaders in the South, it was no coincidence that they would 'go and find some "spokesman" and [...] quote *him* in our stories'.⁷⁷ Conceiving of leadership in specifically masculine terms, male reporters overlooked the contribution of female activists in the South. For instance, veteran activist Dianne Nash was entirely ignored by the *New York Times* and dismissed as 'a comely coed of 22' by *Newsweek* in 1961, despite being active in the founding of SNCC in 1960, the Freedom Rides of 1961, and having been arrested numerous times on SNCC and SCLC campaigns throughout the sixties.⁷⁸ This sexist attitude towards the work of women both

⁷⁴ Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse and Barbara Woods, *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1990); Doug McAdam, 'Gender as a Mediator of the Activist Experience: The Case of Freedom Summer', *American Journal of Sociology*, 97 (1992), 1211–40; Jenny Irons, 'The Shaping of Activist Recruitment and Participation: A Study of Women in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement', *Gender and Society*, 12.6 (1998), 692–709; *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, ed. by Constance Curry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000); *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*, ed. by Bettye Collier-Thomas and V. P. Franklin (New York: New York University Press, 2001); *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, ed. by Faith S. Holsaert (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); *Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*, ed. by Dayo F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

⁷⁵ John Corry, *My Times: Adventures in the News Trade* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1993), p. 146.

⁷⁶ Cumming, 'Race Beat'.

⁷⁷ Hodding Carter Jr. III, as cited in Lyle, p. 44. Emphasis added.

⁷⁸ 'A New Breed - The Militant Negro in the South', *Newsweek*, 5 June 1961, p. 21 (p. 21); Examining the same time frame as that above, the following search term returned only five articles in the New York Times despite incorporating some of the most active and high ranking women in SNCC: ('S.N.C.C.' OR 'Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee' OR 'SNCC' OR 'Student nonviolent coordinating committee') AND ('Mary King' OR 'Elizabeth Sutherland' OR 'Jane Stenbridge' OR 'Constance Curry' OR

inside and outside of the organisation was not unique to SNCC or coverage of the Southern movement. Female leaders in Northern cities, such as SCLC's Western Regional Division Director Manesba Tackett, were also overlooked in coverage or, in the case of Gloria Richardson in Cambridge, Maryland, treated very differently from their male counterparts.⁷⁹ Indeed, it is clear that sexism within even the most radical civil rights organisations intersected with media logistics in a way that exaggerated the importance of a small number of African American men and ignored the significant activism of African American women in this period.⁸⁰

Greater inclusion of activist voices, then, was by no means universal, nor did it represent a significant subversion of media logistics or patterns of racial segregation in the South. For example, according to *Newsweek's* William Cook, reporters would still be expected to abide by certain racial customs, including visiting white officials first when consulting on a story.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the evolving nature of the race beat allowed socially legitimised activists and African American leaders much greater influence over the tone of Northern coverage. In part, this was because Northern reporters had a very different task than local Southern liberals or the journalists that would attempt to cover the urban riots in the North a few years later. For instance, while his work as a stringer for *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* allowed him greater freedom, Bill Minor has claimed that:

I realized that I had to be cautious to protect my flanks. I couldn't afford to isolate myself from news sources in Mississippi's white power structure, nearly all of whom were diehard segregationists, while I worked the story of what was happening with blacks.⁸²

'Gwendolyn Robinson' OR 'Dianne Nash' OR 'Bernice Johnson Reagon' OR 'Prathia Hall' OR 'Cathy Cade' OR 'Joyce Ladner' OR 'Jeanette King' OR 'Ruby Doris Smith').

⁷⁹ Jeanne F. Theoharis, "'Alabama on Avalon": Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black Protest in Los Angeles', in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 27–54; Jenny Walker, 'The "Gun-Toting" Gloria Richardson: Black Violence in Cambridge, Maryland', in *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 169–86; 'Gloria Richardson', *Newsweek*, 5 August 1963, pp. 26, 28.

⁸⁰ For examples see Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Morrow, 1987); Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris SmithRobinson* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

⁸¹ William Cook to Peter Goldman, 'Race Reporters', 26 May 1964, *Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records*, 1953-1979, Box 10 Folder 10, MARBL.

⁸² Wilson F. 'Bill' Minor, 'Six Decades of Watching Mississippi—Starting in 1947', *Nieman Reports*, Fall 2011 <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102669/Six-Decades-of-Watching-MississippiStarting-in-1947.aspx>> [accessed 29 August 2014].

In contrast, with their jobs almost exclusively tied to the unfolding civil rights movement – and local sources in government and law enforcement incredibly reluctant to provide useful information on such stories – Northern race beat reporters could afford to burn bridges that their predecessors and contemporaries in the Southern press could not.

I.ii

The level of access that SNCC gained to the process of mainstream news construction, however, was not just because its detailed communications output was viewed as more useful and reliable than its counterparts in white officialdom. While journalistic conventions of neutrality and objectivity would seemingly prohibit bias, Peter Goldman – who wrote the majority of *Newsweek's* civil rights stories during the 1960s – has claimed that the magazine's coverage of the movement was 'totally *journalisme engagé* from the top down'.⁸³ In fact, at the same time as *Newsweek* was running an advertising campaign claiming that 'this magazine separates fact from opinion', Goldman admits that he was practicing a form of journalism 'that doesn't pretend to be strictly "objective", viewing events from a neutral distance. Instead, it actively takes sides – not uncritically, but with an undisguised preference for one side of the story'.⁸⁴ When justifying this approach, he claimed that balanced reporting was impossible when 'the injustices were so clear [...] as clear as white only and coloured only signs over water fountains or restrooms'.⁸⁵ These feelings were mirrored by Fred Powledge of the *New York Times* who has argued that 'it was hard to adopt the reporters' fake sense of objectivity ... [because] it was so clear as to who the good guys were and who the bad guys were'.⁸⁶ For Powledge, this good versus evil narrative complicated Southern reporting and meant that the race beat was 'a new one for the newsgatherers of the South and the nation' because it cast 'traditional centers of respectability and power', such as the Governor's office, 'in the role of

⁸³ Goldman.

⁸⁴ Peter Goldman to Mark Joseph Walmsley, 'Re: Your Time at Newsweek', 27 May 2013.

⁸⁵ Goldman.

⁸⁶ Fred Powledge, as cited in Murphree, pp. 59–60; This was a common theme expressed by a number of race beat journalists. For examples see John Herbers, 2004 <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/john_herbers_oral_essay.pdf> [accessed 22 February 2014]; Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 22; Gene Patterson, 2004 <http://knightpoliticalreporting.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/john_herbers_oral_essay.pdf> [accessed 22 February 2014]; Nelson, 'Nieman Reports: Reporting on the Civil Rights Movement'.

lawbreaker and arrogant defier of the law of the land'.⁸⁷ As Christopher S. Wren wrote in *Look* magazine in September 1964,

When a reporter goes to Mississippi, the questions he asks can suddenly become personal. Why does a white official parry your inquiries with defensive arrogance? Why does a Negro sharecropper welcome you with a glass of cold water because he has nothing more to give? And why must you ride through Mississippi after dark with a 12-gauge shotgun on your lap?⁸⁸

Amongst the growing press cadre in the South, this sympathy for the local African American demonstrators often manifested itself in a protective instinct. AP reporter Don McKee, for instance, was soon nicknamed 'Fink McKee' by some race beat journalists after he informed local officials of a demonstration that was later broken up by the police. Explaining the ill-feeling towards McKee, William Cook claimed that while 'ratting on a news source is always bad. Ratting on Negroes is unforgivable to the generally liberal press corps'.⁸⁹

Such feelings were not lost on SNCC's Communication Section, with Ilene Strelitz claiming in 1964 that 'many of them [reporters] have come to identify with us [...] Our better correspondents are changing from doubters and observers to understanding educators'.⁹⁰ Having subscribed to a newspaper clipping service, SNCC's Communication Section would target journalists who seemed to be producing sympathetic articles on the movement as well as being approached directly by journalists themselves.⁹¹ Particularly receptive papers would then be identified, with favoured subject angles, such as the presence of local or state born residents amongst the activists arrested or beaten, noted alongside each publication in a special press list.⁹² This process was not just confined to Atlanta-based Communication Section staff. Communicating via SNCC's Wide Area Telephone Service (WATS), activists in the

⁸⁷ Powledge, *Free at Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It*, p. 513.

⁸⁸ Christopher S. Wren, "'Personal Terror in Mississippi'", *Look*, 8 September 1964', in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 194-96; See also: Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, pp. 14-15; Charles W. Gusewelle to Horace Julian Bond, 23 July 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 49-50, SNCC Papers.

⁸⁹ Cook to Goldman; Interestingly, this paragraph was scribbled out so it is not clear if this information was actually sent to the Newseek headquarters in New York, but it's sentiments are mirrored by fellow *Newsweek* reporter Karl Fleming: Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 255.

⁹⁰ Strelitz.

⁹¹ Horace Julian Bond to W. Newman, 24 July 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 39, SNCC Papers; Frank Holeman to Horace Julian Bond, 29 July 1963, Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 44, SNCC Papers.

⁹² *Press People to Call*, n.d., Series A.VII.2, Reel 13 Slide 741, SNCC Papers; *WATS Report: Jackson, Miss.: 11:00am Nancy to Mike Sayer*, n.d., Series A.VII.7, Reel 15 Slide 63, SNCC Papers.

field, such as Mike Sayer, specifically asked about the special press lists and mentioned journalists such as Sitton and Powledge by name.⁹³ While local leaders had avoided Northern journalists during the Till trial, Harrison Salisbury claims that ‘there was hardly a SNCC worker in the early days who did not carry Sitton’s Atlanta telephone number on a scrap of paper or engraved in his mind’.⁹⁴

Sympathy, however, should not be mistaken for insight. Adopting a more favourable stance towards the movement, and including a greater number of African American voices in their reports, this new generation of reporters were still operating in a racial atmosphere that prohibited equal access to, and communication with, the African American community in the South. While integrated groups were becoming a more common sight on the streets and even the restaurants of certain Southern towns, white journalists would rarely stay in the African American neighbourhoods they covered. Aside from the potential backlash such arrangements could have prompted from local whites – as evidenced by the many drive-by shootings aimed at African American homes that housed white activists – such arrangements were often not practical. As we have seen, race beat journalists were reliant on a certain standard of infrastructure that enabled them to either phone in stories or use the series of Western Union teletype operators stationed throughout the region. With such facilities often hard to find in African American neighbourhoods, journalists would stay in white owned hotels where phone lines, while sometimes tapped by local officials, were at least provided as standard.⁹⁵ In large part, however, the decision by many white reporters in the South to stay in the more comfortable and well equipped white areas reflected the disconnect between white reporters and the everyday existence of the often impoverished African American communities in the Deep South. For instance, while the marchers on the Selma to Montgomery March in 1965 made special efforts to include a press tent for travelling reporters, Joe Cumming of *Newsweek* reported that ‘not many reporters actually spent the

⁹³ The Service, commonly referred to as WATS, was a vital part of SNCC’s communication structure as it allowed lost cost calls to be made across the vast distances between field offices and headquarters in Atlanta: *WATS Report: Info Re Selma for Press Conference in Birmingham Today*, n.d., Series A.VII.7, Reel 15 Slide 66, SNCC Papers.

⁹⁴ Salisbury, *Without Fear or Favor*, p. 368.

⁹⁵ For reporters discussing the common assumption that their phone lines were tapped see Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 19; Salisbury, *A Time of Change*, p. 56.

night at the camps', adding that 'the night I slept in it I only know of one other press man sleeping there – Bill Chapman of the *Washington Post*'.⁹⁶ Explaining that 'in practice no hedonistic reporter would consider the forlorn paper cup of oatmeal, raw bread with jelly and ladled-up coffee a proper breakfast', Cumming suggests that the rhetoric of Northern journalists braving adversity to gather news stories is somewhat romanticised.⁹⁷ Importantly, this distance from the African American community meant that journalists either relied on second hand evidence for particular events, or else were entirely unaware of their existence. During the March, for instance, Cumming claimed that instances of men and women sharing the same tent 'couldn't have been more innocent' and were a far cry from the orgies described in the segregationist press.⁹⁸ With no reporters on the scene, however, papers such as the *New York Times* first carried the accusations of the Alabama State Legislature that there had been 'evidence of much fornication' on the March and then printed the erroneous assertion by March leaders that 'the sexes were required to sleep in separate tents'.⁹⁹

The impact of this distance between African American communities and white reporters was not confined to such relatively trivial matters. Scholars such as Jenny Walker have argued that the sympathetic and sometimes paternalistic instinct towards demonstrators led journalists in the South to hide or downplay violence and other elements of the Southern civil rights movement that would have drawn negative publicity.¹⁰⁰ However, while Walker demonstrates how journalists overlooked minor lapses in nonviolent discipline, sympathetic feelings towards the movement cannot fully explain how organisations including SNCC obscured the widespread rejection of philosophical nonviolence amongst their field staff. Instead, as David Ortiz and others have shown, it is important to examine the nature of beat reporters' routine because this pattern acts to 'place certain events in their paths, while others escape their attention because they are too far removed from the usual ways of conducting reporters'

⁹⁶ Joe Cumming, 'Cumming Add One', March 1965, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 43 Folder 13, MARBL.

⁹⁷ Cumming, 'Cumming Add One'.

⁹⁸ Cumming, 'Cumming Add One'.

⁹⁹ Ben A. Franklin, 'Top Entertainers in Alabama Tonight', *New York Times*, 24 March 1965, p. 33; Paul L. Montgomery, 'Band in Vanguard All the Way From Selma to Montgomery', *New York Times*, 25 March 1965, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Jenny Walker, 'A Media-Made Movement? Black Violence and Nonviolence in the Historiography of the Civil Rights Movement', in *Media, Culture, and the Modern African American Freedom Struggle*, ed. by Brian Ward (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), pp. 41–66.

jobs'.¹⁰¹ Staying in the white community, journalists would observe and report on the heroic displays of tactical nonviolence by demonstrators on Main Street while missing the widespread use of arms to protect African American homes and civil rights offices that has since been exposed by a number of revisionist historians.¹⁰² This physical separation, then, meant that white reporters were viewing the Southern movement through a particular – and well choreographed – window.

Separation, however, was not just physical. As Simeon Booker has argued, the racial atmosphere in the South created 'a vast wall between the races' that prevented truthful and productive dialogue.¹⁰³ Constructed by African Americans in the South to protect themselves in their day-to-day interactions with whites, superficial conversations between the races gave white observers little insight into the real feelings of the African American community. This was often a problem for white volunteers who travelled South in 1963 and 1964, with one activist in Batesville, Mississippi writing home that, 'a white man never turns black in Mississippi'.¹⁰⁴ Fleming, for example, has claimed that his interactions with many African Americans in the South were so heavily moderated through this racial and cultural framework that it often made him feel uncomfortable. Indeed, Fleming has argued that while SNCC's Executive Secretary could be abrasive and accusatory in conversation, 'at least Forman was honest'.¹⁰⁵ Importantly, when given a glimpse behind this wall, white activists such as Theresa Del Pozzo often found a community with 'an intensely bitter distrust of and disdain for the white world and a unity of vision about how this country had long operated at the expense of

¹⁰¹ David G. Ortiz and others, 'Where Do We Stand with Newspaper Data?', *Mobilization: An International Journal*, 10.3 (2005), 397–419 (p. 401).

¹⁰² For a more in depth discussion of SNCC's approach to non-violence and its interaction with the press see Mark Joseph Walmsley, 'Tell It Like It Isn't: SNCC and the Media, 1960-65', *Journal of American Studies*, 48.1 (2014), 291–308; For greater examinations of armed self-defence in the South see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (London: University of North Carolina Press, 1999); Simon Wendt, *The Spirit and the Shotgun: Armed Resistance and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Christopher B. Strain, *Pure Fire: Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005).

¹⁰³ Booker.

¹⁰⁴ Anon, as cited in *Letters from Mississippi*, ed. by Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965; repr. Brookline: Zephyr Press, 2007), p. 67.

¹⁰⁵ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 232; Not unsurprisingly, *Newsweek* was one of few outlets to address this barrier in print: 'Mississippi - Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time', *Newsweek*, 13 July 1964, pp. 18–20.

blacks'.¹⁰⁶ However, as few white journalists were able or willing to spend the time building up such genuine rapport with local African Americans, they often found it difficult to breakdown the rigidly constructed patterns of Southern racial discourse.

While the impact of this racial divide on coverage could have been ameliorated by the contribution of African American reporters, even liberal publications such as *Newsweek* had attached a low priority to the recruitment of African Americans to the newsroom. Recalling that *Newsweek* only integrated its newsroom in the late 1960s, Peter Goldman has argued that, 'in a way that was the shame of *Newsweek* [...] we were out there on the street preaching and our own house was not in order'.¹⁰⁷ *Newsweek* was by no means alone. While the *Times* hired their first African American reporter, George Streater, in 1945, it would be more than a decade before black journalists outnumbered the lift attendants hired to give the office a Southern plantation aesthetic.¹⁰⁸ This tendency to only employ African Americans in blue collar or low-level service occupations within newsrooms was common and highlights the hypocrisy with which many reporters and editors approached racial discrimination.

While some editors have since claimed that the absence of people of colour from white owned newsrooms is a consequence not of racism but of low enrolment rates in technical and academic courses, it is clear that many simply did not see African American men and women as their peers.¹⁰⁹ For instance, claiming in 1963 that the industry 'has been open to qualified Negroes for many years', *Harper's Magazine* editor John Fischer claimed that 'a substantial number have risen to positions of considerable responsibility. Many more would be welcome – particularly secretaries, book-keepers, and computer operators – if qualified applicants could be found. Why they can't is something of a mystery'.¹¹⁰ Not only, then, were the effects of institutional racism a 'mystery' to Fischer, but the fact that Fischer did not even think to

¹⁰⁶ Theresa Del Pozzo, 'The Feel of a Blue Note', in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, ed. by Constance Curry (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000), pp. 171–206 (p. 191).

¹⁰⁷ Goldman.

¹⁰⁸ Gay Talese, *The Kingdom and the Power* (New York: World Pub. Co, 1969), p. 113; 326; Richard F. Shepard, *The Paper's Papers: A Reporter's Journey Through the Archives of The New York Times* (New York: Times Books, 1996), pp. 299–300.

¹⁰⁹ Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life With the Times* (New York: Dell, 2000), p. 468.

¹¹⁰ John Fischer, as cited in Paul L. Martin, *Race Relations, 1963: A Report on the Negro Movement for Equal Rights* (The Gannett Newspapers, 1 July 1963), pp. 121–2, Paul L. Martin Papers 1933-77, (Microfilm Edition, 1987), Reel 1 Slide 75-168, WHS.

include reportorial or editorial news staff in his list of ‘positions of considerable responsibility’ where African Americans ‘would be welcome’ was indicative of a news industry that did not see African American men and women as equals. Indeed, one study by Lincoln University found that only twenty one African Americans were working as reporters for white owned newspapers in 1955 – an apparent increase on just five in 1950.¹¹¹ Once attention turned from the rural South to the urban North in the latter half of the sixties, a number of news outlets did begin to hire journalists of colour in greater number, realising that it was now white reporters who were effectively barred from accessing certain areas and covering certain news stories. However, while this increase in recruitment was a key recommendation of the Kerner Commission, there were still less than 200 African American men and women working in the newsrooms of America’s 1,740 daily newspapers in 1968.¹¹²

This lack of diversity had a detrimental impact on the nature of mainstream coverage, with Frankel recalling that ‘too often, we found ourselves discussing articles about racial strife without a single black face in the room’.¹¹³ Reporting practices during the urban unrest of the late 1960s keenly demonstrated the impact of this racial disparity on the treatment of minority communities and simultaneously exposed the idiosyncrasies of the Southern race beat. While journalists in the South saw activists as key sources and the Communication Sections of Southern organisations formed an integral part of their news net, no similar structure existed in racial coverage in the North. Unaware of the collective action taking place in Northern black neighbourhoods, white journalists struggled to locate leaders in these communities and to understand the chaotic nature of urban unrest.¹¹⁴ Instead, the Kerner Commission claimed

¹¹¹ Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965*, p. 65; Carl T. Rowan, *Breaking Barriers: A Memoir* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991), pp. 97–8.

¹¹² James Brian McPherson, *Journalism at the End of the American Century, 1965-Present*, The History of American Journalism, 7 (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), p. 8; Indeed, the industry continues to fall far short of equal representation and appears to be going backwards in some areas in light of the recent financial crisis: Riva Gold, ‘Newsroom Diversity: A Casualty of Journalism’s Financial Crisis’, *The Atlantic*, 9 July 2013 <<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/07/newsroom-diversity-a-casualty-of-journalisms-financial-crisis/277622/>> [accessed 31 July 2014].

¹¹³ Frankel, p. 465.

¹¹⁴ Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. by Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

that 'reporters are [...] too closely tied to police and officials as news sources in a disorder'.¹¹⁵ This reliance on police reports is important given that witnesses to the same Commission also found that fifty per cent of white police officers involved in policing communities of colour exhibited 'extreme prejudice', which meant 'they describe Negroes in terms that are not people terms. They describe them in terms of the animal kingdom'.¹¹⁶ Consequently, when mainstream accounts of Northern activism and unrest in the latter half of the decade read, as Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff have claimed, 'as if [they] were written from a distance, from outside the ghetto looking in', this is because in many cases they were.¹¹⁷

I.iii

This disparity obviously had an impact on the news that mainstream papers produced and its reception amongst the African American communities they covered. Fleming, for example, has claimed that 'to blacks in the South, I was one of the good guys, someone to trust and shelter. To blacks in Watts, I was just another faceless exploitive whitey, someone to hate, and hurt. This reversal was a bitter shock, and unnerving too'.¹¹⁸ Having been knocked unconscious by African American protestors in May 1966 while covering a rally led by Stokely Carmichael, Fleming argued that he had been singled out as a white reporter because, 'these people feel that the white press is not telling their story – and they are right'.¹¹⁹ Importantly, Fleming argued that when it came to explaining this growing disillusionment with the white mainstream press, 'the advocates of Black Power and the treatment they have received by the press is undoubtedly one of the factors behind this situation'.¹²⁰

When analysing this treatment, it is important to examine the shifting relationship between journalists and SNCC activists that had begun before the election of Carmichael and would continue after he resigned in May 1967. Having been on the cutting edge of civil rights

¹¹⁵ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 380.

¹¹⁶ Albert Reiss, as cited in United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, p. 306.

¹¹⁷ Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage, 2007), p. 396.

¹¹⁸ Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 20.

¹¹⁹ Fleming, as cited in Lyle, p. 43.

¹²⁰ Karl Fleming, 'Comment By Karl Fleming', in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 30–33 (p. 31).

activism since its conception in 1960, the organisation was used to being critiqued in conservative news outlets. Having refused to impose loyalty oaths on its members, the organisation rejected censorship and had made it clear to journalists that it would not 'conduct a purge for public relations purposes'.¹²¹ However, while conservative allies had critiqued SNCC members for using 'the same phrases today that we heard during the Stalin era', the rhetorical excesses of members often occurred off the record and were rarely printed by the mainstream press.¹²² As divisions became more obvious during 1965, however, media treatment of statements by the organisation and its members began to change. Increasingly, SNCC members found that former allies were becoming critical of the organisation and its attacks on liberal establishment figures and institutions. For instance, speaking in Selma in March 1965, Forman told a packed church that 'if we can't sit at the table [of democracy], we're going to knock the fucking legs off!'¹²³ Alongside stories that questioned the influence of communists on the organisation, this angry and destructive rhetoric was seen to symbolise the negative changes taking place in the organisation after the failure of the MFDP to be seated in Atlantic City.¹²⁴ Indeed, whether remembered in the memoirs of activists or academic scholarship, this line has become symbolic of an angry SNCC that emerged in 1965.¹²⁵ However, while the language used by Forman – especially in a place of worship – was certainly shocking, this notion of a senseless, destructive anger was emphasised by the purposeful omission of the rest of Forman's sentence, which claimed that 'when we do that then they'll build a better table next time where we can all sit'.¹²⁶ Even *Newsweek*, who maintained some

¹²¹ Christopher Jencks, 'Mississippi: From Conversion to Coercion', *New Republic*, 22 August 1964, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, Box 17 Folder 11, MARBL.

¹²² Fred Powledge, 'N.A.A.C.P. to Hold Citizenship Clinics', *New York Times*, 5 January 1965, pp. 1, 20 (p. 20).

¹²³ Bruce Hartford, *The Selma Voting Rights Struggle and the March to Montgomery* (San Francisco, CA: Westwind Writers, 2014), p. 139.

¹²⁴ 'Civil Rights: Waving the Red Flag', p. 31.

¹²⁵ Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*, 2nd edn (Cambridge; London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 160; *Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, ed. by Cheryl Lynn Greenberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. 10; Jean Wiley, 'Letter to My Adolescent Son', in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, ed. by Faith S. Holsaert (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), pp. 514–23 (p. 518); John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (Harcourt Brace, 1999), p. 354; John Robert Greene, *America in the Sixties* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010), p. 61.

¹²⁶ Joe Cumming, 'Re Civil Rights', 19 March 1965, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 43 Folder 13, MARBL.

of the most positive mainstream coverage of SNCC during this period, omitted this part of Forman's speech, despite the fact that this section was reported to New York by Cumming.¹²⁷

Alongside a wider rejection of white liberalism, this shift in treatment caused SNCC members to reassess their relationship with the media and question the continued utility of appealing to white mainstream audiences. Indeed, it was under John Lewis' chairmanship that SNCC started to take public stances on issues, such as the Vietnam War, that they had avoided in earlier periods, provoking what Roy Reed of the *New York Times* called 'the heaviest criticism that this trouble-prone organization has ever encountered'.¹²⁸ Importantly, such a realisation did not bring Moses and others to question their aggressive push for the cause of black liberation. Instead, Moses typified the organisation's approach when he argued 'we have to prepare ourselves for that. Somebody may have to be ploughed under. But, after all, that's what a revolution means'.¹²⁹

Elected in May 1966, therefore, Carmichael was emerging into a hostile atmosphere. Having taken part in the Freedom Rides and served as a district coordinator during the 1964 Summer Project, Carmichael's supporters hoped his chairmanship would return the organisation back to the grassroots organising tradition that had attracted so many of them to SNCC in the first place.¹³⁰ The mainstream press, however, greeted his election with alarm. The *Los Angeles Times* wrote that SNCC had 'dumped unceremoniously its two top leaders', while *TIME* claimed that both John Lewis and James Forman had been 'ousted' from the organisation in a 'secret meeting'.¹³¹ With other outlets around the country also focused on this notion of a 'purge' or 'overthrow' within SNCC, it was quickly apparent that Carmichael, Executive Secretary Ruby Doris Robinson, and Program Secretary Cleveland Sellers faced an uphill battle for fair

¹²⁷ 'Civil Rights: Waving the Red Flag', p. 31; Cumming, 'Re Civil Rights'.

¹²⁸ Roy Reed, 'Rights Group Widely Criticized For Attacking Vietnam Policy', *New York Times*, 16 January 1966, p. 60; Many SNCC members, including Fannie Lou Hamer, had aroused criticism for opposing the war in Vietnam earlier in 1965, but it wasn't until January 1966 that the organisation took a formal position: 'Civil Rights: Summer Strategy', *Newsweek*, 12 April 1965, pp. 28–29; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, 'Rights, Peace Groups Converging', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 April 1965, section II, p. A5.

¹²⁹ Robert Moses, as cited in Lerone Bennett Jr., 'SNCC: Rebels with a Cause', *Ebony*, July 1965, pp. 146–53 (p. 153).

¹³⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, *Stokely: A Life* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2014).

¹³¹ Jack Nelson, "'2 Veteran Rights Leaders Ousted by SNCC", *Los Angeles Times*, 17 May 1966', in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 491–94 (p. 491); 'Civil Rights: Thinking Big', *TIME*, 27 May 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835632,00.html>> [accessed 30 April 2013].

recognition.¹³² Even *Newsweek* – who ran one of the most fair and balanced assessments of the election that highlighted Carmichael’s leadership of the LCFO project and widespread dissatisfaction with the MFDP’s failures – claimed that Lewis had been ‘deposed’, while Forman had been ‘shuffled out’ by a ‘hypermilitant wing’ of the organisation.¹³³

This criticism caused an even sharper break in SNCC’s relationship with the mainstream press. Days after the election of Carmichael to SNCC Chairman, *Newsweek*’s Marshall Frady claimed that ‘[Julian] Bond confirmed that there’s a hard-nosed general conviction among SNCC workers now that white reporters are not to be trusted – ever’.¹³⁴ Indeed, reporting from Selma the same day, fellow *Newsweek* correspondent Gerald Lubenow was instructed by one SNCC staffer that ‘we have nothing to say to the white press [...] anything we have to release will be given to the Negro press and you can get it from them if you want it’.¹³⁵ Indeed, calling a staff meeting days later because of the ‘resulting unfavourable publicity’, Forman claimed that he was ‘very indignant’ about ‘the way in which this organization has been slandered’, but rationalised that such slander ‘is understandable, because the American press is not our friend’.¹³⁶

By early June 1966, Ivanhoe Donaldson warned members that misleading stories in liberal publications such as the *New Republic* were having a negative effect on the organisation’s finances, claiming that white liberal allies who read negative articles, ‘take it for fact and [...] stop sending money’.¹³⁷ However, with Carmichael as chairman and Charlie Cobb taking over responsibility for communications after Bond had taken up his seat in the Georgia State Congress, the direction and audience of SNCC’s rhetoric would change. In the light of an increasingly hostile media, Cobb argued that:

¹³² ‘Negro Leaders Dividing – The Effect’, *U.S. News and World Report*, 18 July 1966, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Records, Box 335, Folder 1, MARBL; ‘SNCC Overthrow, Purge Will Cut off Support’, *[Michigan] Chronicle*, 28 May 1966, Series A.IX.131, Reel 33 Slide 931, SNCC Papers; Gene Roberts, ‘Militants Take Over Student Coordinating Group’, *New York Times*, 17 May 1966, p. 22.

¹³³ ‘Growl of the Panther’, *Newsweek*, 30 May 1966, pp. 33, 36 (p. 36).

¹³⁴ Marshall Frady, *Nation – SNCC Shuffle*, 20 May 1966, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 59 Folder 6, MARBL.

¹³⁵ Gerald Lubenow, *SNCC Shuffle Take #2*, 20 May 1966, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 59 Folder 6, MARBL.

¹³⁶ James Forman, as cited in *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966, p. 699, Series A.VI.19, Reel 12 Slide 697-715, SNCC Papers.

¹³⁷ Ivanhoe Donaldson, as cited in *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966.

What we have constantly tried to do communications-wise is express black people's struggle/work/aims [...] in terms understandable to whites. In many cases we have opted for white acceptance (though lack of acceptance of what our work must be has rarely stopped us). I think that further efforts in this direction are futile and detrimental [...] We tend to establish and/or become responsible to, a language and mechanisms that are not the most relevant to black people. Or, allow something relevant to get captured (e.g. "black power"). We talk too much.¹³⁸

Claiming that, 'we should not shoulder the responsibility of changing white people', Cobb articulated a new vision of SNCC's communication strategy that would be aimed at a fundamentally different audience.¹³⁹ In part, this fundamental shift in African American opinion and SNCC's rhetorical strategies explains the use of slogans and phrases that whites found incendiary. Engaging in rhetorical excesses in front of black crowds, it is clear that some Black Power advocates made themselves 'easy targets for demonization and dismissal' and caused former leaders to warn that there was a 'danger in SNCC of fumbling the ball' of public relations.¹⁴⁰ For instance, Carmichael's assertion that, 'we see integration as insidious subterfuge for white supremacy in this country', was used by the *New York Times* to corroborate its assertion that Carmichael was a 'Negro separatist'.¹⁴¹ Indeed, this rhetoric allowed reporters, such as Gene Roberts, to claim that 'the organization now considers integration to be "irrelevant"', and frame SNCC's articulation of black political and economic power as abandoning previous commitments to integration.¹⁴²

Nevertheless, it is important to note how and why journalists went to lengths to highlight – often out of context – the most radical and theatrical excesses of Black Power advocates. Claiming that 'the press pounced on Carmichael's careless rhetoric', journalist Paul Good demonstrates how the media were often highly selective in the elements of SNCC's new

¹³⁸ Charles Cobb, *Towards a Theory for Communications*, n.d., Series A.IV.417, Reel 11 Slide 320, SNCC Papers.

¹³⁹ Cobb.

¹⁴⁰ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field', *The Journal of American History*, 96 (2009), 751–77 (p. 751); John Lewis, as cited in 'Lewis Quits S.N.C.C.; Shuns "Black Power"', *New York Times*, 1 July 1966, pp. 1, 18 (p. 18).

¹⁴¹ Austin C. Wehrwein, 'Dr. King Disputes Negro Separatist: Critical of Carmichael, New S.N.C.C. Chairman, Over Black Nationalism Plea', *New York Times*, 28 May 1966, pp. 1, 9 (p. 1).

¹⁴² Gene Roberts, 'The Story of Snick: From "Freedom High" to "Black Power"', *New York Times*, 25 September 1966, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM27–29, SM119–28 (p. SM122); See also: 'Civil Rights: The New Racism', *TIME*, 1 July 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835847,00.html>> [accessed 11 October 2014].

programme they popularised.¹⁴³ To understand the unusual nature of this approach to Black Power, it is important to understand the context in which reporters were operating. While the rise of social media has created an atmosphere in which speech – whether on or off record – is heavily scrutinised, mainstream journalists in the 1960s often displayed more deferential attitudes towards sources. Criticising the way Carmichael had been treated, Fleming argued that while SNCC's new Chairman was a 'sort of hysterical Barry Goldwater', there had been quite significant differences in how the two leaders were treated:

The difference is that the press was almost uniformly defensive of Goldwater. They would go to interminable lengths to give him a second chance, going back and saying "Well, did you really mean this Senator", or "Would you like to clarify this?" Exactly the reverse is true of Carmichael. The press has uniformly, and I think deliberately, set out to distort what this guy was trying to say about Black Power.¹⁴⁴

Claiming that Carmichael had repeatedly clarified his statements – telling journalists 'hundreds' of times that 'the Black Power movement is not an attempt to take over the country, but only our own community' – Fleming highlighted how reporters purposefully rephrased and repeated questions 'over and over and over again', until they got the quotes that they wanted.¹⁴⁵ This analysis is supported by William Raspberry of the *Washington Post*, who has argued that journalists were 'plainly disappointed' during a SNCC press conference in early July when Carmichael refused to be drawn into discussions on Black Power. Indeed, Raspberry's article claimed that 'several [other reporters] stalked angrily out of the room' when it became clear the conference would only deal with the proposed Civil Rights Bill on open housing.¹⁴⁶ Nor was this an isolated incident. It is clear from the interviewing techniques of Martin Agronsky on *Face the Nation* and Mike Wallace of *CBS News* that disproportionate attention was focused on controversial issues surrounding self-defence and the exclusion of

¹⁴³ Paul Good, 'Odyssey of a Man - And a Movement', *New York Times*, 25 June 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM3, 44–47 (p. SM3).

¹⁴⁴ Karl Fleming, 'Comment By Karl Fleming', p. 31.

¹⁴⁵ Karl Fleming, 'Comment By Karl Fleming', p. 31.

¹⁴⁶ William J. Raspberry, 'SNCC Chief Calls Rights Bill Useless', *Washington Post*, 2 July 1966, p. A4; The walk-out also made it into wire press accounts of the conference: Associated Press, 'Bill Criticized by SNCC Chief', *Toledo Blade*, 2 July 1966, p. 7.

whites.¹⁴⁷ While such issues were always likely to receive attention in the press, the way in which interviewers continually rephrased and repeated questions made it clear that they approached the subject with a set agenda and acted to suggest that Carmichael was being dishonest when he denied being racist or violent.¹⁴⁸

In contrast, African American news outlets, while by no means unified when it came to Black Power, often gave advocates a fairer hearing. For instance, while citing Carmichael's radical pronouncements on integration in his September 1966 *Ebony* article, Lerone Bennett Jr.'s inclusion of a fuller quote – 'if integration means moving to something white is moving to something "better", then integration is a subterfuge for white supremacy' – provided important context and qualification.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Bennett's piece – the longest discussion of SNCC and its strategies in the magazine – ignored the condemnation of Wilkins and other moderate leaders in favour of exploring what the slogan meant to the African American community at large. Furthermore, it included quotes not found in the mainstream press, such as Carmichael's assertion that:

Integration never speaks to the problem of what happens to the black school or the black community after two or three people move out 'to integrate'. That's the problem we must force America to speak to; that's the problem Black Power speaks to.¹⁵⁰

Consequently, while Mary King had found that some mainstream outlets had reproduced SNCC's press releases 'line for line' in the wake of the 1964 Summer Project, the hostile reaction to Black Power was such that by mid-July SNCC had introduced a 'controlled situation' on the mainstream press, restricting interviews with members and tightening the flow of information within the organisation.¹⁵¹ Indeed, by mid-August Carmichael told reporters on

¹⁴⁷ *Transcript of 'Face the Nation', 28 March 1965*, n.d., Rowland Evans Jr. and Robert D. Novak Papers, Box 86 Folder 31, WHS; 'Black Power, White Backlash', *CBS News* (CBS, 1966) <<http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/black-power-white-backlash/>> [accessed 20 October 2014].

¹⁴⁸ Tom Peck, 'Black Racism', *Liberation*, October 1966, Series A.VIII.134, Reel 20 Slide 883, SNCC Papers.

¹⁴⁹ Stokely Carmichael, as cited in Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', *Ebony*, September 1966, pp. 25–32 (p. 27).

¹⁵⁰ Bennett Jr., 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', p. 27.

¹⁵¹ Communication Section, *No Title*, 18 July 1966, Series A.VII.4, Reel 14 Slide 880, SNCC Papers.

Meet the Press that the organisations felt it was no longer productive to define the phrase at all.¹⁵²

Critics of Black Power, such as journalist and former government official Carl Rowan, have argued that the temporary refusal to define the philosophy stemmed from a growing belief within SNCC that it had represented a ‘colossal public relations blunder’.¹⁵³ Correspondence by the Communication Section, however, shows that the refusal to define Black Power represented a desperate attempt to ‘condition the emphasis’ of coverage, rather than a reassessment of the slogan’s merits. Believing that the organisation needed to ‘accept as fact that the press is doing us no favors’, and that ‘in fact they write what they want’, the refusal, therefore, was an attempt to starve a media fire that had burned beyond SNCC’s control.¹⁵⁴ Articulating a new vision for SNCC’s communication strategy, Charlie Cobb argued that ‘every effort to communicate to the white man, detracts from the development of an effective black communications. We are more often used than use’.¹⁵⁵ Consequently, the Photography Department under Julius Lester began ‘deemphasizing’ lucrative jobs for the likes of *TIME* and *Newsweek*, instead encouraging work for African American outlets and papers in the developing world.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, claiming that SNCC should ‘cultivate the Negro Press despite its shortcomings for the sake of image’, the Communication Section was making it clear to members that this shift in policy had ideological as well as practical implications.¹⁵⁷ Even when this plan was seen to fail, and SNCC once again attempted to define the phrase in public, the organisation found it impossible to influence the media’s conception of Black Power. Indeed, by May 1967, Carmichael told African American photo-journalist Gordon Parks in *Life* magazine, ‘I’ve given up trying to explain it. The whites never really listen when I do, anyway’.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² *Meet the Press*, NBC, 21 August 1966, Series A.I.63, Reel 2 Slide 1260-5, SNCC Papers.

¹⁵³ Carl T. Rowan, ‘Crisis in Civil Rights Leadership’, *Ebony*, November 1966, pp. 27–37 (p. 28).

¹⁵⁴ Communication Section, *Report of the Communications Section of the Atlanta Office*, 1 August 1966, Series A.VII.4, Reel 14 Slide 878, SNCC Papers.

¹⁵⁵ Cobb.

¹⁵⁶ Julius Lester, *Photography Department Report #2*, 28 September 1966, Series A.XI.19, Reel 36, SNCC Papers.

¹⁵⁷ Communication Section, *Report of the Communications Section of the Atlanta Office*.

¹⁵⁸ Stokely Carmichael, as cited in Gordon Parks, ‘Whip of Black Power’, *Life*, 19 May 1967, p. 76A – 82 (p. 82).

Consequently, and despite still being included in news reports and often cited at length, the treatment of Carmichael and other Black Power advocates within SNCC demonstrates that favourable access to the media was neither permanent nor under the control of sources themselves. Importantly, SNCC was not alone. While perhaps the most recognisable civil rights leader, even Martin Luther King Jr. saw his influence wane in the years before his death, especially after he followed SNCC's lead in opposing the war in Vietnam, highlighting the *de facto* racism of Northern cities, and questioning the commitment and value of liberal establishment figures.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, while certain individuals, such as the President, can guarantee coverage of their actions, outside pressure groups, especially those alienated from mainstream, heterosexist white culture, are often at the mercy of journalistic prerogatives. As the next section demonstrates, nowhere is this clearer than in the coverage of the gay and lesbian community in the 1950s and 1960s.

II

Whatever the flaws in race beat reporting, there was at least a rhythm and pattern to mainstream coverage that activists could identify and engage with. In contrast, news stories on the gay and lesbian community in the 1950s and 1960s often emerged from a variety of different sources before sinking back into obscurity. Projected as a series of unrelated events, stories would be assigned to general reporters or result from gay men and women appearing in beats established for very different purposes. Combined with the scarcity and irregularity of news about the gay and lesbian community, this lack of specialisation meant that coverage not only lacked any coherent theme or approach, but also complicated efforts by homophile organisations to become reliable and trusted journalistic sources. Indeed, during the 1960s, a total of fourteen reporters produced just seventeen by-lined articles mentioning the Mattachine Society by name in the *New York Times*.¹⁶⁰ Coverage was even worse in the national magazines, with just four articles mentioning Mattachine in *TIME* (two of which were post-Stonewall) and two in *Life* (both of which were part of its June 1964 issue). Contrasting

¹⁵⁹ Mantler.

¹⁶⁰ A total of nineteen articles were printed on the Mattachine Society by the *Times* during this period, with one appearing without by-line and the other being reprinted from the Associated Press.

early coverage with the much higher number of articles printed on gay liberation activities in the 1970s, this absence has been viewed as the consequence of homophile timidity. Indeed, even revisionist historians such as Martin Meeker view this absence as a conscious strategy to deflect attention away from the more radical private activities of organisations like the MSNY. As this chapter demonstrates, however, this lack of coverage was not seen as desirable by a number of homophiles in this period who actively worked to increase the public profile of the movement. Furthermore, by investigating the voices that did appear in coverage of the gay and lesbian community, it is clear that homophile efforts were influencing mainstream narratives even when their name was not explicitly mentioned.

Focused on other goals, journalists would consciously or unconsciously calibrate their news nets in a way that excluded homophile voices. Indeed, the first *New York Times* reporter to mention the Mattachine Society by name was Walter Waggoner in 1960, ten years after the founders first met and four years after the New York Chapter was created. Having previously covered calls for legal reform in the wake of the 1957 Wolfenden Report, Waggoner was one of few journalists at the *Times* to by-line multiple articles on the subject of homosexuality.¹⁶¹ Based in London and tasked with covering major social and political developments in the UK, however, Waggoner was never likely to include the opinion of homophile organisations and publications in his coverage. For instance, citing Mattachine President Hal Call as the head of an organisation, ‘which advocates reform of laws relating to sexual behavior’, the focus of Waggoner’s 1960 article was a British documentary that examined dissent in US politics.¹⁶² His limited coverage of the homophile movement and the push for legal reform, therefore, was a coincidental by-product of his assignment to a fundamentally different beat.

Even when stories related to events closer to home, however, journalists were likely to rely on established contacts in the legal, religious, or medical establishment rather than go out of their way to seek the opinion of homophile activists. As we have seen, stories on the gay and lesbian community emerged from a greater variety of beats during the 1950s and 1960s as

¹⁶¹ Walter H. Waggoner, ‘Vice Law Reform Urged In Britain’, *New York Times*, 5 September 1957, p. 31; Walter H. Waggoner, ‘British Map Curb on Prostitution’, *New York Times*, 27 November 1958, p. 4; Walter H. Waggoner, ‘London TV Puts a Focus on U.S.’, *New York Times*, 28 January 1960, p. 16.

¹⁶² Waggoner, ‘London TV Puts a Focus on U.S.’

discussion moved away from religious categorisations of sin and immorality.¹⁶³ As part of this discussion, journalists increasingly felt the need to consult psychiatrists and medical professionals, whose voices began to appear as authoritative sources on television, radio, and print stories on homosexuality.¹⁶⁴ Recognising the superior social legitimacy of professionals in various fields, homophile groups were careful to stress the presence of such individuals within their organisations. For example, in 1952, when the Administrative Council of the Mattachine Foundation consisted of only the seven founding members and three of their female relatives, the organisation disingenuously claimed that their governing body included figures from 'law, labor, science, medicine, education, [and] the ministry'.¹⁶⁵ From the outset, then, homophile organisations were aware of the power that society and the media placed on respectable and professional institutions and were careful to adapt their public relations strategies accordingly.

Realising the need to educate a broader range of the public, some homophile activists began to focus on cultivating relationships with the religious, psychiatric, and law enforcement officials that dominated coverage of their community. With all three fields institutionally hostile to their cause and often holding power over the lives of gay men and women, this interaction was never going to be free from compromise or conducive with what we may now view as a radical interpretation of sexuality and social change. Indeed, the work of even the most liberal officials often bore signs of the homophobia that was explicit in the teachings of their disciplines and wider society. However, while it is always useful to highlight the blind-spots and prejudices of previous activism, it is equally important to understand the context in which these failures emerged. Defending the sometimes questionable content of early homophile publications such as the *Mattachine Review*, Martin Meeker has argued that 'to read the *Review* with a critical, post-gay liberationist, post-Stonewall sensibility is to read it in a manner quite different from the way that most gay men would have read it in the 1950s'.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ For example, articles on homosexuality would now appear in the medical sections of magazines such as *Newsweek*: 'The Third Sex', *Newsweek*, 1 June 1964, p. 76.

¹⁶⁴ 'The Homosexuals', *CBS Reports* (CBS, 1967); 'Display Ad 46', *Chicago Tribune*, 7 March 1967, p. C6; Irving Bieber, 'Speaking Frankly: Taboo', *New York Times*, 23 August 1964, section Sunday Magazine, pp. 75, 107–8.

¹⁶⁵ Learned Foote, 'Homosexual Democracy in America: Political Ideology and Organization in the Mattachine, 1950-1954' (Columbia University, 2011), p. 28.

¹⁶⁶ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 47.

Similarly, when examining the praise given to the sometimes questionable pronouncements of medical, legal, and religious officials, whether in homophile publications, private correspondence, or the press, it is important to note just how radical some of their pronouncements must have seemed to men and women who were used to being denounced from the pulpit, jailed in the courthouse, and sectioned in the doctor's office.

Importantly, using legitimised professionals was common practice in minority social movements that would otherwise struggle to gain recognition. When challenging discriminatory laws in the 1930s, for instance, the NAACP had consciously utilised white professionals because members recognised that when society discussed 'lawyers of distinction and high reputation [...] this usually meant white counsel'.¹⁶⁷ As August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's investigation of the NAACP's legal wing demonstrated:

Whites played an important role in the early years of NAACP because the black members felt the whites were needed. As the movement gained strength and achieved victories, and as the external society accorded greater legitimacy to the Negroes' demands, the usefulness of whites declined, and their role within the organization became constricted.¹⁶⁸

This evolution in movement tactics not only contextualises the articulation of Black Power outlined above, it also demonstrates how minority movements were often faced with debates over which groups in society had the right to choose their own leaders and speak on their own behalf. Consequently, when examining the relationship between homophile activists and medical, legal, and religious professionals, it is important to see this relationship as a fluid and evolving negotiation between powerful mainstream interests and a marginalised section of society.

For instance, despite an official separation of Church and State, organised religion held powerful sway over American life, especially as Cold War rhetoric pitted a spiritual US against an atheistic enemy.¹⁶⁹ Working with religious leaders, therefore, was not only of personal

¹⁶⁷ August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, 'Attorneys Black and White: A Case Study of Race Relations within the NAACP', *The Journal of American History*, 62.4 (1976), 913–46 (p. 920).

¹⁶⁸ Meier and Rudwick, p. 946.

¹⁶⁹ For a discussion of the impact the Cold War had on America's religious life see: T. Jeremy Gunn, *Spiritual Weapons: The Cold War and the Forging of an American National Religion* (Westport, CT:

importance to many homophiles during this period, but could have important effects on national debates about homosexuality. Consequently, MSNY and other homophile organisations put considerable effort into forging links with ministers from all faiths. Given common conceptions of homosexuality as sinful, this relationship was always likely to be problematic. In his 1964 MSNY pamphlet entitled 'Homosexuality and the Church', for example, Reverend Robert W. Wood told Society members that they needed to make a 'constructive adjustment' towards more traditional relationship models and condemned promiscuity and deviations from traditional gender norms.¹⁷⁰ Rejecting or alienating those for whom the transgression of established sexual and gender norms was an integral part of their identity, Wood's emphasis on respectability could be viewed as another example of homophile conservatism and self-doubt. Given the prevailing view of mainstream Christianity in this period, however, Wood's pronouncement in the same document that homosexuality was a 'glorious gift of God' that was 'basically an irreversible situation' was certainly radical.¹⁷¹ Indeed, Wood had written one of the earliest books affirming the rights of gay men and women to marry and enter the Christian faith in 1960, and later openly identified himself as a gay man.¹⁷² Comparing the moral neutrality of homosexuality to that of left-handedness, and speaking of the church's 'God given responsibility to serve as a watch dog wherever the human dignity and civil liberties of homosexuals are encroached upon', Wood actively campaigned on behalf of the MSNY and other homophile groups using rhetoric and ideas that separated him from the majority of America's religious leaders.¹⁷³

This interaction between homophile activists and liberal clergymen could bring positive results in terms of media coverage. For much of the 1950s, any discussion of homosexuality's relationship with religion had tended to describe gay men and women only as sinful, immoral, and corrupting influences on society.¹⁷⁴ Even articles covering the rising calls for

Praeger Publishers, 2009); Jason W. Stevens, *God-Fearing and Free: A Spiritual History of America's Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹⁷⁰ Robert W. Wood, *Homosexuality and the Church*, 16 April 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 9.

¹⁷¹ Wood, *Homosexuality and the Church*.

¹⁷² Robert W. Wood, *Christ and the Homosexual* (New York: Vantage Press, 1960).

¹⁷³ Wood, *Homosexuality and the Church*; Garfield D. Nichol to George Desmannes, 5 January 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11; Dick Leitsch to Robert W. Wood, 29 October 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

¹⁷⁴ George Sokolsky, 'These Days...: The Moral Switch', *Washington Post*, 30 March 1954, p. 20.

decriminalising sodomy in the wake of the Wolfenden Report and Model Penal Code often included quotes from religious leaders who maintained a distinction between legality and morality.¹⁷⁵ While this view remained popular throughout the 1960s, there is a noticeable shift in coverage that began in the early-to-mid 1960s and continued throughout the decade.¹⁷⁶ For instance, less than three weeks after Doty's claim in December 1963 that homosexuality 'is regarded as sin by all three of the main branches of western religion', the *Times* published a letter by Wood that not only claimed the reporter was 'on weak journalistic ground' and had 'failed to substantiate his thesis', but also pointed out several contrasting opinions in the existing medical and religious literature.¹⁷⁷ This dissent did not create radical or immediate shifts in reporting at the *Times*, with coverage in May 1964 still referring to homosexuality as a 'shadowy realm' that religious light needed to penetrate.¹⁷⁸ However, a front-page article published in November 1964 suggested that the increasingly vocal dissent in religious circles was beginning to attract more balanced coverage. While including a number of quotes from Catholic spokesman Charles Tobin – who called homosexuality 'an increasing threat to sound family life in our community' – the article also cited John V. P. Lassoé who, as Director of Christian Social Relations for the Episcopalian Diocese of New York, called proposals to decriminalise sodomy 'a significant and enlightened advance over existing laws'.¹⁷⁹ While it is unclear if Lassoé was known to the homophile movement before his testimony in front of the Temporary Commission on Revision of the Penal Law and Criminal Code, he would deliver a keynote address at ECHO's third annual conference in September 1965 and helped forge links

¹⁷⁵ 'British Vice Report Praised by Prelate', *New York Times*, 25 September 1957, p. 9; 'Religion: Crime & Sin', *TIME*, 7 October 1957 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,809994,00.html>> [accessed 10 December 2014].

¹⁷⁶ For later examples of articles that maintained this distinction see: 'Cleric Asks Aid to Homosexuals: Criticizes Church on Counseling', *New York Times*, 12 August 1963, p. 43; John Cogley, 'Religion: Morality and the Law', *New York Times*, 30 May 1965, section 4, p. E12.

¹⁷⁷ Robert C. Doty, 'Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern', *New York Times*, 17 December 1963, pp. 1, 33 (p. 33); Robert W. Wood, 'Letters to the Times: Report on Homosexuality', *New York Times*, 4 January 1964, p. 22.

¹⁷⁸ Robert Trumbull, 'Homosexuals Proud of Deviancy, Medical Academy Study Finds', *New York Times*, 19 May 1964, pp. 1, 75.

¹⁷⁹ Charles Tobin and John V. P. Lassoé, as cited in Emanuel Perlmutter, 'Catholics and Episcopalians Differ on Law on Sex Deviates', *New York Times*, 26 November 1964, pp. 1, 34; This debate was also reviewed in later coverage by the *Times*: Anthony Lewis, 'Morals Issue: Crime or Not?', *New York Times*, 29 November 1964, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E10.

between the homophile movement and other religious organisations such as the Metropolitan Urban Service Training Facility in New York.¹⁸⁰

Greater coverage accompanied the work of Episcopal Vicar Robert W. Cromeey, who featured heavily in *Newsweek's* 1967 discussion of the relationship between homosexuality and religion as a leader within the California-based Council on Religion and the Homosexual.¹⁸¹ Given that the magazine only covered the gay and lesbian community in thirteen articles during the entire decade, this inclusion and prominent focus on Cromeey and the work of other liberal religious leaders is significant.¹⁸² This more positive discussion of the overlap between religion and homosexuality also began to feature in the *New York Times*, which started to highlight the growing number of religious leaders who rejected the draconian policies laid out by their more orthodox and evangelical competitors.¹⁸³ With the MSNY and MSW maintaining links with a number of these liberal clerics, it is clear that the organisation was having an important, if indirect, impact on coverage. Having established a Religious Concerns Committee chaired by Madolin Cervantes that had 'many contacts in the religious publications field', MSNY was able to 'watch religious publications concerning homosexuality' and attempt to sway opinion and encourage debate where possible.¹⁸⁴ In doing so, MSNY helped facilitate many of the changes that would emerge in the latter half of the decade and early 1970s. Indeed, as President Dick Leitsch outlined in a letter to Dr. Ernest Stricklin, Secretary of the Division of Family Life of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, while MSNY could not personally 'reform the churches and make them realize that their attitudes towards homosexuals are in conflict with their philosophy of love and forgiveness', they could:

¹⁸⁰ *Third Annual ECHO Conference Program: The Homosexual Citizen in 'The Great Society'*, 24 September 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 3, Folder 25; John V. P. Lasso Jr. to Dick Leitsch, 22 June 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 13; Dick Leitsch to G. W. Webber, 8 July 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

¹⁸¹ 'God and the Homosexual', *Newsweek*, 13 February 1967, p. 63.

¹⁸² Lisa Bennett, 'The Perpetuation of Prejudice in Reporting on Gays and Lesbians: *TIME* and *Newsweek*: The First Fifty Years' (The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 1998), p. 2 <http://shorensteincenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/r21_bennett.pdf> [accessed 12 August 2014].

¹⁸³ Edward B. Fiske, 'Religion: Views on Homosexuals Sharp Break', *New York Times*, 3 December 1967, section The Week In Review, p. E7; 'Homosexuals Ask Candidates' Ideas', *New York Times*, 19 August 1968, p. 29.

¹⁸⁴ Madolin Cervantes to Daniel Wolf, 4 November 1967, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 15.

Try to act as a catalyst, doing what we can to get church leaders to understand the wants and needs of homosexuals, and letting them make their reforms. It is our job to start the action, and to represent the homosexual viewpoint whenever that viewpoint needs to be considered.¹⁸⁵

Undoubtedly, the creation of openly gay religious spaces, such as Rev. Troy Perry's Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) in 1968, where gay men and women could articulate an understanding of God free from heterosexual bias, was an important step in the movement. Dismissing earlier attempts to influence mainstream narratives, however, not only overlooks how these struggles created an atmosphere in which the MCC could thrive, but also misses the fact that Wood and other homophile allies were also part of this later and more radical challenge to religious authority.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, an examination of news construction in this period adds weight to calls by Rebecca Davis and others to reinterpret and rediscover the role that religion and the religious have played in the fight for gay and lesbian rights.¹⁸⁷

II.i

Religion is not the only area where the interaction of activists with homophobic authorities has been a controversial and much maligned aspect of the homophile movement. By hosting lectures from psychiatrists who would tell audiences of gay men and women that they were mentally ill, groups like the MSNY and the DOB have been seen as complicit in their own medicalisation. However, while a number of activists may have internalised homophobic medical diagnoses, examining these cooperative efforts in the context of a long-term public relations strategy can help us to re-evaluate homophile activity.

John D'Emilio has argued that the psychiatric tests carried out on drafted soldiers during the Second World War, 'catapulted the psychiatric profession into the lives of millions of

¹⁸⁵ Dick Leitsch to Ernest Stricklin, 18 December 1967, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 14.

¹⁸⁶ Edward B. Fiske, 'Homosexuals in Los Angeles, Like Many Elsewhere, Want Religion and Establish Their Own Church', *New York Times*, 15 February 1970, p. 58; Eleanor Blau, 'Churches Assailed Here as Foes of Homosexuals', *New York Times*, 25 March 1971, p. 30; Edward B. Fiske, 'Homosexuals: Color Some of the Churches Lavender', *New York Times*, 28 March 1971, section E, p. 7.

¹⁸⁷ Rebecca Davis and others, 'Believe It: Finding Religion in the History of U.S. Sexuality', *Notches: (re)marks on the History of Sexuality* <<http://notchesblog.com/2014/11/24/believe-it-finding-religion-in-the-history-of-u-s-sexuality/>> [accessed 4 December 2014].

Americans'.¹⁸⁸ Writing in the *New York Times* in 1946, the former Director of the Army's Neuropsychiatry Consultants Division, General William Menninger, argued that the war had resulted in 'wider acceptance and better understanding' of psychiatry as a field.¹⁸⁹ By the 1950s, other social movements had begun using psychology and related social sciences to further their own causes, with psychological 'doll tests' forming part of the plaintiff's case in the historic 1954 *Brown* decision.¹⁹⁰ Noting that roughly 1.25 million soldiers were treated 'for one form of mental trouble or another', Menninger claimed that society had begun to view mental illness as a medical problem rather than 'a matter of perversity or meanness or incompetence or stupidity'.¹⁹¹ Having risen dramatically during the war, funding for medical research continued to grow as the public began to view science and technology not only from the perspective of economic or industrial gain, but also as an important influence on the living conditions of ordinary citizens.¹⁹² Indeed, a *Newsweek* poll in 1965 found that college students had lost faith in a number of traditional American institutions and reported more confidence in both the scientific community and the medical profession than any of the other eighteen tested fields.¹⁹³ With more students claiming to have a 'great deal' of confidence in psychiatry than organised religion, this shift in post-war attitudes towards scientific leaders influenced the homophile movement's approach to the increasing medicalisation of homosexuality.¹⁹⁴ As 'medicine was moving toward parity with religion and law in structuring American culture's

¹⁸⁸ John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 17; For more detail on the role that psychiatry played during the war and its interaction with the topic of homosexuality see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*, 20th anniversary ed (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), especially pp. 149-74.

¹⁸⁹ William Menninger, 'The Promise of Psychiatry', *New York Times*, 15 September 1946, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM6, SM53-54 (p. SM6).

¹⁹⁰ John P. Jackson Jr., *Social Scientists for Social Justice: Making the Case against Segregation* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), pp. 125-52.

¹⁹¹ Menninger, p. SM53.

¹⁹² 'Progress Is Noted in Medical Studies', *New York Times*, 2 June 1947, p. 28; Waldemar Kaempffert, 'The Rapid Steps of Science and the Plodding Gait of Men', *New York Times*, 31 December 1950, section The New York Times Book Review, p. BR2; Howard A. Rusk, 'Increase Is Noted in Funds For Research in Medicine: Public Is Now "Sold" on Program, Which Has Paid Nation Enormous Dividends', *New York Times*, 29 June 1952, p. 26.

¹⁹³ 'How Students View the World Around Them', *Newsweek*, 22 March 1965, p. 45.

¹⁹⁴ 'How Students View the World Around Them'.

perception of homosexuality', then, engagement with medical officials became a necessity for homophile activists.¹⁹⁵

The nature of this engagement, however, was sometimes problematic and led radical homophiles, such as Jim Kepner, to characterise the MSNY in the early 1960s as an organisation 'whose members didn't mind being told they were sick as long as the doctor was nice about it'.¹⁹⁶ This characterisation was not without merit for the homophile movement at large. In 1964, for example, the DOB's New York Chapter not only called Dr. Irving Bieber 'a contemporary authority on research into the causes of homosexuality', but also reprinted his argument that, 'evidence indicates female homosexuality is caused by "destructive psychological conditions within the family"'.¹⁹⁷ Published as a consequence of Bieber's recent piece in the *New York Times*, the DOB's article, entitled 'Preventing Homosexuality', failed to challenge any of Bieber's conclusions and even encouraged readers to consult 'a copy of the full report of Dr. Bieber and his distinguished colleagues' in the Chapter's reference library.¹⁹⁸

To concentrate on the educational role that homophobic officials played within the homophile movement, however, is to ignore the role that they played – and were encouraged by homophile activists to play – in wider society. In a well-documented dispute that played out within the pages of *The Ladder*, the DOB's Director of Research, Florence Conrad, and MSW co-founder Frank Kameny fought over the necessity of research to the movement.¹⁹⁹ Described by Kristen Gay Esterberg as 'one of the last times that the "sickness" position was taken seriously in *The Ladder's* pages', Conrad's article contains some problematic assumptions that serve as evidence of homophile self-loathing.²⁰⁰ Indeed, given that Conrad was the DOB's Director of Research, her characterisation of the work conducted by her own organisation as

¹⁹⁵ D'Emilio, p. 17.

¹⁹⁶ Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), p. 405 fn 15.

¹⁹⁷ 'Preventing Homosexuality', *Daughters of Bilitis (DOB): New York Chapter Newsletter*, September 1964, p. 3, Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter Collection, (Primary Source Media, Thompson Gale, 2006, Microfilm Edition), Reel 14.

¹⁹⁸ 'Preventing Homosexuality'; Bieber.

¹⁹⁹ Franklin E. Kameny, 'Does Research into Homosexuality Matter', *The Ladder*, May 1965, pp. 14–20; Florence Conrad, 'Research Is Here to Stay', *The Ladder*, August 1965, pp. 15–21; Franklin E. Kameny, 'Emphasis on Research Has Had Its Day', *The Ladder*, October 1965, pp. 10–14, 23–26.

²⁰⁰ Kristin Gay Esterberg, 'From Illness to Action: Conceptions of Homosexuality in the Ladder, 1956–1965', *Journal of Sex Research*, 27.1 (1990), 65–80 (p. 78).

an ‘amateur survey’ – and claim that it had ‘the main purpose of spurring others to research’ – demonstrates a tendency within certain homophile organisations to defer to the authority of established institutions, even when those institutions printed material that contradicted the experience of their own lives.²⁰¹ However, while it would be wrong to ignore the ways in which some homophiles internalised the dominant, homophobic rhetoric of the period, there is an important difference between acknowledging institutional privilege and accepting it. By viewing the battle between Conrad and Kameny as essentially one of public relations, rather than medical theory, we can get at the heart of an important question faced by all activists; who speaks for me?

Kameny’s opening essay ‘Does Research into Homosexuality Matter?’ was a forceful critique that challenged the timidity he believed was stopping the movement from reaching its full potential. Among the many challenges that Kameny issued to conservatives in the movement, he specifically addressed the issue of whether gay men and women could – or should – speak on their own behalf:

There are some who say that WE will not be accepted as authorities, regardless of what we say, or how we say it, or what evidence we present, and that therefore we must take no positions on these matters but must wait for the accepted authorities to come around to our position – if they do. This makes of us a mere passive battlefield across which conflicting "authorities" fight their intellectual battles. I, for one, am not prepared to play a passive role in such controversy, letting others dispose of me as they see fit. I intend to play an active role in the determination of my own fate.²⁰²

This powerful challenge demonstrates the increasing militancy within the movement that Kameny would come to personify as a leader within MSW and ECHO. However, while certainly true of some homophiles, it would be wrong to characterise Conrad and other activists as ‘passive’ or present engagement with officials as representing a binary between militant defiance and conservative acceptance of normative social hierarchies. Instead, Conrad and others took cues from political allies, such as Floor Majority Leader of the Colorado House of Representatives Robert E. Allen, who told the 1959 Mattachine Convention that ‘in this area of

²⁰¹ Conrad, p. 20.

²⁰² Kameny, ‘Does Research into Homosexuality Matter’, p. 15.

great taboo, legislators need the backing of competent psychiatrists, researchers and authorities in order to be effective in helping to bring about needed changes'.²⁰³ Aware of the power that legitimised officials played in mainstream society, Conrad argued that 'ours is a science-oriented society, and scientists are God to most people'.²⁰⁴ Viewed through this lens, it is easier to understand why Conrad felt that 'maintaining or increasing the barriers dividing us from the scientific community can work only to our disadvantage'.²⁰⁵ Indeed, in a period when homophile voices were still largely absent from mainstream discussion, even Kameny recognised the superior impact that liberal professionals could have on mainstream audiences – asking Dr. Evelyn Hooker to write letters of support to the court during his challenge of federal discrimination laws in September 1966.²⁰⁶

Importantly, this notion of expertise – and homophile lack thereof – reflected prevailing attitudes in the mainstream press. Indeed, when examining mainstream articles in this period, it is not hard to see why Conrad felt a greater need to 'get some issues clarified with those whose opinions count with the public and who deal in ideas, the crucial role of which Kameny grossly underestimates'.²⁰⁷ For instance, while the *New York Times* first mentioned the Mattachine Society in 1960, it was not until 1963 that articles within the paper included the words of actual homophile activists.²⁰⁸ Indeed, even coverage of the British TV show that had led to the first ever mention of the Mattachine Society within the *Times* was treated more favourably by other publications. While Waggoner briefly mentioned Harold Call in a list of secondary figures in the show, coverage by the AP included a quote from the homophile leader in which he claimed 'we are an anti-sexual society [...] And yet we're hypocritical about it because all our advertising and output is geared to making more people sexually attractive'.²⁰⁹ Picked up by the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, who put the piece on their front page, it is clear that

²⁰³ 'Mattachine Breaks Through the Conspiracy of Silence', *The Ladder*, October 1959, pp. 5–8, 16–20 (p. 16).

²⁰⁴ Conrad, p. 16.

²⁰⁵ Conrad, p. 21.

²⁰⁶ *Gay Is Good: The Life and Letters of Gay Rights Pioneer Franklin Kameny*, ed. by Michael G. Long (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), pp. 134–6.

²⁰⁷ Conrad, p. 18.

²⁰⁸ Waggoner, 'London TV Puts a Focus on U.S.'; 'Homosexual Groups Asks Understanding', *New York Times*, 18 October 1963, p. 28.

²⁰⁹ Waggoner, 'London TV Puts a Focus on U.S.', p. 16; Associated Press, 'Hiss, Hutchins Tell Britons of U.S. "Faults"', *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 January 1960, pp. 1, 5 (p. 5).

any conflation of the *Times* record with that of the media more generally is problematic. Indeed, both of these firsts for the *Times* came about because of homophile inclusion by other organisations – with Mattachine President Hal Call appearing on British television in 1960 and Randolfe Wicker appearing at the City College WBAI-FM club in 1963. As Alwood has argued, the coverage of these programmes by the *Times* and other mainstream outlets ‘was especially ironic because the press was celebrating a development that newspapers themselves had failed to anticipate, that is, affording gay men or lesbians access to a public platform where they could speak for themselves’.²¹⁰

However, if mainstream papers were apt to ‘celebrate’ the inclusion of gay men on other, limited audience platforms, the continued exclusion and marginalisation of just such voices in their own publications suggests that early absences were not accidental or simply the result of a lack of foresight. Claiming that WBAI radio’s 1962 programme *Live and Let Live*, ‘succeeded [...] in encouraging a wider understanding of the homosexual’s attitudes and problems’, Jack Gould’s article for the *New York Times* failed to include a single quote from Wicker or the other five gay men on the show.²¹¹ Homophile voices were also marginalised in Doty’s front-page story for the *Times* in December 1963.²¹² Instead, Police Commissioner Michael J. Murphy – the only source to be cited on the front page – was one of three police officials quoted in the piece alongside SLA Chairman Donald S. Hostetter and First Deputy Police Commissioner John F. Walsh.²¹³ Doty also cited three psychiatrists – Dr. Abram Kardiner, Dr. Irving Bieber, and Dr. Charles Socarides – as well as Monsignor Robert Gallagher.²¹⁴ All seven of these officials gave a negative view of homosexuality, the gay community, and homophile activism. In contrast – and despite emerging from over a month of research including personally guided tours by Wicker and other activists – it was not until the fourth column of the piece’s second page that Doty chose to cite anyone from the Mattachine.²¹⁵ While Wicker was mentioned by name in

²¹⁰ Edward Alwood, ‘A Gift of Gab: How Independent Broadcasters Gave Gay Pioneers A Chance to Be Heard’, in *Media Q: Media/Queered*, ed. by Kevin G. Barnhurst (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 27–44 (p. 30).

²¹¹ Jack Gould, ‘Taboo Is Broken: Live and Let Live on WBAI Presents Homosexuals Discussing Problems’, *New York Times*, 16 July 1962, section Radio and Television, p. 47.

²¹² Doty.

²¹³ Doty, pp. 1, 33.

²¹⁴ Doty, p. 33.

²¹⁵ Doty, p. 33.

the final five paragraphs – of a roughly 110 paragraph article – the pyramid style of reporting used by the *Times* and most other newspapers would suggest that this information was deemed to be of the least importance to Doty and his editors.²¹⁶ Given the absence or limited use of homophile voices, therefore, the work of Conrad and others can be seen as an attempt by homophile activists to indirectly influence coverage by persuading those whom journalists, and the wider public, respected as legitimate sources of news and opinion.

Indeed, engagement with homophobic research did not have to be subservient or a product of self-hatred. Despite highlighting and cataloguing many of the same flaws in Bieber's methodology that Kameny described, Swiss psychologist Dr. Fritz Fluckiger's article in *The Ladder* in July 1966 was unapologetic in its continued support for further research. Taking issue with Kameny's earlier piece, Fluckiger wrote that:

Of course research does matter. Its findings influence the attitude of the public at large, the policies of the social institutions and professions concerned with mental health, and the decisions of legislators and law enforcement agencies. Last but not least, research findings influence the attitudes of homosexuals towards themselves.²¹⁷

Stressing the need to influence the outcome of this research by correcting the homophobic parameters of previous efforts, Fluckiger challenged the idea that homophile activists and their allies considered themselves passive actors in the creation of this narrative. Indeed, Ronald Bayer has demonstrated how this rejection of scientific neutrality emerged within the pages of homophile publications as early as 1957, when the *Mattachine Review* launched an almost year long critique of Edmund Bergler's *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life*.²¹⁸

II.ii

Importantly, this push to influence narratives did not just take place within the confines of homophile publications, but was an active part of their interaction with the psychiatric and wider scientific profession. In 1961, for example Albert J. DeDion told members of the MSNY

²¹⁶ Doty, p. 33.

²¹⁷ Fritz A. Fluckiger, 'Research Through A Glass Darkly', *The Ladder*, July 1966, pp. 16–26 (p. 16).

²¹⁸ Ronald Bayer, *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry the Politics of Diagnosis* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), pp. 78–80.

that the organisation's annual convention would, 'be a chance for us to voice our needs and know that the psychologists attending the APA's [American Psychiatric Association's] meeting will have a chance to know of us'. Indeed, DeDion even used the presence of APA officials – and the need to convince them of the MSNY's position – to encourage attendance, claiming later in his letter that 'a good attendance will help us carry these points across'.²¹⁹ By December 1964 this fight had escalated, with four homophile activists picketing a talk by Dr. Paul R. Dince entitled 'Homosexuality, A Sickness' that was being hosted by the popular Cooper Union Forum series in New York. Demanding – and receiving – ten minutes to rebut Dince, one of the four activists (who may have been Randolfe Wicker) was able to highlight the division amongst psychiatrists on homosexuality, the unscrupulous nature of many offering so called cures, and the false assumptions underlying much current research into the topic. Delivered in a way that 'stunned' Dince, *The Ladder* claimed that 'applause for the challenger topped applause for the lecturer'.²²⁰ Clearly, therefore, the relationship between homophile activists and medical professionals was evolving. Having previously deferred to medical authority, homophile activists were attempting to influence medical narratives and even speak out as experts on their own lives.

Demonstrating the importance of looking past the *New York Times* to other outlets, however, this trend appeared much later in the mainstream press than other less prestigious outlets. For instance, while the *Times* incorrectly claimed that the MSNY was a branch office of the San Francisco Mattachine Society in May 1964, William J. Helmer's earlier examination of New York's "'Middle-Class" Homosexuals' for *Harper's Magazine* in March 1963 gave a detailed and accurate history of the organisation that was clearly informed by MSNY staff.²²¹ Similarly, having sent the DOB a release about the article in late February, *Harper's* publicity director Stuart Harris not only seemed to recognise the growing importance of homophile organisations in a way that the *Times* did not, but also saw gay men and women as part of the magazine's potential audience.²²² Other mainstream outlets followed suit. Indeed, while the

²¹⁹ Albert J. de Dion to Dear Friend, 25 August 1961, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4.

²²⁰ Kay Tobin, "'Expert" Challenged', *The Ladder*, March 1965, p. 18.

²²¹ Trumbull; William J. Helmer, 'New York's "'Middle-Class" Homosexuals', *Harper's Magazine*, March 1963, pp. 85–92.

²²² Faye Bell, 'Preview of an Insight into Homosexuality', *The Ladder*, March 1963, p. 23.

Times totally ignored homophile opinion when publishing the highly homophobic report of the New York Academy of Medicine in May 1964, other mainstream papers actively sought out spokespeople from the organisation whose input had an effect on subsequent coverage.²²³ While the *Wall Street Journal's* coverage still contained a number of highly homophobic passages from the Academy's report, it also included an unnamed Mattachine spokesperson, likely to have been Dr. Wardell Pomeroy, who stated that, 'we don't believe the idea that homosexuals can be cured'.²²⁴ According to Dick Leitsch, other publications carried more favourable stories, with *Newsweek* featuring a picture of a Mattachine meeting and detailing the organisation's membership and activities.²²⁵ Importantly, while contacting Leitsch in the first instance, journalists were passed on to board member Dr. Wardell Pomeroy who could speak as an official representative of the organisation while also benefitting from the positive social status given to psychiatrists on this issue. Having moved to New York in 1963, and with a strong reputation as a co-author of the famous Kinsey Reports, Pomeroy would often speak to homophile groups in the city and was a useful ally.²²⁶ With the *New York Post* reportedly focusing their subsequent story almost entirely around Dr. Pomeroy's critique rather than the study itself, it is clear that this combined authority could provide homophile organisations with much greater access to media narratives and challenges the idea that engagement with the psychiatric establishment was a passive or conservative act.²²⁷

Indeed, while presented as a major shift in the movement, the open rejection of the sickness theory did not prevent more militant homophile activists, including Kameny himself, from continuing to utilise and debate the work of psychiatrists. As Jim Kepner would argue in the more radical *Tangents* magazine in 1968:

Bieber, totally without value as a scientist, is nonetheless worth the trouble to answer. Analysts like Bieber do not spend all their time at therapy sessions; they spend a good deal of it as psycho-logical advisers or "authorities" in courts, state legislatures, licensing boards, prisons, parole

²²³ Trumbull.

²²⁴ 'Homosexuality Is an Illness and Is Curable In Some Cases, Major Doctors' Group Says', *Wall Street Journal*, 19 May 1964, p. 7.

²²⁵ Dick Leitsch, *News-Views*, May 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 11, Folder 6.

²²⁶ Eric Nagourney, 'Wardell B. Pomeroy, 87; Aided Kinsey's Studies on Sex', *New York Times*, 12 September 2001, section Business & Finance, p. C14; 'Homosexual Women Hear Psychologists', *New York Times*, 21 June 1964, p. 54.

²²⁷ Leitsch.

boards, schools, and employment agencies. Our freedom and our livelihood may very well depend, more than one time in the future, on the “expert” testimony of Bieber or an “expert” like him – and it may very well be to our advantage to understand just what such a man and his free-flowing theories can do.²²⁸

Consequently, while Margaret Rubick has claimed that by 1973 ‘the APA had been under pressure for two years’, the fight against the medicalisation of homosexuality had a considerably longer history.²²⁹ Importantly, many of the gains that were made before Stonewall were not necessarily felt in that period. Indeed, despite attempts by scholars to create clean narratives that neatly periodise stages in the homophile and gay liberation movements, there was considerable overlap in ideas and personnel between pre- and post-Stonewall attitudes to psychiatry and medicalisation. Consequently, when claiming that Barbara Gittings acted as a ‘fairy godmother’ to a group of gay psychiatrists in the early 1970s, Rubick distorts Gittings’ timeline of activism by ignoring the role she played in facilitating the debate between Conrad and Kameny as editor of *The Ladder* and the extensive links she maintained with those in the field of psychiatry for much of the mid-to-late 1960s.²³⁰ Condemnation of early engagement with the psychiatric establishment, then, overlooks how this work fitted into longer term and larger scale attempts to not only educate the public, but also embolden and legitimise homophile activity itself.

Importantly, when it came to deciding which officials deserved the approval of the organisation, what homophiles deemed to be tolerable was in a constant state of flux. A good example of this evolution is the case of Dr. Albert Ellis. One of the earliest psychiatrists to speak to the newly formed Mattachine Society chapter in New York, Ellis was a vocal supporter of the theory that bisexuality was the dominant and natural human condition. His outspoken criticism of contemporary psychiatry and sexual mores led Kepner to argue in 1959 that Ellis

²²⁸ Jim Kepner, ‘Dr. Bieber’s Enormous Carrot’, *Tangents*, June 1968, pp. 13–19 (p. 19); For more on *Tangents* and Kepner see: C. Todd White, *Pre-Gay L.A. : A Social History of the Movement for Homosexual Rights* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), pp. 116–75.

²²⁹ Margaret Rubick, ‘The Women Who Took on the APA’, *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, 19.2 (2012), 16–18 (p. 18).

²³⁰ Rubick, p. 17.

was able to ‘shock many who think themselves sexually enlightened’.²³¹ As well as writing for the *Mattachine Review*, Ellis spoke regularly to homophile groups and was billed as a keynote speaker at ECHO’s 1963 conference in an advert the organisation placed in the *New York Times*.²³² Having written several books on human sexuality, including *Sex Without Guilt*, that were advertised prominently in the *Times*, Ellis was featured in mainstream articles on human sexuality and appeared as a psychiatric expert on local radio stations and KHJ-TV’s *Therapy*.²³³ Striking against what he saw as outdated religious attitudes in psychiatry in 1959, Ellis was cited in the *Times* claiming that ‘there is no place whatever for the concept of sin in psychotherapy and to introduce this concept in any manner, shape, or form is highly pernicious and anti-therapeutic’.²³⁴

However, while Ellis’ approach to bisexuality made him a potential ally in the fight against draconian and outdated laws, his characterisation of exclusive homosexuality as a neurosis seriously undermined his credentials as an ally of the gay and lesbian movement. Consequently, the frequency with which Ellis addressed the *Mattachine*, either in person or within the pages of the *Mattachine Review*, has been seen as evidence that the Society accepted the medical model that Ellis and others put forward.²³⁵ As Martin Duberman has argued, however, ‘in the context of the psychiatric profession of the day, Ellis was a decided liberal’.²³⁶ More importantly, while Kepner has criticised the MSNY for their interactions with Ellis, his own critique of Ellis’ work, published in ONE Inc.’s academic magazine *Homophile Studies* in 1959, highlights the visible dissent towards Ellis’ thinking that would continue to grow throughout the 1960s.²³⁷ By 1965, for example, Elver Barker – an active MSNY member

²³¹ James Kepner Jr., ‘“An Examination of the Sex Theories of Albert Ellis, PhD”’, *Homophile Studies*, 5 (Spring 1959), in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s’ Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 269–77.

²³² ‘Display Ad 80’, *New York Times*, 23 August 1963, p. 26.

²³³ Ellis’ various works featured in more than 200 advertisements in the *Times* during the period 1950–73. For a good example, see: ‘Display Ad 13 -- No Title’, *New York Times*, 6 September 1958, p. 15; ‘On Radio’, *New York Times*, 3 September 1954, p. 24; ‘Radio’, *New York Times*, 13 October 1967, p. 79; Digby Diehl, ‘TV Psychodrama: Therapy or Titillation?: TV Psychodrama’, *New York Times*, 9 October 1966, section Arts & Leisure, p. X22.

²³⁴ Emma Harrison, ‘Therapists Clash on Concept of Sin’, *New York Times*, 5 September 1959, p. 18.

²³⁵ Henry L. Minton, *Departing from Deviance: A History of Homosexual Rights and Emancipatory Science in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 240.

²³⁶ Martin B. Duberman, *The Martin Duberman Reader: The Essential Historical, Biographical, and Autobiographical Writings* (New York: New Press, 2013), p. 191.

²³⁷ Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views*, p. 405 fn 15; Kepner Jr.

who had organised the 1959 Mattachine conference in Denver – wrote to MSNY’s leadership informing them that when it came to preparing the list of those to lobby for changes to federal discrimination practices, ‘Dr. Albert Ellis should definitely be ruled out. Among some truths, he does help perpetuate the sickness dogma which is precisely what was used in the original as a basis for federal discrimination against us’.²³⁸ Indeed, even those associated with Ellis came under suspicion with Barker arguing that Donald Webster Cory [AKA Edward Sagarin], had equally ‘disqualified himself’ from inclusion.²³⁹ The rejection of Cory signified another big shift in homophile politics. Author of one of the most influential early works on homosexuality – *The Homosexual in America* – in 1951, Cory has been described by MSNY member Albert J. De Dion, as ‘an icon, like a Godfather’.²⁴⁰ Comparing the repression faced by gay men and women to that of other minority groups, Cory’s call for civil rights and equality before the law made a powerful impact on future homophile activity. By 1965, however, his association with Ellis led Barker to conclude that:

Just as some Negroes accept an inferiority status and many untouchables in India after centuries of conditioning still believe themselves inferior in spite of the fact that the caste system has been outlawed in that nation, so do some American homosexuals accept the myth of their being inferior. They are not the ones to work for our civil rights.²⁴¹

Indeed, when congratulating Dick Leitsch’s victory over the more conservative members of the MSNY in June 1965, MSW co-founder Jack Nichols argued that:

When you get the sickness policy through, maybe Cory will actually quit the NY Society. Why doesn’t he start his own little therapy group. You may tell him that I am spreading the word “traitor” and “treason” after reading his introduction to Ellis’ new book. I used to be much kinder – but no more.²⁴²

²³⁸ Elver Barker to Dick Leitsch, Julian C. Hodges, and Richard L. Schlegal, 22 August 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

²³⁹ Barker to Leitsch, Hodges, and Schlegal.

²⁴⁰ Albert DeDion, as cited in Duberman, p. 192; Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (New York, NY: Greenberg, 1951).

²⁴¹ Barker to Leitsch, Hodges, and Schlegal.

²⁴² Warren D. Atkins [Pseudonym of Jack Nichols] to Dick Leitsch, 2 June 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 8, Folder 5; Similar viewpoints were expressed after Cory printed his book *Odd Man In* under the name Edward Sagarin in 1969. The book’s homophobic tone even caused Gene Damon of the *Ladder* to compare him to Judas while keeping his previous identity secret: Gene Damon, ‘Lesbiana’, *The Ladder*, March 1970, pp. 31–35.

Once again, then, this shifting dynamic demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between homophile activists and legitimised medical professionals and challenges the notion of self-hating men and women who 'didn't mind being told they were sick as long as the doctor was nice about it'.²⁴³

II.iii

Unfortunately for the homophile movement, however, news reporters did not share their priorities or concerns when they chose potential sources for their news stories. Instead, the overlap of media logistics and individual prejudice often prevented the inclusion of more positive psychiatric and scientific approaches to homosexuality. For instance, while Wicker exposed Doty to the work of psychologists, such as Dr. Evelyn Hooker, who disputed the sickness theory, it was the work of Dr. Irving Bieber and Dr. Charles Socarides that dominated his landmark piece.²⁴⁴ Indeed, the highly homophobic pronouncements of Bieber and Socarides appeared so regularly in stories on the gay community that journalism professor Edward Alwood has argued the two men quickly became 'public enemy number one and number two for gay Americans'.²⁴⁵

In part, the dominance of Bieber and Socarides can be explained by geography. As we have seen, gay communities were often viewed as a local problem, and this not only discouraged the coverage of events in other cities, but also meant that journalists were unlikely to look too far afield for sources to cite when investigating homosexuality. With Hooker based on the West Coast and the Kinsey Institute and Reproductive Biology Research Foundation located in Indiana and Missouri respectively, it is not surprising that New York based officials were cited over those based further afield. Indeed, with reputable local practices in New York and extensive publishing careers, Bieber and Socarides were ideal journalistic sources. Geography and media logistics, however, cannot fully explain the absence of positive voices within the *Times* and other papers in this period. Given the length of time Doty spent on his article, and

²⁴³ Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views*, p. 405 fn 15.

²⁴⁴ Doty.

²⁴⁵ Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 49.

the close contact he had with Wicker and other leading homophile activists, it is highly unlikely that the experienced reporter was not at least aware of the division over many of the ideas he quoted unopposed in his article. Nevertheless, as Wicker has complained, ‘he didn’t give any mention – not one mention – that there was a division among the psychiatrists – not one word’.²⁴⁶ Importantly, while the ‘balance’ of the piece was criticised by Wicker and other homophiles, it was praised by media colleagues at *Newsweek*, who argued that, ‘while straining for objectivity, a *Times* trademark, Doty nevertheless tried to explode a favorite myth propagated by some homosexuals that their condition is incurable and innate’.²⁴⁷ When it came to stories on the gay and lesbian community, therefore, journalists and homophiles had very different ideas of ‘neutral’ reporting.

Without nationally recognised leaders that could reasonably demand inclusion in stories, journalists were free to select voices that suited their own needs and prejudices. As the next chapter demonstrates in greater detail, the side-lining of homophile voices was also integral to how journalists within the mainstream media framed their stories. Consequently, even when journalists such as Doty did include homophile voices in their stories they were often used to legitimise wider attacks on the gay community.²⁴⁸ Of the three anonymous quotes Doty apparently took from Mattachine officials, one describes a particular restaurant on Broadway as ‘the bottom of the barrel’ – with Doty informing readers it was ‘the haunt of exhibitionist queens and eccentrics’ – while another claims that his reason for remaining gay was that he had, ‘none of the social and emotional background of the straight world’ and ‘would be lost in the world of heterosexuals’.²⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, Doty was not the only journalist to use these anonymous voices to advance negative and exclusionary viewpoints that undermined the messages emerging from other aspects of the movement. In his examination of ‘New York’s “Middle-Class” Homosexuals’, *Harper’s Magazine* journalist William Helmer used gay voices to attack elements of the gay community which met with societal disapproval, arguing that:

²⁴⁶ Randolfe Wicker, as cited in Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 50.

²⁴⁷ Alwood, *Straight News*, p. 50.

²⁴⁸ While briefly mentioning lesbians, the focus of Doty’s article is clearly on gay men so the use of gay here is purposefully exclusive. A follow up article on lesbians was planned, but never published.

²⁴⁹ The latter quote also formed the final words of the piece: Doty, p. 33.

Many claim to regard the “flaming faggot” with contempt [...] Generally speaking, any behavior which attracts heterosexual attention is disapproved, if for no other reason than that it is considered bad public relations.²⁵⁰

By dividing the community between ‘respectable’ homophiles and the more overt gay men who populated the bars, restaurants, and clubs of New York’s gay districts, the mainstream press helped to strengthen the divide between the gay subculture and the political organisations that claimed to represent it. This is not to argue that journalists forged quotes or that they did not represent the views of some Mattachine members. While journalists may have sought and reproduced only those opinions that resonated with their personal feelings towards homosexuality, they were undoubtedly aided by homophile activists who expressed attitudes as, if not more, pernicious than their heterosexual counterparts. Covering Columbia University’s decision to charter a student gay rights group in 1967, for example, Murray Schumach was able to cite gay men who made his definition of the gay community as a ‘twilight world that alternates between the furtive and the flagrant’ appear relatively positive.²⁵¹ Indeed, with one anonymous gay man arguing that ‘the mascaraed fagot [...] is just a homosexual derelict’, while another claimed that ‘flagrant homosexuals have undoubtedly done us a good deal of harm’, Schumach was able to condemn large swathes of the gay community while appearing to comply with journalistic conceptions of neutrality and balance.²⁵² However, it is clear that many selectively used their sources to match a pre-conceived notion of homosexuality, the gay community, and the homophile movement. While Craig Loftin and others have investigated the very real prejudices held by homophiles in this period, the disproportionate use of homophile voices to condemn elements of the gay community has therefore exaggerated the prevalence of such voices in the movement.²⁵³ Indeed, as Loftin’s *Letters to ONE* demonstrates, many who were involved in the homophile

²⁵⁰ Helmer, pp. 87–8.

²⁵¹ Murray Schumach, ‘Morals: On the Third Sex’, *New York Times*, 7 May 1967, section 4: The News of the Week in Review, p. E5.

²⁵² Schumach, p. E5; Once again, this internal critique does not make homophiles unique, with similar arguments still expressed in some quarters of the LGBT community: Bruce Bawer, *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993).

²⁵³ Craig M. Loftin, ‘Unacceptable Mannerisms: Gender Anxieties, Homosexual Activism, and Swish in the United States, 1945-1965’, *Journal of Social History*, 40.3 (2007), 577–96; Elvia R. Arriola, ‘Faeries, Marimachas, Queens, and Lezzies: The Construction of Homosexuality before the 1969 Stonewall Riots’, *Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*, 5 (1995), 33–77.

community in this period had crafted a definition of homosexuality that articulated a proud, inclusive, and diverse identity.²⁵⁴

Consequently, as Maryann Barakso and Brian F. Schaffner have demonstrated in their examination of the women's movement, it is wrong to assume that the dominant voices present in media coverage can be equated to the dominant desires or aims of social activists.²⁵⁵ While homophile groups were certainly complicit in the construction of what Martin Meeker has called the 'Mask of Respectability', one only has to examine the hostile reaction to Doty's piece by Wicker and others in the movement to understand that media outcomes and homophile media goals were not synonymous in this period.²⁵⁶ Indeed, when *TIME* magazine published their homophobic editorial essay 'The Homosexual in America' almost three years later, Renee Vera Cafiero of the MSNY wrote a highly critical letter to the magazine that called the piece 'as bigoted an essay as I have seen even in comparison with Southern editorials on integration'.²⁵⁷ While claiming to stick to the 'broader areas' rather than 'a sentence-by-sentence breakdown of the article', the letter, which stretched to four A4 pages, took exception to almost everything contained within the *TIME* piece and demonstrates that the organisation and its members were actively fighting and contesting negative portrayals in the press.²⁵⁸ In particular, Cafiero's attack on the magazine's use of 'psychologists and psychiatrists (I use the term loosely) who are "against" the homosexual', alongside its exemption of Drs. Pomeroy and Hooker, shows how homophiles were attempting to influence who the media chose to cite in their articles.²⁵⁹ Similar sentiments were expressed in homophile publications that reviewed the article as well as letters written by Frank Kameny of

²⁵⁴ *Letters to One: Gay and Lesbian Voices from the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. by Craig M. Loftin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).

²⁵⁵ Maryann Barakso and Brian F. Schaffner, 'Winning Coverage: News Media Portrayals of the Women's Movement, 1969-2004', *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11.4 (2006), 22-44.

²⁵⁶ Richard S. Bolin to Turner Catledge, 9 January 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4.

²⁵⁷ 'Essay: The Homosexual in America', *TIME*, 21 January 1966
<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835069,00.html>> [accessed 11 February 2013]; Renee Vera Cafiero to *TIME* Magazine, 24 January [1966], MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11. The date is given in brackets because the letter actually states it was sent on the 24th September 1965. This is clearly a typographical error.

²⁵⁸ Cafiero to *TIME* Magazine.

²⁵⁹ Cafiero to *TIME* Magazine.

the MSW, Jody Shotwell of the DOB, and homophile ally Dr. Fluckiger.²⁶⁰ None of these letters, however, were printed by *TIME*. Indeed, while carrying short letters from Dr. Clarence Tripp and Dr. Isadore Rubin – in which the latter criticised *TIME* for giving readers ‘the false impression that only “homophile opinion” rejects the notion that homosexuals are sick’ – no mention was made of either men’s close involvement with the homophile movement.²⁶¹ Clearly, then, homophile activists were attempting to speak on behalf of their own community, but were often frustrated by the barriers erected by homophobic mainstream narratives and sourcing practices.

Importantly, any concentration on large, mainstream newspapers causes historians to overlook early coverage of the gay community that appeared in local and alternative media sources. Despite the continued inclusion of negative voices, small distribution radio and television programmes at least gave male homophiles a chance to put across their views in their own words and can give us a greater insight into the media image they wished to project. Indeed, as early as 1954, when Dale Olson featured on local Los Angeles television, homophile leaders made clear and positive statements about homosexuality when allowed to do so.²⁶² While it is impossible to judge the impact that these statements had on general audiences, reviews of these programmes suggest that homophile leaders were able to make important gains. Reviewing a 1967 episode of the David Susskind Show in which Dick Leitsch was featured, *Variety*’s TV critic argued that the MSNY President had ‘made it [homosexuality] seem mostly logical and right in the face of some [...] fumbling and even foggy theorizing by a pair of psychiatrists’.²⁶³ Claiming that ‘one of the more impressive points in the presentation was the homos’ personal ease and aplomb re exhibiting theirselves [sic] on color vid’, the

²⁶⁰ ‘Cross-Currents’, *The Ladder*, March 1966, p. 18; ‘Letters *TIME* Didn’t Print’, *The Ladder*, April 1966, pp. 22–24.

²⁶¹ Clarence Tripp, ‘Letters: Truth or Trash?’, *TIME*, 4 February 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,898916-3,00.html>> [accessed 12 October 2014]; Isadore Rubin, ‘Letters: Truth or Trash?’, *TIME*, 4 February 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,898916-3,00.html>> [accessed 10 December 2014]; Both, for example, were speakers at the 1965 ECHO conference: *Third Annual ECHO Conference Program: The Homosexual Citizen in ‘The Great Society’*.

²⁶² Alwood, ‘A Gift of Gab: How Independent Broadcasters Gave Gay Pioneers A Chance to Be Heard’, p. 30.

²⁶³ Pit, ‘Radio-Television: Tele Followups - David Susskind Show’, *Variety*, 15 February 1967, p. 40.

review clearly demonstrated that homophile activists were both willing and capable of actively rebutting homophobic officials in public when given the opportunity to do so.²⁶⁴

Similar breakthroughs occurred on national television with the appearance of MSW co-founder Jack Nichols in CBS's 1967 documentary 'The Homosexuals'. As chapter five discusses, the framing of this documentary still produced a highly negative understanding of homosexuality and demonstrates how inclusion was not necessarily indicative of, nor conducive to, 'balance'. Instead, the perceived need to 'balance' positive viewpoints remained, with Wallace also interviewing a gay man who hid his identity behind a flower pot and told audiences that, 'I know that inside now I'm sick, I'm not just sick sexually, I'm sick in a lot of ways, immature, child-like and the sex part of it is a symptom as a stomach ache is a symptom of who knows what'.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the inclusion of Nichols and other positive voices demonstrated the increasing willingness of media platforms outside of the mainstream print media to present homophile activists as experts on their own lives. Indeed, having been included in earlier programmes as individuals, prominent homophiles such as Nichols and Leitsch were increasingly introduced as the leaders of homophile organisations, demonstrating how TV shows and articles in the mid-to-late 1960s began to include gay men as legitimised experts on homosexuality and the gay community at large.²⁶⁶

In part, this shift was the result of changes in popular culture and an increasing willingness to debate more open and permissive approaches to sex and sexuality even when coverage remained negative.²⁶⁷ Discussing the 'so-called homophile groups' that it claimed were 'a relatively new phenomenon', *TIME's* extended article in 1966 also outlined the groups' position on the sickness theory in a way that – while framed as militant and unwise – would nevertheless have appealed to many:

²⁶⁴ Pit, p. 40.

²⁶⁵ 'The Homosexuals'.

²⁶⁶ While far less common, similar treatment was eventually extended to lesbian homophiles, with Phyllis Lyon cited as former DOB officer and current Vice President of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual: 'God and the Homosexual', p. 63.

²⁶⁷ 'Matrimony: Eye Opener', *Newsweek*, 11 May 1964, pp. 22–23; 'S*cr*ts of S*x', *Newsweek*, 26 April 1965, pp. 58, 60; John Corry, 'Research Into Sexual Physiology Disclosed After 11-Year Inquiry', *New York Times*, 18 April 1966, pp. 31, 41; John Corry, 'A U.S. Sex Revolt? It's Mostly Talk', *New York Times*, 11 July 1966, pp. 29, 59.

Most homosexuals apparently do not desire a cure. A generation ago, the view that homosexuality should be treated not as a vice but as a disease was considered progressive. Today in many quarters it is considered reactionary. Homophile opinion rejects the notion that homosexuals are sick, and argues that they simply have different tastes.²⁶⁸

Viewed as part of a larger 'Sexual Revolution' – that saw the emergence of organisations such as the League for Sexual Freedom – the notion that men and women could speak on behalf of a group united by their sexual preferences was no longer so unique.²⁶⁹ As the previous chapter demonstrated, this wider association with the counter-culture led to increased coverage for groups such as the GLF who were able to contribute to articles such as Lacey Fosburgh's front-page article on the first CSLDP in the *New York Times* in 1970.²⁷⁰

The recognition given to leaders of the GLF and other gay liberation organisations, however, was also a result of earlier commitments to actively and openly challenging harmful narratives that had been pioneered by homophile activists. Having been used as a weapon against gay men and women, public coverage of arrests and other examinations of police practices in New York also presented one of the few opportunities for homophile officials to distinguish themselves as legitimised experts in the mainstream press. Indeed, the only two *New York Times* journalists who by-lined more than one article mentioning the MSNY in this period, Eric Pace and Charles Grutzner, were both assigned as local crime beat reporters.²⁷¹ Importantly, the inclusion of the MSNY within these articles appears to be predominantly the result of journalists seeking out, or responding to, statements by Dick Leitsch and the MSNY concerning local events in New York. When writing about the mafia's role in the running of gay bars and nightclubs in New York City, for instance, Grutzner interviewed Leitsch who provided useful

²⁶⁸ 'Essay: The Homosexual in America'.

²⁶⁹ Martin Gansberg, 'Spring Seasoning Brings Out the Flavor of the City', *New York Times*, 13 April 1964, p. 31; 'Pro-Sex Group Pickets Against Antismut Drive', *New York Times*, 24 January 1965, p. 80; 'Students: The Free-Sex Movement', *TIME*, 11 March 1966
<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,899098,00.html>> [accessed 20 May 2015].

²⁷⁰ Lacey Fosburgh, 'Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park', *New York Times*, 29 June 1970, pp. 1, 29.

²⁷¹ Eric Pace, 'Garelik Urges Public to Report Police Trapping of Homosexuals', *New York Times*, 2 April 1966, pp. 1, 60; Eric Pace, 'Policemen Forbidden to Entrap Homosexuals to Make Arrests', *New York Times*, 11 May 1966, p. 36; Charles Grutzner, 'S.L.A. Won't Act Against Bars Refusing Service to Deviates', *New York Times*, 26 April 1966, p. 55; Charles Grutzner, 'Court Annuls S.L.A. Penalty in a Morals Case', *New York Times*, 9 March 1967, p. 33; Charles Grutzner, 'Mafia Buys Clubs for Homosexuals', *New York Times*, 30 November 1967, pp. 1, 50.

information about the number and nature of these operations.²⁷² By citing Leitsch and the MSNY in such coverage, the *New York Times* conferred legitimacy on the organisation, even referring to the Society in conjunction with more traditional authorities such as the New York Police Department (NYPD) and the District Attorney's office.²⁷³ Indeed, in a rather unexpected sign of the recognition that publishers and advertisers attached to the Mattachine Society by the end of the decade, the organisation was included in a 'Buck Rogers Space Quiz' as a possible answer to the question, 'A medal from which organization would mean the most to Wilma Deering?'²⁷⁴ While easily dismissed as trivial, inclusion in a quiz that was presumably aimed at a young audience suggests that the Society was becoming more respectable and recognisable to *New York Times* readers as the decade drew to a close.

While often associated with post-Stonewall radicalism, it is important to credit homophile activists for creating an atmosphere that allowed significant changes in media access. For instance, an article entitled 'Medicine: What is a Homosexual?' published in *TIME* magazine in 1958 cited no homophile activists, was based entirely on research conducted on prison populations, and ended with a claim that gay scoutmasters were routinely abusing boys under their command.²⁷⁵ Eleven years later in October 1969, however, a much longer *TIME* article entitled 'A Discussion: Are Homosexuals Sick?' demonstrated just how rapidly sourcing practices had changed.²⁷⁶ Of the panel's 'eight experts on homosexuality', two (Weeks and Pomeroy) had been strong supporters of the MSNY for many years, two (Leitsch and Kameny) were Presidents of Mattachine chapters, and one (John Gagnon) would later become a member of the Task Force on the Status of Lesbian and Gay Psychologists under the auspices of the APA's Board of Social and Ethical Responsibility for Psychology. While Charles Socarides was also present, his homophobic ideas were thoroughly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of

²⁷² Grutzner, 'Mafia Buys Clubs for Homosexuals', p. 50.

²⁷³ Grutzner, 'S.L.A. Won't Act Against Bars Refusing Service to Deviates'; Grutzner, 'Court Annuls S.L.A. Penalty in a Morals Case'; Pace, 'Garelik Urges Public to Report Police Trapping of Homosexuals'; Pace, 'Policemen Forbidden to Entrap Homosexuals to Make Arrests'; Schumach.

²⁷⁴ The Mattachine Society was included alongside the 'Women's Liberation Movement' and Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: 'Display Ad 413', *New York Times*, 16 November 1969, p. BR 29.

²⁷⁵ 'Medicine: What Is a Homosexual?', *TIME*, 16 June 1958

<<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,863496,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2014].

²⁷⁶ 'Behavior: A Discussion: Are Homosexuals Sick?', *TIME*, 31 October 1969

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,839118,00.html>> [accessed 22 January 2015].

voices arguing for a more positive and progressive understanding. Despite being published post-Stonewall, the legacy and importance of homophile activism in achieving such a monumental change in representation is clear. Indeed, with Leitsch cited in an article dealing with the park vandalism in Queens, Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings appearing in a story on security clearances in Washington D.C., and the DOB the central focus of one of the longest pieces on lesbians during the entire 1960s, it was homophile activists that remained most prominent in mainstream coverage during the year following the riots themselves.²⁷⁷ Although the relationship between activists, journalists, and more traditional sources remained ‘an uneven contest on a tilted playing field’, homophiles and their allies were at least now being invited to play.²⁷⁸

Conclusion

Nina Eliasoph has critiqued what she argues is the false assumption that ‘news routines operate in such a way that no matter who is making the news, as long as it is made in a news organization, it will be under the sway of [...the same] unspoken conventions’.²⁷⁹ As this chapter has demonstrated, while the process of news production can be likened to a conveyor belt, it must not be confused for one. Susceptible to all manner of human foibles, the way in which journalists seek out, understand, and produce news stories is an intrinsically personal process. Consequently, while media theory can help us to understand how and why certain events, ideas, or voices were more likely to make it into print, it can never fully complete a picture that requires more qualitative analysis.

²⁷⁷ David Bird, ‘Queens Resident Says the Police Stood By as Park Trees Were Cut’, *New York Times*, 2 July 1969, p. 38; Charlayne Hunter, ‘Homosexual Seeks to Retain Security Clearance’, *New York Times*, 20 August 1969, p. 38; Enid Nemy, ‘The Woman Homosexual: More Assertive, Less Willing to Hide’, *New York Times*, 17 November 1969, section Food, Fashions, Family, Furnishings, p. 62.

²⁷⁸ Gamson and others, p. 382; Indeed, in a rather strange twist in 1973, the ‘playing field’ metaphor took on literal meanings when the Mattachine Society played the NYPD in a charity softball match, suggesting just how far the organisation had come in the decade since Doty’s front-page article generated such alarm: Laurie Johnston, ‘Homosexual Nine Loses to Police’, *New York Times*, 28 August 1973, p. 70; United Press International, ‘All for Understanding: Cops Beat Gays’, *Chicago Tribune*, 28 August 1973, p. 11.

²⁷⁹ Nina Eliasoph, ‘Routines and the Making of Oppositional News’, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 5.4 (1988), 313–34 (p. 313).

This examination also requires historians to challenge the sometimes romanticised and often auto-biographical accounts of this process that exist in the literature. Despite race beat reporters, such as ‘the legendary’ Claude Sitton of the *New York Times*, being applauded for having ‘stared down shotgun barrels and crawled out of ditches under gunfire to get stories’, it is important not to overestimate the commitment of race beat journalists.²⁸⁰ While some reporters risked injury to cover Southern demonstrations, most, including Sitton, then returned to white-owned hotels in nearby towns or cities rather than remaining with the local African American population. Indicative of wider attitudes towards race that erected mental as well as physical barriers between white journalists and African Americans in the South, the daily routines and interactions of mainstream reporters created a news net quite different to that of their African American counterparts. Indeed, routinely denied access to white campuses and other white controlled spaces in the South, African American reporters often viewed the Southern movement through a different physical and mental lens.²⁸¹ As a result, the mainstream media covered and prioritised events and ideas that did not necessarily reflect how many within SNCC or the wider African American community saw the movement. As time passed and certain narratives became more dominant, this dissonance would undermine the relationship between SNCC and the press. Having created one of the most extensive communication structures of any civil rights organisation in the Deep South, the increasing intra- and inter-organisational tensions encouraged activists within SNCC to pursue a different approach to public relations.

As the urban unrest and legal gains of the mid-to-late 1960s shifted public goals and narratives, this difference in how journalists’ constructed their news nets would become even more pronounced. Having often been welcomed as heroes in Southern black communities, race beat reporters found themselves attacked on the streets of Watts, Harlem, and Chicago’s South Side. Responding to this unrest, the first page of the Kerner Commission’s report highlighted that ‘our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white – separate

²⁸⁰ Nelson, ‘Nieman Reports: Reporting on the Civil Rights Movement’; Melvin N. Coffee in Charlotte Grimes, ‘Debate: Civil Rights and the Press’, *Journalism Studies*, 6 (2005), 117–34 (p. 126).

²⁸¹ Jet associate editor Larry Still, for example, was not allowed to report on the troubles at Ole Miss despite having Justice Department press credentials: ‘Guild Protests Mississippi Treatment of Reporters’, *Jet*, 18 October 1962, p. 58.

and unequal'.²⁸² Interviews conducted by the Commission highlighted the widespread distrust in the African American community for media sources that many saw 'as mouthpieces of the "power structure"'.²⁸³ Formerly fruitful relationships soured, while a new generation of activists began to call loudly for representation on their own terms.

In contrast, the 1960s revolutionised the access gay men, and to a lesser extent lesbians, had to the media. Finding it difficult to get coverage of any kind, never mind coverage that actively involved homophile activists, groups like MSNY and MSW had fairly low standards when it came to coverage in the 1950s and early 1960s. With stories emerging from beats that had little connection to the gay and lesbian community and failed to prioritise their needs, journalists were unlikely to approach homophile organisations that had made little impact on national or even local discussions. Instead, journalists relied on established connections within the fields of medicine, law enforcement, and religion. While a number of social movements suffered from this overreliance on familiar and easily accessible sources, the criminalisation and medicalisation of homosexuality made it particularly prevalent in stories relating to the gay and lesbian community.

While there were undoubtedly some homophiles who internalised mainstream narratives and recognised medical, religious, and law enforcement officials as the ultimate authorities on their own lives, attempts to educate and influence these groups cannot be seen simply as a sign of homophile self-hatred. Indeed, as Marc Stein has argued, to dismiss the contact homophile activists had with mainstream professionals is to risk misinterpreting their goals.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, it is to ignore the fact that almost all social movements have to negotiate complex relationships with those in oppressive categories.²⁸⁵ The resultant absence of homophile voices in this period, therefore, does not mean that activists did not spend considerable time discussing how to make positive changes to society and advocating for these in public forums and in letters to journalists and editors with mixed success. Too often, however, attempts at breaking down the wall of silence surrounding homosexuality are either

²⁸² United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, p. 1.

²⁸³ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, p. 374.

²⁸⁴ Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2012), p. 58.

²⁸⁵ Meier and Rudwick.

ignored or misleadingly viewed as part of a later, more militant turn in the movement. For instance, while the documentary film *Before Stonewall* included audio from Olson's interview in 1954, it did so after discussion of the homophile pickets in 1965 and was immediately preceded by Barbara Gittings' declaration that 'one of the major successes of the gay movement in the 1960s was our breakthrough into mainstream publicity'.²⁸⁶ To compound this ahistorical approach to Olson's testimony, the director chose to overlay Olson's voice over a series of articles in which dates ranging from the mid-to-late 1960s are clearly visible.²⁸⁷

Indeed, when broadening the search for homophile voices to local and specialised outlets, it is clear that the mainstream record is not indicative of the gains that homophiles were making across the country. Having celebrated the appearance of seven articles in two local newspapers during the Mattachine's 1959 conference in Denver, the 1960s would see the goalposts of success in media access shifted again and again as advances were made at a rate that both excited homophile activists and encouraged further changes. By ECHO's third annual conference in September 1965 the organisation was able to claim that, 'members of the Society have appeared on radio and television, and have given numerous talks, in an effort to inform the public in regard to homosexuality, and to eliminate the prejudice and discrimination faced by the homosexual'.²⁸⁸ Indeed, less than a year after the conference Leitsch informed fellow MSNY member Elver Barker that discussion surrounding entrapment practices in New York had meant that:

We've been mentioned favorably in nearly every newspaper every two or three days for the past two or three months, we've met with the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, high church officials, etc., and have had productive, useful, and newsmaking results.²⁸⁹

Clearly, then, homophile activists were making progress. However, having spent hours with Richard Doty of the *New York Times*, Paul Welch of *Life*, and researchers from *TIME* – all of whom produced long, homophobic articles as a result – access to journalists was not, in-and-

²⁸⁶ Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* (First Run Features, 1984; Pcadillo Pictures Ltd, 2010).

²⁸⁷ Schiller and Rosenberg.

²⁸⁸ *Third Annual ECHO Conference Program: The Homosexual Citizen in 'The Great Society'*.

²⁸⁹ Dick Leitsch to Elver Barker, 27 May 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

of-itself, a panacea for negative coverage.²⁹⁰ As the final chapter demonstrates, even the inclusion of homophile voices in stories could be framed in a way that militated against a sympathetic reading of the text. Indeed, homophile voices could be used to suit heteronormative framing practices that acted to exclude and degrade certain members of the gay and lesbian community even as they offered a small encouragement to others. Similarly, as SNCC found after the enunciation of Black Power, even the most positive and useful of media frames could produce unintended consequences. Having enjoyed relatively extensive and positive access to media production in the first half of the decade, civil rights activists were able to craft a narrative that, while useful in the short term, would end up having a significant impact on the future direction and tenor of the movement. As this chapter has demonstrated, activists in both movements fought bitterly for the right and ability to speak on their own behalf and project a positive image of their work, but they also had to work to ensure that their voices and their image were not distorted, sidelined, or appropriated by those who would use them for other purposes.

²⁹⁰ Doty; Paul Welch, 'The "Gay" World Takes to the City Streets', *Life*, 26 June 1964, pp. 68–74.

Chapter Five: Framing the News

‘Information is manipulated through the use of adjectives; the frequency of certain nouns; the use of synonyms and paraphrases, comments and editorials, and titles and subtitles; the emphasis on some aspects of an event to the exclusion of others; and the breakup of information and its recomposition in a way that suggests precise causal relations’
(Roberto Franzosi, 1987)¹

‘Journalists serve as gatekeepers [...] deciding which frame sponsors will be granted standing and selecting what to quote or emphasize. Journalists, however, do not invent the rules of access; these are structural, reflecting power differences between actors in the larger society. In some cases, the media output may simply reflect the frames of the most powerful actors with little independent contribution from journalists’
(William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld, 1993)²

The previous three chapters have dealt with how the process of news construction can act to hide certain events, individuals, and practices from view while normalising others or imbuing them with symbolic significance. Reporting biases, however, are not limited to the inclusion of certain news events at the expense of others, but also the way in which all media contextualise and communicate news through a process commonly referred to as framing. Unlike the agenda setting function of the media – which is ‘concerned with the salience of issues’ – frame setting is ‘concerned with the salience of issue attributes’.³ While the former is at least partly based on objective judgements of a story’s newsworthiness, the latter is far more prone to subjective influence. Indeed, media framing aptly demonstrates the difference between theoretical and practical applications of objectivity in journalism. As Robert Entman argues, ‘journalists may follow the rules for “objective” reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news text that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation’.⁴

¹ Roberto Franzosi, ‘The Press as a Source of Socio-Historical Data: Issues in the Methodology of Data Collection From Newspapers’, *Historical Methods*, 20 (1987), 5–16 (p. 7).

² William A. Gamson and Gadi Wolfsfeld, ‘Movements and Media as Interacting Systems’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 528 (1993), 114–25 (p. 119).

³ Dietram A. Scheufele, ‘Framing as a Theory of Media Effects’, *Journal of Communication*, 49 (1999), 103–22 (p. 116).

⁴ Robert M. Entman, ‘Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm’, *Journal of Communication*, 43 (1993), 51–58 (p. 56); Edward Alwood, *Straight News: Gays, Lesbians, and the News Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 9.

As we have seen, journalistic ‘neutrality’ often rested on a simplistic understanding of ‘balance’ that encouraged reporters to present two, often heavily contrasting points of view as representative of wider debate. This adversarial approach to media coverage encouraged readers to view discussion of news stories through a ‘for-and-against’ frame that pitted two contesting views against each other. Importantly, while presenting ‘both sides’ of a given topic, it is clear that journalists often favoured one over the other. As Entman has argued, ‘to frame is to *select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation* for the item described’.⁵ By examining how journalists and their editors created and structured the content of news stories, we can gain an insight into how they pushed neutral positions of ‘for-and-against’ into loaded narratives that often appeared to the reader as ‘good-versus-evil’, ‘right-versus wrong’, and ‘us-versus-them’.

Much of this process takes place in what William Gamson and others call the ‘uncontested realm’, where the social constructions inherent in news reporting ‘rarely appear as such to the reader and may be largely unconscious on the part of the image producer as well. They appear as transparent descriptions of reality, not as interpretations, and are apparently devoid of political content’.⁶ This notion of an ‘invisible frame’ that guides reporting is particularly important for the ‘objective’ mainstream press where a state of ‘frame-blindness’ encourages reporters to ignore ‘the ideological nature of their own framing of issues’.⁷ This ‘neutral’ framing is often contrasted to the partisan stance of ‘specialized media’, such as the African American press, and legitimises its use in historical research.⁸ However, given the commercialisation of mainstream newspapers and the concentration of ownership amongst a privileged white demographic, this notion of objectivity or neutrality can hide a presentation of reality ‘no more neutral or impartial’ than the framing practices of minority and specialised

⁵ Entman, p. 52, Emphasis in original.

⁶ William A. Gamson and others, ‘Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18 (1992), 373–93 (p. 382).

⁷ Steven Maras, *Objectivity in Journalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), p. 66; See also: Scheufele, p. 117.

⁸ Rosalee A. Clawson, Harry C. ‘Neil’ Strine IV and Eric N. Waltenburg, ‘Framing Supreme Court Decisions: The Mainstream versus the Black Press’, *Journal of Black Studies*, 33 (2003), 784–800 (p. 786).

media.⁹ As Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman have argued, the domination of media outlets by elite societal groups led to the ‘marginalization of dissidents’ by filtering news according to particular definitions of normative behaviour that ignored those deemed to be fringe elements of society.¹⁰

This framing of news stories may have appeared neutral to reporters working at mainstream outlets, but Nina Eliasoph has shown that many dominant news frames can be, and have been, utilised by oppositional media for different purposes.¹¹ For instance, while coverage of social disorder often focuses on violence, the perceived aggressor and victim in each case can often be affected by media frames, rather than springing inherently from events themselves.¹² Indeed, Eliasoph argues that individual journalists adopt the dominant frames of their workplace in order to please their superiors and use these routines to ‘both structure the news and act as an alibi for the hidden ideology’.¹³ As Warren Breed noted in 1955, ‘the newsman’s source of rewards is located not among the readers, who are manifestly his clients, but among his colleagues and superiors’.¹⁴ While reporters are rarely given explicit instructions on how they should cover the news, the individual prejudices of editors and publishers are absorbed via a journalistic version of osmosis; with journalists who find their coverage or framing of certain issues consistently rewritten or rejected by editors learning to avoid such topics or phrasing in the future.¹⁵ Newsroom culture, therefore, is crucial to understanding why certain topics were treated in particular ways and further emphasises the need to recognise the heterogeneity of mainstream media outlets.

⁹ Clawson, Strine IV and Waltenburg, p. 796.

¹⁰ Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books 1988; repr. London, Vintage Books, 1994), p. 2.

¹¹ Nina Eliasoph, ‘Routines and the Making of Oppositional News’, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 5 (1988), 313–34 (p. 314); For relevant examples in this period see: Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995); Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, 2nd edn (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991); John Campbell McMillian, *Smoking Typewriters: The Sixties Underground Press and the Rise of Alternative Media in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹² Ronald N. Jacobs, *Race, Media, and the Crisis of Civil Society: From Watts to Rodney King* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹³ Eliasoph, p. 315.

¹⁴ Warren Breed, ‘Social Control in the Newsroom: A Functional Analysis’, *Social Forces*, 33 (1955), 326–35 (p. 335).

¹⁵ Breed, pp. 328–9; See also: Thomas Griffith, ‘The Pursuit of Journalism’, *Nieman Reports*, January 1959 <<http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102000/1959-The-Pursuit-of-Journalism.aspx>> [accessed 20 August 2014].

Journalists, editors, and publishers were not the only ones with the ability to frame certain events or actions in particular ways. Whether through their publicity materials or the nature of their demonstrations, activists also played an important role in framing their activity. As Robert Benford and David Snow have argued, ‘all actors [...] who engage in this reality construction work are embroiled in the politics of signification’.¹⁶ To understand media frames, therefore, it is also important to examine the actions and rhetoric of SNCC, MSNY and MSW; what aspects of their activism they chose to highlight, how they presented certain events and decisions to the public, and – perhaps most importantly – what they chose to conceal. Furthermore, with these organisations often competing with others to shape media narratives, it is important to examine how intra-movement and inter-movement dynamics affected frame creation and adoption. This chapter, therefore, not only analyses how these movements were framed, but also investigates why this particular interpretation of activism emerged and the impact it has had on our understanding of the past.

I

For many commentators in the late 1960s, the rhetoric of Black Power symbolized a break with the nonviolent and interracial civil rights movement.¹⁷ Editorials in the *New York Times* typified mainstream press coverage when they condemned the philosophy as ‘a hopeless, futile, destructive course expressive merely of a sense of black impotence’.¹⁸ Claiming that ‘most of the militants who make up SNCC and CORE have no taste or talent for the arduous practice of sophisticated politics’, this coverage framed Black Power as the product of an excessive and immature impulse that had ‘almost no recognition of the ambiguities and indefinities of real life’.¹⁹ Denying that the slogan articulated legitimate political grievances, articles instead framed the philosophy as the result of a ‘wash of frustration’ that was

¹⁶ Gamson and Wolfsfeld, p. 115; Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26 (2000), 611–39 (p. 625).

¹⁷ ‘Black Power Is Black Death’, *New York Times*, 7 July 1966, p. 35; ‘As Negro Militants Challenge Moderates’, *New York Times*, 16 July 1967, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E1.

¹⁸ ‘The Politics of Frustration’, *New York Times*, 7 August 1966, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E8.

¹⁹ ‘The Politics of Frustration’, p. E8.

sweeping over the urban ghetto.²⁰ In doing so, they mirrored condemnation by civil rights leaders such as Bayard Rustin, who argued that Black Power was a defeatist philosophy that emerged out of ‘the growing conviction that the Negroes cannot win’ rather than a realistic approach to the cause of black freedom.²¹ Claiming that the slogan ‘remains ambiguous – perhaps deliberately so’, mainstream newspapers framed Black Power advocates as ‘political manipulators’ that were attempting ‘to scare the white community without specifically inciting the black’.²²

Black Power was also seen as divisive.²³ Mainstream outlets such as *TIME* claimed that, ‘black-power spokesmen’, such as Carmichael and CORE’s Floyd McKissick, had ‘broken up the civil rights coalition whose strong, united stand did much to advance meaningful legislation in the past’.²⁴ This view was reinforced by the selective quotation of white ‘champions of the civil rights movement’ such as Hubert Humphrey and ‘responsible civil rights leaders’ such as Roy Wilkins – who claimed that the philosophy advocated ‘apartheid’ and could mean ‘only black death’.²⁵ Indeed, when attacking Black Power, it is clear that the mainstream media and the ‘responsible’ movement leadership worked together to deny that the slogan had a groundswell of support in the community, while simultaneously using the philosophy as a bogeyman figure to scare intransigent whites into action. Calling supporters of Black Power ‘mindless followers’, the *New York Times* warned that if whites did not ‘respond more positively to the legitimate demands [...of] responsible Negro leaders’ then leadership of the African American community would fall to those ‘who are attempting to lead the Negro

²⁰ ‘Mobilization of Black Strength’, *Life*, 6 December 1968; ‘The Politics of Frustration’; Indeed, such narratives would be formally recognised later in the decade by the Kerner Commission: United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968).

²¹ Bayard Rustin, ‘“Black Power” and Coalition Politics’, *Commentary*, September 1966, Series A.VIII.134, Reel 20 Slide 834, SNCC Papers.

²² ‘“Black Power”’, *New York Times*, 12 July 1966, p. 42; ‘Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy’, *New York Times*, 10 July 1966, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E1.

²³ ‘Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy’; ‘The Nation: A Negro “No” To Black Power’, *New York Times*, 16 October 1966, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E2.

²⁴ ‘Civil Rights: Ahead of Its Time’, *TIME*, 30 September 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,836425,00.html>> [accessed 3 June 2013].

²⁵ M. S. Handler, ‘Humphrey Backs NAACP in Fight on Black Racism’, *New York Times*, 7 July 1966, pp. 1, 22; ‘Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy’; M. S. Handler, ‘Wilkins Says Black Power Leads Only to Black Death’, *New York Times*, 6 July 1966, pp. 1, 14; See also: ‘“Black Power”’; ‘Black Power Is Black Death’; ‘Civil Rights: Ahead of Its Time.’

community down the primrose path of arson, looting, and murder'.²⁶ In order to isolate and delegitimize Black Power, critics such as A. Philip Randolph often framed it as antithetical to the movement, telling the African American *Amsterdam News* in October 1966 that 'no Negro who is fighting for civil rights can support Black Power, which is opposed to civil rights and integration'.²⁷ The power of such criticism was not lost on SNCC members, with one staffer commenting days before Carmichael's Black Power speech in Greenwood that, 'there's nothing more difficult to rectify than having a Negro call another Negro "racist"'.²⁸ Furthermore, citing Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield – who blamed the failure of Congress to pass the 1966 Civil Rights Bill on the 'rioting, marches, shootings and inflammatory statements which have characterized this simmering summer' – *TIME* and other mainstream outlets also linked the enunciation of Black Power to a perceived backlash against movement gains.²⁹

Black Power militancy, then, was framed as a divisive influence on the civil rights movement that used hollow and incendiary rhetoric to exploit political naivety amongst a frustrated constituency, alienating the movement's key political allies in the process. While the inclusion of Black Power advocates in stories officially presented articles in familiar for-and-against terms – at least outside of editorials – mainstream coverage of the slogan can be seen to conform perfectly to the adversarial model outlined above. Described as having 'saved themselves from total impotence by projecting [a] demagogic and almost meaningless slogan', and condemned for trying to 'flog the raw wounds of their people' with their 'racist philosophy', Black Power activists were framed in remarkably similar ways to the Nation of Islam (NOI) earlier in the decade.³⁰ Indeed, having previously painted movement activism as a

²⁶ 'The Voice of Negro Leadership', *New York Times*, 27 July 1967, p. 34.

²⁷ A. Philip Randolph, as cited in Charles Fager, *White Reflections on Black Power* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 55.

²⁸ Merle, as cited in *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966, Series A.VI.19, Reel 12 Slide 697-715, SNCC Papers.

²⁹ 'Civil Rights: Ahead of Its Time'; 'Clergy: Caution on Civil Rights', *TIME*, 26 August 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,842694,00.html>> [accessed 30 September 2014]; 'The Nation: Adding up the March', *New York Times*, 26 June 1966, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E2; Edward C. Burks, 'Militant Rights Groups Feel Pinch as Gifts Drop', *New York Times*, 25 July 1966, pp. 1, 16.

³⁰ "'Black Power" in Nashville', *New York Times*, 11 April 1967, p. 46; 'Civil Rights: The New Racism', *TIME*, 1 July 1966 <<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835847,00.html>> [accessed 11 October 2014]; Loudon Wainwright, 'The View from Here: A Spell of Hickory Weather', *Life*, 26 August 1966, p. 22; For examples of similar coverage of the NOI, see: 'Black Muslim's Cry Grows Louder: "The White Devil's Day Is Almost Over"', *Life*, 31 May 1963, pp. 22–30; 'Races: The Black

choice between the ‘diametrically opposed approaches’ of the NOI and the NAACP, framing of Black Power shifted the characters in the mainstream media’s adversarial play, but continued to paint intra-movement division as a battle between the positive forces of moderation and a pernicious and dangerous alternative.³¹

Similarly, while SNCC’s programme of independent political parties was dismissed as ‘emotional’, emerging black leaders of whom *TIME* and others approved – such as newly elected Cleveland mayor Carl Stokes – were described as the ‘most intelligent spokesmen for the new attitude’.³² With Black Power advocates framed as appealing to frustration and irrationality, while moderate leaders were sophisticated and astute tacticians, mainstream coverage of the philosophy also repackaged the right-versus-wrong frame that had previously critiqued intransigent segregationist resistance. Finally, with Carmichael characterised as the ‘high priest’ of a ‘black power cult’, coverage of Black Power also acted to other its adherents and distance them from traditional American values.³³ In doing so, mainstream coverage of Black Power – and Carmichael in particular – bore remarkable similarities to the rhetoric employed by Southern segregationists. As Paul Good argued in his coverage of the Meredith March for the Southern Regional Council’s publication the *New South*:

Somehow Stokely Carmichael and Black Power seem to be becoming the enemy while the enemy of white power unresponsive to just Negro demand skulks off to the side. Already riot-torn northern cities are blaming ‘outside agitators’ for their ghetto problems. We are coming in on a bad picture we have seen before.³⁴

Supremacists’, *TIME*, 10 August 1959

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,811191,00.html>> [accessed 12 May 2015].

³¹ Gertrude Samuels, ‘Two Ways: Black Muslim and N.A.A.C.P.’, *New York Times*, 12 May 1963, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM14, SM86–89; Austin C. Wehrwein, ‘Dr. King Disputes Negro Separatist: Critical of Carmichael, New S.N.C.C. Chairman, Over Black Nationalism Plea’, *New York Times*, 28 May 1966, pp. 1, 9; Handler, ‘Humphrey Backs NAACP in Fight on Black Racism.’

³² ‘Civil Rights: Thinking Big’, *TIME*, 27 May 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835632,00.html>> [accessed 30 April 2013];

‘Essay: Black Power and Black Pride’, *TIME*, 1 December 1967

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,712007,00.html>> [accessed 8 April 2013].

³³ Claude Sitton, ‘After King, the Search Is On for a New “Drum Major”’, *New York Times*, 14 April 1968, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E2.

³⁴ Paul Good, ‘“The Meredith March”’, *New South*, Summer 1966’, in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 495–515 (p. 515).

Undoubtedly, the reaction to Black Power and its equation with a harmful and racist black separatism was itself fuelled by racist attitudes towards African Americans. As Karl Fleming told a conference of fellow journalists in 1968:

The truth of the matter is that we have all lived with this racial sickness so long in the United States that just the mention of “black” rings a Pavlovian bell in us white people. It is a reaction we don’t have a hell of a lot of control over. Let’s be honest. Can any of you newsmen here honestly say that deep in your hearts you would have the same reaction to the phrase “Polish power” or “Jewish power” or “labor power” that you have when someone mentions Black Power?³⁵

Mirroring claims by SNCC activists such as Julius Lester that, ‘if SNCC had said Negro Power or Colored Power, white folks would’ve continued sleeping easy every night’, Fleming articulated an important dynamic of mainstream framing of Black Power that is often overlooked in critiques of advocates’ overblown rhetoric.³⁶

In contrast, having already written about black political power in the context of Reconstruction and earlier battles for black self-determination, Lerone Bennett Jr. of *Ebony* framed the Black Power slogan differently to that of white mainstream journalists.³⁷ This alternate framing had a clear influence on readers such as John Edwards of Brooklyn, who explained that re-reading Bennett’s previous series on black political power in the South meant that:

Suddenly I knew what Mr. Carmichael meant by the term and where he got his now popular war cry [...] Mr Carmichael is evidently trying to regain for the Southern black man the birth right that was snatched from him almost 100 years ago.³⁸

Framing Black Power as part of a century long battle to deconstruct racist systems of oppression that affected men and women in both the South and North, Bennett’s coverage was by no means indicative of all African American news outlets. However, mirrored in periodicals of the radical left, his coverage challenges dominant mainstream frames by

³⁵ Karl Fleming, ‘Comment By Karl Fleming’, in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 30–33 (p. 31).

³⁶ Julius Lester, *Look Out, Whitey! Black Power’s Gon’ Get Your Mama!* (New York: Dial Press, 1968), p. 97; Anon to Henry Abuza, 23 December 1966, Series A.I.51 Reel 2, Slide 258, SNCC Papers.

³⁷ Lerone Bennett Jr., ‘Black Power in Dixie’, *Ebony*, July 1962, pp. 84–90.

³⁸ John Edwards, ‘Letters to the Editor’, *Ebony*, November 1966, p. 13.

highlighting the alternative ways in which the slogan could have been embraced and encouraged.³⁹

Importantly, mainstream framing of Black Power as a radical new development in the movement not only required ignoring decades of grassroots activism, but even challenged earlier trends in mainstream coverage. For instance, while *TIME* talked in 1966 of the 'responsible civil rights movement' that had 'accomplished much for the Negro', it had chastised the civil disobedience of the same activists in 1963 for bringing 'dismay and hostility among Northern whites'.⁴⁰ Similarly, articles in the *New York Times* in July 1966 that lamented the 'shattering [...of] the once-solid front of the civil rights movement', failed to acknowledge earlier coverage that had highlighted and criticised an 'open break' between the same groups as early as 1961.⁴¹ Indeed, while *Life* claimed that the Meredith March exposed 'disturbing signs' that the movement was splitting 'between moderates willing to settle for "Freedom Now" and militants who want nothing less than outright "Black Power"', previous articles in the magazine had described the former slogan as 'a phrase with explosive potential' that 'blinds rather than clarifies' and had 'a crippling effect on strategy'.⁴² Condemning 'Freedom Now' for 'confusing [African American's] just and urgent cause' by creating 'a dilemma of understanding', *Life's* coverage of this early phase in the movement presaged condemnation in editorials on Black Power that claimed the phrase had 'defied every attempt at definition'.⁴³

I.i

Importantly, however, while many of the frames used to denigrate and denounce Black Power were routinely employed throughout the 1960s, SNCC and other civil rights organisations had

³⁹ David Danzig, 'In Defense of "Black Power"', *Commentary*, September 1966, Series A.VIII.134, Reel 20 Slide 837, SNCC Papers; For a longer commentary, see: Fager.

⁴⁰ 'Civil Rights: End of the Road?', *TIME*, 25 August 1967

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,841026,00.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013]; 'Civil Rights: The Dangers of Militancy', *TIME*, 19 July 1963

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,896862,00.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013].

⁴¹ 'Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy'; Claude Sitton, 'Negro Groups Split on Georgia Protest', *New York Times*, 18 December 1961, pp. 1, 31.

⁴² 'A Mississippi Reunion for Marcher Meredith', *Life*, 8 July 1966, p. 27; Theodore H. White, 'The Angry U.S. Negro's Rallying Cries Are Confusing His Just and Urgent Cause', *Life*, 22 July 1966, pp. 78–90, 93 (p. 78).

⁴³ White; "'Black Power" Must Be Defined', *Life*, 22 July 1966, p. 4.

also profited from adversarial frames that portrayed them as heroic patriots fighting the evil wrongs of Southern segregationists. Fleming, for example, has argued that framing stories about the police in the South was simple, 'we all knew that Bull Connor was the bad guy, Martin Luther King the good guy. It was like a western movie [...] And we wrote our stories like western movie scenarios'.⁴⁴ In contrast, he argued, the move to cover urban unrest in cities like Los Angeles meant that, 'the plot became extremely subtle'.⁴⁵ As *Newsweek's* Peter Goldman has since claimed, dramatic pictures of violence against church-going demonstrators, 'fed the media's need for the drama of good against evil, the morality play'.⁴⁶ While this simplistic framing of Southern activism 'worked as long as there was Jim Crow and as long as there were Jim Clarks and Bull Connors', it failed to comprehend urban rebellions that were 'not clearly good-versus-evil' and required journalists to 'strain to see them that way'.⁴⁷

As David Garrow's investigation of the 1965 Selma campaign has demonstrated, King and the SCLC had perfected mobilisation techniques that exploited the barbarism of white segregationists to elicit sympathy and action from white liberals and federal officials in the North.⁴⁸ Clarifying his strategy at a later rally in Montgomery, King declared that 'we are here today to say to the white men that we will no longer let them use their clubs on us in dark corners. We are going to make them do it in the glaring light of television'.⁴⁹ In reality, however, SCLC and the civil rights movement more widely had been utilising such violence to positively frame their activism for over half a decade. As Goldman has argued,

The media were part of the strategy, it was sort of one hand washes the other. We had an interest in getting the story obviously, and they had an interest in getting the story framed as a struggle between peaceful petitioners and [...] a recalcitrant and often violent Southern resistance.⁵⁰

Aniko Bodroghkozy and Martin Berger have demonstrated how the imagery of campaigns in places such as Birmingham and Selma 'routinely cast black [...] protestors as the hapless

⁴⁴ Fleming, 'Comment By Karl Fleming', p. 32.

⁴⁵ Fleming, 'Comment By Karl Fleming', p. 32.

⁴⁶ Peter Goldman, 2013.

⁴⁷ Goldman.

⁴⁸ David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

⁴⁹ Martin Luther King Jr., as cited in Garrow, p. 111.

⁵⁰ Goldman.

victims of violent whites'.⁵¹ Similarly, narratives in print media that focused on white involvement presented local black activists as the passive recipients of enlightened (and often Northern) white aid, detailing white volunteers while often failing to even name African American activists.⁵² As Peter Ling has argued, for those not versed in the nuances and practicalities of the tactic, the focus on nonviolent direct action fed into this notion that activists in the South were submissive; acted upon rather than being active themselves.⁵³ For example, calling Martin Luther King Jr. the 'passive resistance hero of the embattled Southern Negro', *Newsweek* exemplified this conception of Southern activists as meekly resisting the brutalities of an un-American and unfamiliar Southern enemy.⁵⁴ While SNCC's style of activism did not lend itself to these large-scale mobilisations, the emphasis the Communication Section placed on segregationist violence within the organisation's press releases also acted to encourage a vision of the South that centred around violence being actively inflicted on passive black bodies.⁵⁵

Movement activists not only encouraged such comparisons when they consciously faced white segregationist violence with well-choreographed nonviolent displays, but also acted to frame themselves as nonviolent gatekeepers stemming a growing tide of dissatisfaction and violence. Consequently, when King and others exploited the perceived threat posed by Black Power, they were utilising a common movement frame that had existed for years previously. For instance, telling Gene Roberts of the *New York Times* that, 'people have to understand that the choice is no longer between nice little meetings or nonviolence. It is between militant nonviolence and riots', King used the spectre of 'bad' Black Power and urban unrest to position

⁵¹ Martin A. Berger, *Seeing Through Race: A Reinterpretation of Civil Rights Photography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 15; Aniko Bodroghkozy, *Equal Time: Television and the Civil Rights Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

⁵² 'Mississippi: The Attack on Bigotry', *Look*, 8 September 1964, Series A.IX.4A, Reel 23 Slide 1167-76, SNCC Papers; Associated Press, '10 Indicted in Virginia', *New York Times*, 22 June 1963, p. 10.

⁵³ Peter J. Ling, 'Gender and Generation: Manhood at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference', in *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Peter J. Ling and Sharon Monteith (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp. 101–30 (p. 112).

⁵⁴ 'Georgia: The Wall', *Newsweek*, 14 January 1963, pp. 26–27 (p. 27).

⁵⁵ This emphasis on segregationist violence, Dan Berger has argued, has even affected recent legal battles relating to 1960s activism: Dan Berger, 'Rescuing Civil Rights from Black Power: Collective Memory and Saving the State in Twenty-First-Century Prosecutions of 1960s-Era Cases', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 3 (2009), 1–27 (p. 17).

his own militant brand of action as ‘good’ and received front-page coverage in the process.⁵⁶ By doing so, King mirrored the earlier rhetoric of SNCC activists such as James Forman who told Sitton in June 1963 that:

I dare say that 85 per cent of the Negro population, if not 95 per cent, does not adhere to nonviolence or does not believe in it. They are allowing the nonviolent movement to go ahead because it’s working and I think it’s imperative for the government to permit it to work.⁵⁷

While one could argue that the threat here was implicit, it was followed by more obvious exploitations of the potential for violence. Calling for greater concessions from the white power structure in Danville, Virginia, SNCC member Avon Rollins warned reporters that ‘there will be blood flowing in the streets’ if progress wasn’t made, because ‘those who are violent are beginning to outnumber those of us with a nonviolent persuasion’.⁵⁸ Framing nonviolence as a temporary action that depended on positive outcomes helped bolster the position of SNCC and other groups working in the South who were viewed as a bulwark against the outbreak of violence. However, this not only encouraged the notion that nonviolence was the only positive path for movement activists to take, but also presented violence as the logical outcome of frustration and embitterment amongst an inherently violent African American community. Given that both of these frames would negatively impact coverage of Black Power and later urban unrest, it is important to realise the role that activists played in their earlier propagation.

More importantly, this idea of a battle between a satanic enemy and nonviolent angels not only created an impossible standard against which protesters were measured, but also helped to reduce Jim Crow racism to individual Southern prejudice. Profiles of Sheriff Clark that dubbed him Selma’s ‘symbol of racism’ were indicative of articles that painted Southern resistance as a distant and unusual aberration.⁵⁹ Once again, activists played a key role in cementing such frames. As King and SCLC found to their cost in Albany, the morality play

⁵⁶ Gene Roberts, ‘Dr. King Declares Rights Movement Is “Close” to a Split’, *New York Times*, 9 July 1966, pp. 1, 8 (p. 1).

⁵⁷ Claude Sitton, ‘Not Token Freedom, Full Freedom’, *New York Times*, 9 June 1963, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. 21, 78–80 (p. 78).

⁵⁸ Associated Press, ‘Threat in Danville’, *New York Times*, 31 July 1963, p. 13.

⁵⁹ Gay Talese, ‘Burly Sheriff Clark Is Selma Symbol of Racism’, *New York Times*, 16 March 1965, p. 32.

required a villain who was unrestrained and unthinking in their denial of equality. Indeed, civil rights activists all over the South found that when it came to media coverage, ‘the morality play doesn’t really work if Satan isn’t in it’.⁶⁰ Consequently, activists who were invested in this narrative purposefully tried to select cities and officials that they thought were most likely to generate the kind of violence that made newspaper headlines.⁶¹ As Kenneth Crawford argued in *Newsweek* during the Selma campaign, King had ‘a way of picking the right opponents. With the kind of enemies he makes, he scarcely needs friends’.⁶² While tactically effective, this focus on certain flashpoints presented segregationist resistance in a one-dimensional way that focused almost exclusively on images of anonymous police officials rather than documenting and humanising the array of oppositional forces in the South.⁶³ This distortion not only exacerbated tensions between local Southerners and journalists working for mainstream press outlets, but also presented oppression as a line of helmeted officers under the command of tyrannical officials, rather than a systematic and institutionalised programme of discrimination that had as much strength in the urban North as the more rural South.⁶⁴

This simplistic portrayal of Jim Crow segregation acted to distance Southern activism and the problems it raised from the daily life of Northern audiences and allowed mainstream outlets to avoid deeper questions about structural and institutionalised racism. This is not to argue that mainstream coverage completely denied Northern racism. Indeed, the *Times* printed a number of stories that explicitly challenged the idea of regionally confined discriminatory practices.⁶⁵ Similarly, a number of articles in *Newsweek* exposed the racism behind what it called the ‘other Washington’ and challenged ‘those Northerners who take the comfortable view that race is a Southern problem’ to realise that ‘many [black leaders] feel the battle will be tougher and more dangerous in the North than in the South, where both apartheid and the

⁶⁰ Goldman.

⁶¹ A good example of this evolution in tactics is the Birmingham Campaign: Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁶² Kenneth Crawford, ‘Washington: Right to Vote’, *Newsweek*, 1 March 1965, p. 39.

⁶³ George Lewis, ‘Sidelining Selma’s Segregationists: Memory, Strategy, Ideology and Agency’ (presented at the *The Shadow of Selma: Selma and the Voting Rights Act, 1965-2015*, Northumbria University, Newcastle, 2015).

⁶⁴ David Greenberg, ‘The Idea of “The Liberal Media” and Its Roots in the Civil Rights Movement’, *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, 1 (2008), 167–86.

⁶⁵ Claude Sitton, ‘Chicago: Racial Tensions Increasing’, *New York Times*, 26 August 1963, pp. 1, 16; ‘Civil Rights Bill - V’, *New York Times*, 8 May 1964, p. 32.

steps of progress against it are more visible'.⁶⁶ However, often pegged to the actions and pronouncements of political figures or bodies, rather than dramatic protests by African Americans, the framing of these pieces was fundamentally different.⁶⁷ While discrimination in the North was still clearly defined as wrong, the optimistic and often self-congratulatory tone of coverage meant that Northern society was not unilaterally condemned or othered in the mainstream press in the same way as the segregationist South.

Consequently, when activists in the North did take action, the good-versus-evil narrative was often absent from coverage. Covering the sit-in protests at the office of New York City Mayor Robert F. Wagner Jr. in 1963, the *Times* claimed that the Mayor's patience had ended after picketers engaged in an 'outright provocation' that ended in 'a noisy melee in which three patrolmen were injured'.⁶⁸ Emphasising these injuries in the piece's above-the-fold, front-page sub-heading, the piece later went on to claim that the injuries were sustained by patrolmen after demonstrators 'fell on the police with fists and knees'.⁶⁹ However, given that two of the injured patrolmen apparently only suffered from strained backs – as a result of carrying 'squirring pickets to a police wagon' – while the other had suffered a bruised shin and cuts to his arm, the emphasis on the injuries faced by the three patrolmen represented a departure from the treatment of similar injuries faced by Southern white officials.⁷⁰ Furthermore, in contrast to the positive reception that often accompanied SNCC's press releases in the South, accusations of police brutality during this incident levelled by CORE leader Val Coleman were undermined by the claim that 'none of those acts were witnessed by others at City Hall'.⁷¹ Indeed, reporter Homer Bigart gave no indication in his subsequent

⁶⁶ 'The Other Washington: Behind the Gleaming Facade, A Squalid Sprawl', *Newsweek*, 1 July 1963, pp. 21–23; 'Integration: Angry Language', *Newsweek*, 29 April 1963, pp. 25–26; "'I Like the Word Black'", *Newsweek*, 6 May 1963, pp. 27–28 (p. 28).

⁶⁷ 'Transcript of the Second Nixon-Kennedy Debate on Nation-Wide Television', *New York Times*, 8 October 1960, p. 10; Cabell Phillips, 'Rights Unit in Doubt', *New York Times*, 27 August 1961, section Review of the Week Editorials, p. E12; Tom Wicker, 'Kennedy Appeals for Local Action on Race Problem: Time Past for Token Moves, He Warns Conference of Mayors in Honolulu', *New York Times*, 10 June 1963, pp. 1, 20.

⁶⁸ Homer Bigart, 'City Hall Pickets Ousted By Mayor: Wagner Angered by Melee Causing Police Injuries - 9 Persons Arrested', *New York Times*, 23 August 1963, pp. 1, 11 (p. 1).

⁶⁹ Bigart, 'City Hall Pickets Ousted By Mayor', p. 11.

⁷⁰ Bigart, 'City Hall Pickets Ousted By Mayor', p. 11; For a discussion of how race beat reporters downplayed violence against Southern officials see: Karl Fleming, *Son of the Rough South: An Uncivil Memoir* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005), p. 254.

⁷¹ Bigart, 'City Hall Pickets Ousted By Mayor', p. 11.

coverage of the protest that the injuries sustained were so minor and dropped altogether the accusations by Coleman that violence had been present on both sides.⁷² Instead, Bigart chose to focus on the condemnation of picketers by Frederick W. Richmond of the Urban League who ‘deplored’ the earlier ‘outbreak’ at City Hall, which he claimed had caused ‘nothing [...] except acute embarrassment [...] to all responsible people in the field of human rights’.⁷³ Unlike Southern reporting that would downplay or overlook minor lapses in non-violent discipline, then, coverage of protests in New York City would often emphasise violence in front-page headlines and within the text, even when ‘the scuffle lasted five minutes and no injuries were reported’.⁷⁴ In doing so, it presaged mainstream framing of Black Power by casting African American activists in the role of aggressive, misguided, and violent opponents of reason and order, in contrast to the positive influence of respectable civil rights leaders and a liberal white power structure.

I.ii

As outlined in the previous chapter, this difference in coverage can partly be explained by the different news nets utilised by northern reporters and their increased reliance on the testimony of law enforcement officials. However, this narrative also had deeper roots in Northern conceptions of what the black freedom struggle actually was. Despite being one of the few African American reporters at the *New York Times*, Laymond Robinson’s front-page article in August 1963 mirrored the beliefs of many in the North when it claimed that the rise of civil disobedience meant that ‘suddenly, it seems, the Negro is mad at everybody’.⁷⁵ Claiming that this new mood had ‘arisen in a region that has more laws to protect the civil rights of Negroes and other citizens than any other place in America’, Robinson argued that

⁷² Bigart, ‘City Hall Pickets Ousted By Mayor’, p. 11.

⁷³ Homer Bigart, ‘Civil Rights Groups Here Split On Plan for New Protest Rally: Urban League Opposes Move to Picket Tuesday’, *New York Times*, 24 August 1963, pp. 1, 9 (p. 1).

⁷⁴ Samuel Kaplin, ‘City Halts Work at Site in Harlem’, *New York Times*, 14 June 1963, pp. 1, 32 (p. 32); Homer Bigart, ‘Near-Riot Flares in Race Protest at Project Here’, *New York Times*, 1 August 1963, pp. 1, 12.

⁷⁵ Laymond Robinson, ‘New York’s Racial Unrest: Negroes’ Anger Mounting’, *New York Times*, 12 August 1963, pp. 1, 10 (p. 1).

this wave of activism had ‘shaken many New Yorkers’ and demonstrated the difficulty Northern outlets had in positioning the majority of their readership in the role of oppressor.⁷⁶

This reluctance to positively frame coverage of Northern activism is even clearer when contrasted to the heroic framing of the Southern movement detailed above. For instance, while Sitton’s Southern coverage would later date the civil rights movement to the sit-ins of 1960, an editorial in the *New York Times* in June 1963 claimed that the sit-in campaign against Wagner went ‘beyond the bounds of legitimate picketing’ and was responsible for ‘building up resistance against achievement of the just goal it seeks’.⁷⁷ Criticising the demonstrators for violating a local police order and claiming that ‘demonstrators cannot be allowed to interfere with government (city, state or national)’, the *Times* editorial completely ignored the fact that very similar tactics in the Southern movement were being regularly applauded within the newspaper.⁷⁸ Indeed, just five pages before the editorial in question, the paper had run a story on the hero’s welcome granted to Memphis Norman, an activist who had been beaten during a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in Jackson, Mississippi.⁷⁹ Similarly, when writing a lengthy piece for the *Times*’ Sunday magazine in February 1964, it is telling that Sitton used the recent boycott of schools in New York City, rather than any of the Southern struggles he had covered, to claim that, ‘in situations where solutions must of necessity be long range in nature, mass protests in the streets may do little but arouse white antagonism’.⁸⁰

Responsibility for this geographic distinction, however, does not just lie with Northern journalists. It is also important to recognise how the rhetoric of civil rights organisations helped to encourage the notion that activism in the South was aimed at a fundamentally different and peculiarly Southern problem. Describing itself in various press releases throughout 1962 as ‘an independent southwide movement’ that worked ‘in hard-core areas of

⁷⁶ Robinson, p. 1.

⁷⁷ Claude Sitton, ‘3 -Year-Old Protest Movement Comes of Age in Capital Rally’, *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, p. 20; ‘No Back Door’, *New York Times*, 10 July 1963, p. 34.

⁷⁸ ‘No Back Door.’

⁷⁹ ‘Attacked Negro Hails “Triumph”’, *New York Times*, 10 June 1963, p. 29.

⁸⁰ Claude Sitton, ‘Civil Rights: Leaders Now Fear That Unrest Will Grow’, *New York Times*, 9 February 1964, p. E3; See also: ‘Civil Rights: The Backlash’, *TIME*, 24 April 1964
<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,870869,00.html>> [accessed 20 April 2013].

the South', SNCC clearly projected a Southern image.⁸¹ In contrast to its work in Southern towns and villages, affiliate groups on Northern campuses were not formal branches of the organisation, but instead given the title 'Friends of SNCC' and tasked with '[keeping] the Northern "supply lines" open' through publicity and fundraising efforts rather than local activism.⁸² Indeed, in March 1964, Communication Section worker Mary King told a potential Northern recruit that an upcoming SNCC conference was 'geared to southern students and is not national in scope at all'.⁸³ This is not to argue that SNCC ignored the problems of Northern racism, but the organisation's emergence out of a particular wave of protest meant that it was often willing to confine its limited financial and human resources to the Deep South. Although tactically sound on many levels, this meant that SNCC failed to challenge conceptions of the black freedom struggle that affirmed white Northern conceptions of what that struggle meant. Consequently, when profiling the organisation in the run up to the Selma campaign of 1965, *Rolling Stone* founder Ralph Gleason felt able to characterise the South as 'an America unknown to the rest of us' – distancing readers from the brutality and institutionalised racism he described and framing SNCC's activism as taking place in some foreign land.⁸⁴

The framing of the civil rights movement as a Southern problem had other important ramifications for SNCC and its attempts to overcome the institutionalised racism of Jim Crow. Claiming in its Statement of Purpose that the 'integration of human endeavor' was the 'crucial first step' on the road to a 'social order of justice permeated by love', SNCC's symbol of a white hand and a black hand grasped in friendship reflected its commitment to a new 'redemptive community'.⁸⁵ However, while an ultimate aim for many in the organisation, SNCC's conceptualisation of, and commitment to, integration was fundamentally different from that of other movement allies. For instance, the organisation's press releases and statements often referred to their efforts as being 'aimed at ending segregation' rather than achieving

⁸¹ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Press Release*, 21 February 1962, Series A.VII.3, Reel 13 Slide 757-85, SNCC Papers; Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Press Release*, 16 April 1962, Series A.VII.3, Reel 13 Slide 786, SNCC Papers.

⁸² *A Note about the Friends of SNCC Groups - What Do They Do?*, n.d., Series A.VI.24, Reel 12 Slide 789, SNCC Papers.

⁸³ Mary King to Lisa Anderson, March 1964, Series A.VII.2, Reel 13 Slide 360-440, SNCC Papers.

⁸⁴ Gleason; See also: Fischer.

⁸⁵ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Founding Statement*, 17 April 1960 <<http://www.crmvet.org/docs/sncc1.htm>> [accessed 2 August 2014].

integration.⁸⁶ Indeed, Forman even clarified this difference in rhetoric in an interview with the *US News and World Report* in January 1964:

The significance of this is not often appreciated. The whole attack on segregation in public accommodations is not primarily because Negroes want to sit down and eat with white persons but rather because the erection of segregated barriers is an affront to the dignity of Negroes.⁸⁷

This challenge to mainstream conceptions of movement aims was even more common in private. Just days before Carmichael called for Black Power in Greenwood, Forman went as far as to argue that ‘the word “integration” got manipulated as the goal of American society’ and that he was ‘absolutely convinced’ that ninety per cent, if not the entire staff of SNCC, ‘never saw [...] integration as the goal we were working for’.⁸⁸ Indeed, even Jane Stemberge, a white Southerner and SNCC’s first full-time staffer, has claimed that, ‘I don’t think SNCC people, even in the early days, were interested in brotherhood, in reconciliation, in integration. SNCC has not changed radically, taking the position of Black Power’.⁸⁹

For the most part, however, the phrase ‘integration’ appeared with much greater regularity in the mainstream press. While 4,658 articles, front-page articles, and editorials in the *New York Times* that used the word ‘Negro’ also mentioned either ‘integration’ or ‘desegregation’ in the period 1960-5, only 913 (twenty per cent) used both terms while 2,607 (fifty six per cent) used the term ‘integration’ alone.⁹⁰ Similar patterns followed at *Newsweek*, which used the term ‘Integration’ as the predominant preface for its articles on the black freedom struggle in the early 1960s, helping to immediately frame reporting in a way that encouraged a certain

⁸⁶ Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Press Release*, 16 April 1962.

⁸⁷ ‘Interview with James Forman, Executive Secretary, Student Nonviolent Co-ordinating Committee’, *U.S. News and World Report*, 30 January 1964, Series A.V.382, Reel 10 Slide 826, SNCC Papers.

⁸⁸ *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966, p. 704.

⁸⁹ Jane Stemberge, as cited in Emily Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee: The Growth of Radicalism in a Civil Rights Organization* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1989), p. 259.

⁹⁰ These figures were found via a proquest search for the period 01/01/1960 – 31/12/1965 using the search terms: “Negro AND (integration OR desegregation)”; “Negro AND integration AND desegregation”; “Negro AND integration NOT desegregation” respectively. A further test for “Negro AND Desegregation NOT Integration” under the same parameters returned 1,138 results (twenty four per cent), further demonstrating the more frequent solo usage and framing of stories using the ‘Integration’ framework.

understanding of the black freedom struggle.⁹¹ Again, while not denying the presence of articles that questioned the link between integration and desegregation – including one *New York Times* piece authored by *Greenville Delta Democrat-Times*' publisher Hodding Carter – the overwhelming number of articles that emphasised integration over desegregation points to the common misconception amongst white Northerners that the former was the true goal of the movement or that the two words were essentially synonymous.⁹²

This early framing of the movement is crucial to understanding the later backlash against Black Power advocates' calls for the formation of separate economic and political blocs within the African American community. Given that community blocs remain a fundamental part of American political, economic, and social life, the notion that African Americans would choose to coalesce in their own self-interest should not have been viewed as radical.⁹³ However, given earlier emphasis on integration, mainstream media narratives often portrayed this strategy as a fundamental and damaging break in the movement. Covering an address by Hubert Humphrey in July 1966 on their front page, the *Times* quoted the Vice President at length, including his claim that 'integration must be recognized as an essential means to the end we are seeking – the ends of freedom, justice and equal opportunity for all Americans'.⁹⁴ By equating civil rights goals with integration, mainstream narratives not only ignored SNCC's earlier rhetoric, but also demonstrated the implicitly racist and commonly held assumption that measured progress for African Americans in terms of their association with and attainment of white ideals and institutions. As Bennett Jr. argued in *Ebony* in September 1966, this framing of integration centred on the notion that 'for integration to be successful today a black man must meet the white man's idea of what a black man ought to be'.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Over sixty articles were published with this prefix between 1960 and 1964: 'Integration: Louisiana Nightmare', *Newsweek*, 28 November 1960, 19–20; 'Integration: Mother Goes to Jail', *Newsweek*, 13 April 1964, p. 25.

⁹² Hodding Carter, 'Desegregation Does Not Mean Integration: A Southerner Explains Why "Numerically Meaningful Integration" Will Not Be in the Cards in the Deep South for a Long Time to Come', *New York Times*, 11 February 1962, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. 21, 71–72.

⁹³ 'Racial Voting Bloc Calculator', *CNN* <<http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2012/10/politics/voting-bloc-calculator/index.html>> [accessed 9 May 2015].

⁹⁴ Handler, 'Humphrey Backs NAACP in Fight on Black Racism', p. 22.

⁹⁵ Lerone Bennett Jr., 'Stokely Carmichael: Architect of Black Power', *Ebony*, September 1966, pp. 25–32 (p. 27).

Claiming on its editorial pages that, ‘responsible civil rights leaders [see Black Power as] a contradiction of the whole history of the movement, of the drive for integration and equality’, the *New York Times* highlighted how SNCC’s attempts to frame movement activity were complicated by the actions and rhetoric of rival organisations.⁹⁶ SNCC was not alone. Indeed, social movement organisations rarely have unique access to the process of frame formation and instead have to negotiate a series of intra- and counter-movement frame disputes.⁹⁷ SNCC’s attempt to frame its activism, therefore, must be seen within the context of how similar activism was being framed by competitors within the civil rights movement and its external opponents. A thorough examination of civil rights frames from SCLC, CORE, and the NAACP – never mind that of both moderate and radical segregationist resistance – is beyond the scope of this project. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the limitations placed on SNCC’s Communication Section by powerful rivals who often had more direct access to media personnel.

I.iii

By 1963, SNCC’s emergence as the dominant field organisation in many areas of the Deep South had cemented it as one of the ‘Big Five’ of the civil rights movement.⁹⁸ Attending White House conferences and other important movement events, SNCC had thus made the transition in the media’s eye from a peripheral student body to a nationally recognised organisation that formed a part of the ‘Civil Rights Movement’. Importantly, however, this national recognition also meant that SNCC was closely associated with organisations with which it had significant operational and ideological differences. Having resolved in their founding conference to ‘rid America of the scourge of racial segregation and discrimination — not only at lunch counters,

⁹⁶ ‘Black Power: Negro Leaders Split Over Policy’, p. E1.

⁹⁷ For more on intra-movement disputes see: Robert D. Benford, ‘Frame Disputes within the Nuclear Disarmament Movement’, *Social Forces*, 71 (1993), 677–701; Jürgen Gerhards, ‘Framing Dimensions and Framing Strategies: Contrasting Ideal-and Real-Type Frames’, *Social Science Information*, 34 (1995), 225–48; For examples of counter-movement frame disputes see: John Gallagher and Chris Bull, *Perfect Enemies: The Battle Between the Religious Right and the Gay Movement* (Lanham: Madison Books, 2001); Melinda S. Miceli, ‘Morality Politics vs. Identity Politics: Framing Processes and Competition among Christian Right and Gay Social Movement Organizations’, *Sociological Forum*, 20 (2005), 589–612; Deana A. Rohlinger, ‘Friends and Foes: Media, Politics, and Tactics in the Abortion War’, *Social Problems*, 53 (2006), 537–61.

⁹⁸ ‘Nation: The Big Five in Civil Rights’, *TIME*, 28 June 1963

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,874944,00.html>> [accessed 20 April 2015].

but in every aspect of life', SNCC's radical vision of the future was always likely to cause tensions with more conservative allies.⁹⁹ Furthermore, as a junior partner in this coalition, SNCC was often left in a position where other, more moderate organisations were dictating the parameters and constraints of action. Faced with a mainstream media that believed that 'only in perfect concert can [civil rights activists'] efforts mobilize white America's conscience and sympathy behind their goals', however, SNCC was often unable or unwilling to publicly criticise these organisations and their tactics.¹⁰⁰ Consequently, while Forman was no doubt sincere in his claim that SNCC had '[talked] not in terms of just voter registration, but ultimately what lay beyond that' ever since he joined the organisation in 1961, SNCC's early interactions with the press often accentuated elements of its programme that overlapped with the public goals of the movement.¹⁰¹

While SNCC actively attempted to influence media narratives, it was also part of a longer discussion that had been evolving since the *Brown* decision and had become inextricably linked to the fight against segregation. Relying on more limited understandings of the emerging student movement, news workers such as Paul L. Martin, former head of the Gannett Group's Washington Bureau and editor with the *U.S. News and World Report*, emphasised the difference between the emerging struggle in the South and difficulties closer to home. Scribbling in the margins of a potential article on the 1960 sit-ins, Martin wrote; 'South – Public accommodations. North – Jobs, Housing, and schools. Police brutality'.¹⁰² Indeed, *Newsweek's* increasing use of the preface 'Civil Rights' from early 1963 – overtaking 'Integration' as the most common by mid-1964 – illustrates how mainstream newspapers framed activism as the pursuit or enforcement of legal rights.¹⁰³ In turn, this rights-based

⁹⁹ Ella Baker, "'Bigger than a Hamburger'", *Southern Patriot*, May 1960', in *Documentary History of the Modern Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Peter B. Levy (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1992), pp. 70–71 (p. 70).

¹⁰⁰ Warren R. Young and William Lambert, 'Marchers' Master Plan', *Life*, 23 August 1963, pp. 63–64, 66–68, 70 (p. 63).

¹⁰¹ James Forman, as cited in *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966, p. 699; Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, *Press Release*, 16 April 1962; Dorothy Miller to Chief of Police Herbert T. Jenkins, 18 October 1962, Series A.IV.362 Reel 10, SNCC Papers.

¹⁰² Paul L. Martin, *Feb. 1, 1960*, n.d., Paul L. Martin Papers, (Microfilm Edition, 1987), Reel 1 Slide 2, WHS.

¹⁰³ While not the first to use this prefix, usage increased after this early 1963 piece: 'Civil Rights: Passport to Progress', *Newsweek*, 4 February 1963, pp. 18–19; This use of prefixes was not limited to

discourse encouraged media coverage to present civil rights activists as patriotic protestors, intent on upholding and furthering the moral values of the American Republic in the face of un-American segregationist resistance.¹⁰⁴

In contrast, SNCC's more radical message was rarely articulated in the mainstream press until the mid-1960s when continued activism following legislative gains in 1964 and 1965 led to a refocusing of media discussion on the movement. In part, this delay was caused by the power of SNCC's erstwhile allies in the movement, such as SCLC, who argued that while 'we have become aware of the economic issue, [...] political change, as implied in the MSP, must precede economic change'.¹⁰⁵ Dominating discussion, the political and legal rhetoric of SCLC and the NAACP were a better fit for mainstream media narratives that described events such as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom as a 'March for Civil Rights'.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, coverage of Lewis' speech at the March demonstrates the importance of viewing activist rhetoric within the wider context of movement frames. Unlike Carmichael and other Black Power advocates – who increasingly stood alone at press conferences and marches as the movement's long held divisions began to publicly surface – Lewis' words in Washington formed part of a much larger narrative that blunted white fears by employing significantly different frames that emphasised integration, nonviolence, and cooperation.

For instance, while Lewis' militant speech at the March on Washington won him high praise in *Ebony*, with one article claiming that 'the people were in danger of forgetting why they were there; and Lewis reminded them', it was largely ignored in the mainstream press.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, while Lewis' original speech threatened to 'make the action of the past few months look petty', 'fragment the South into a thousand pieces', and 'burn Jim Crow to the ground – nonviolently', the *New York Times'* desire to frame the March as the pinnacle of

Newsweek: Sitton, 'Civil Rights: Leaders Now Fear That Unrest Will Grow'; 'Civil Rights: The Backlash, 24 April 1964.'

¹⁰⁴ Gerald M. Platt and Michael R. Fraser, 'Race and Gender Discourse Strategies: Creating Solidarity and Framing the Civil Rights Movement', *Social Problems*, 45 (1998), 160–79; For a wider examination of this framing strategy within American activism see: Simon Hall, *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Young, as cited in Mary King, 'Rough Minutes of a Meeting Called by the National Council of Churches to Discuss the Mississippi Project', 1964, Mary E. King Papers, Box 1 Folder 17, WHS.

¹⁰⁶ E. W. Kenworthy, '200,000 March for Civil Rights In Orderly Washington Rally; President Sees Gain for Negro', *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, pp. 1, 16.

¹⁰⁷ 'Biggest Protest March', *Ebony*, November 1963, pp. 28–30 (p. 29).

unified, non-violent action meant that its front-page coverage only went as far as dubbing him the ‘harshes of all the speakers’.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, an article in the same issue, while including excerpts from the majority of the day’s speakers, made no mention of Lewis’ speech at all.¹⁰⁹ Instead, narratives focused on the ‘orderly, temperate, good-natured atmosphere of the demonstration’, with James Reston of the *New York Times* complimenting the March for its appearance as ‘part Sunday School picnic’.¹¹⁰ While claiming that ‘Equality is their Right’, an editorial in the *Times* stressed the link between movement support and the well-tempered nature of the demonstrations, claiming that the March’s ‘decorum’ was ‘a tribute to the responsibility of both leaders and followers – a responsibility not always evident in other demonstrations’.¹¹¹ With the conduct of marchers reportedly drawing praise from several Southern papers, it is clear that the decision taken by March organisers to ‘insure an orderly, efficient, self-disciplined demonstration’ achieved the intended moral statement and defended the movement against the scare-tactics employed by pre-March coverage.¹¹² To activists in SNCC, such as Washington Office chief Michael Thelwell, however, the March had ‘an overhanging atmosphere of complete political irrelevance’, and ‘served a similar function to the “bread and circuses” of the Roman emperors [...by draining] the anger of our people into irrelevant channels’.¹¹³ Unable to control these national level demonstrations and meetings, SNCC members would grow increasingly agitated at what they saw as their cooption into actions designed to further the popularity of established political and civil rights leaders.

Martin Berger has demonstrated how this sidelining of Lewis was also clear in mainstream images of the March, which favoured depictions ‘of a patient King who would wait for social

¹⁰⁸ John Lewis, *The March on Washington Original Draft of SNCC Chairman John Lewis’ Speech to the March*, 28 August 1963 <<http://www.crmvet.org/info/mowjl.htm>> [accessed 2 July 2014]; Kenworthy, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Excerpts From Addresses at Lincoln Memorial During Capital Civil Rights March’, *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ ‘For Rights’, *New York Times*, 1 September 1963, section The Week in Review, p. E1; James Reston, ‘“I Have a Dream...”’: Peroration by Dr. King Sums Up A Day the Capital Will Remember’, *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, pp. 1, 17 (p. 1).

¹¹¹ ‘Equality Is Their Right’, *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, p. 28.

¹¹² Claude Sitton, ‘Southern Press Plays Up March: Participants’ Conduct Stirs Favorable Comment’, *New York Times*, 2 September 1963, p. 6; M. S. Handler, ‘Negro Leaders Issue Manual for Rally in Capital: Booklet Is Aimed of Assuring Order in Aug. 28 March’, *New York Times*, 25 July 1963, p. 11.

¹¹³ Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, ‘The August 28 March on Washington’, *Présence Africaine*, 1 (1964), in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 67–85 (p. 68; 85).

changes brought about by well-meaning whites'.¹¹⁴ Alongside a growing literature that examines and catalogues the iconic photographs of the civil rights movement, Berger's work has encouraged scholars to consider the impact of the striking visual images that activists and journalists used to frame civil rights activity to white Northern audiences.¹¹⁵ While signalling a great advance, however, this scholarship often overlooks the way that textual descriptions of activists and events could also be used to frame activism in particular ways. With space at a premium, especially in the national print media, journalists covering civil rights demonstrations would often use certain phrases or highlight certain attributes that allowed them to communicate ideas to audiences quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, with photographs often hard to source and expensive to print, allusions to appearance were a common and even necessary part of journalism. In some cases, this focus on physical appearance seemed to be part of the same fastidious attention to detail that saw *Newsweek* correspondent Karl Fleming travel with two encyclopaedias on Southern trees and wildlife to ensure that he could accurately 'set the scene' of his stories.¹¹⁶ However, during a counter-cultural wave of activity that saw long hair and beards closely associated with 'beatniks' and anti-war protestors in the North, allusions to appearance could be used as a shorthand way of pigeon-holing activists as 'militant' and implicitly conveying their deviance from traditional or 'respectable' societal norms.¹¹⁷ Associated with this wider counter-culture, the rural uniform of SNCC and CORE workers allowed them to be easily differentiated from the Sunday dress of NAACP and SCLC leaders as well as the early protestors who took part in the sit-ins of 1960. While seemingly superficial, these descriptions obtained real power by controlling the extent to which the views and actions of those described were deemed to be legitimate by the wider audience. For instance, during Julian Bond's long fight to be seated in the Georgia House of Representatives, media articles reported that many sitting Congressmen expected him 'to be bearded and

¹¹⁴ Martin A. Berger, p. 31.

¹¹⁵ Martin A. Berger; See also: Danny Lyon, *Memories of the Southern Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Steven Kasher, *The Civil Rights Movement: A Photographic History, 1954-68* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1996); Leigh Raiford, "'Come Let Us Build a New World Together": SNCC and Photography of the Civil Rights Movement', *American Quarterly*, 59 (2007), 1129–57; Julian Cox, *Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, 1956-1968* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008); Bodroghkozy.

¹¹⁶ Fleming, *Son of the Rough South*, p. 276.

¹¹⁷ 'The Beardniks', *New York Times*, 26 September 1963, p. 34; 'A Union in "Village" Arouses Beatniks And Stirs Inquiry', *New York Times*, 12 August 1964, p. 37.

unkempt' and were surprised by his 'conservative, Ivy League clothing', given his continued ties to SNCC; 'a civil rights organization in which beards and overalls are commonplace'.¹¹⁸ Indeed, some whites reportedly used Bond's dress to distance him from SNCC's radicalism, telling Alfred Duckett of the Associated Negro Press that he was 'not like [those] SNCC beatniks who wear bluejeans and beards. He's a nice young man – a bit misguided – but really, intelligent and well dressed'.¹¹⁹ Thus, when Sitton commented in 1964 that 'the carefully scrubbed, neatly dressed college students who sat down at lunch counters across the South in 1960 and politely ordered coffee are gone for the most part', his allusion to the changing appearance of activists was also designed to convey the increasing militancy of the movement.¹²⁰

By the time Ben Franklin of the *New York Times* introduced SNCC field secretary Isaac Coleman simply as 'bearded and 22 years old' in April 1966, the highlighting of youth and unconventional appearance represented easy short hand for militancy.¹²¹ Furthermore, as allusions to unconventional appearance became an easy way to discredit some activists, conformity to societal norms could also be highlighted as a way of tacitly endorsing others. For example, claiming that 'there was scarcely a beard in the house' when visiting an SCLC project in 1965, *Newsweek* writers used physical appearance to quickly convey the ideological gap they saw between the bearded militants of SNCC's 1964 Summer Project and King's new recruits who were 'an earnest, fresh-faced lot' that were 'far less flamboyantly rebellious than some of their [...] counterparts last year'.¹²² With physical descriptions being used as a way of conveying meaning and marking difference, appearance was clearly being loaded with significance beyond simple personal preference.

Examining coverage of SDS, Todd Gitlin has argued that this desire to separate activists into moderate and militant camps 'was a convenient peg for a reporter in a hurry' that also

¹¹⁸ 'Pacifists Rights Aide', *New York Times*, 12 January 1966, p. 18.

¹¹⁹ Alfred Duckett, 'Julian Bond: Young Rebel With a Cause', *Associated Negro Press*, 29 January 1966, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Records, Box 335 Folder 1, MARBL.

¹²⁰ Sitton, 'Civil Rights: Leaders Now Fear That Unrest Will Grow.'

¹²¹ Ben A. Franklin, 'Negroes Extend Camp Stay', *New York Times*, 6 April 1966, p. 29; This tendency would increase when the Black Power slogan attained popularity during the Summer of 1966 and African American activists began adopting styles of dress and appearance they felt to be more in keeping with their African heritage. For an example see 'Races: Black Separatist', *TIME*, 21 June 1968.

¹²² 'Civil Rights: Helping Hands', *Newsweek*, 28 June 1965, p. 24.

influenced coverage of the New Left and the anti-war movement.¹²³ However, it is important to see the emergence of this moderate-versus-militant frame as the outcome of a symbiotic relationship between activists and the journalists who covered them, rather than simply an imposition by a faceless national media. While journalists undoubtedly highlighted differences in personal appearance, they did not create these differences, nor were they responsible for imbuing them with the deep significance they represented to many within the movement. For instance, with a greater focus on publicity and its power to help the civil rights cause at a federal level, it is clear that those working with SCLC and the NAACP were encouraged to adopt a more respectable style. Describing a group of seminary students from California who volunteered during the Selma to Montgomery March as the ‘nicest looking, most [...] direct, honest, unpretentious and unpius [sic] group of young men I ran across’, *Newsweek* reporter Joe Cumming also reported that the students were told, ‘to shave and not look like beatniks’.¹²⁴ Indeed, conservative commentators Rowland Evans and Robert Novak claimed in May 1965 that the NAACP was ‘symbolized by its prohibition of beards and blue jeans’, strongly linking the organisation’s position on dress with its desire to ‘deflect the Southern civil rights movement to a less radical course’.¹²⁵

In contrast, SNCC members highlighted how a change in their visual appearance – adopting the jeans, overalls, and work-shirts of Southern sharecroppers as the unofficial uniform of the movement – indicated an important shift in attitudes, with Bob Moses arguing in the *New Yorker* in 1964 that:

This movement is pointed in a different direction [...] not toward acceptance by the white community but toward the organization of political and other kinds of expression in the Negro community, or really toward the organization of a Negro society. And the dress is a symbol of that.¹²⁶

¹²³ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), p. 231.

¹²⁴ Joe Cumming, ‘Re Logistics Add Two’, 24 March 1965, *Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records*, 1953-1979, Box 43 Folder 13, MARBL.

¹²⁵ Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, ‘Hopes NAACP: Not So Hot This Long Summer’, 23 May 1965, *Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records*, Box 57 Folder 26, MARBL.

¹²⁶ Bob Moses, as cited in Calvin Trillin, ‘Letter From Jackson’, *The New Yorker*, 29 August 1964, Series A.VIII.283, Reel 22 Slide 1054, SNCC Papers.

Similarly, while acknowledging the positive impact of the student sit in movement in the same article, Forman argued that the nature of such protest, and the Sunday dress of protesters, 'was also defensive – to show people we are clean'.¹²⁷ Consequently, when it came to its rural uniform, SNCC often refused to compromise what it saw as a symbolic part of its activity in the South.¹²⁸

Initially designed to serve a radical, grassroots ideology that helped bridge the gap between highly educated SNCC students and working class men and women in the rural South, this visible symbol of difference also helped to generate a cult of mystique and bravado around SNCC activists that became clear in subsequent coverage. Claiming in July 1963 that SNCC workers could 'be likened to missionaries in a dark and dangerous land, risking their lives for a cause bigger than themselves', Morton William Newman of the *Chicago Daily News* highlights how coverage of SNCC's activism was taking on heroic, even biblical, frames in certain liberal quarters.¹²⁹ This coverage was mirrored in some African American outlets, with the *Chicago Daily Defender* characterising SNCC activists as 'bearded, fiery-eyed youth clad in blue jeans and jumpers; its girls as militant as its men; all of them ready to march at a moment's notice through the gauntlet of a white mob or through the doors of a jail'.¹³⁰ While straight reports on news events in the South remained more aloof, in-depth examinations of the organisation increasingly emphasised the dangers confronted by SNCC members and glorified their opposition to Southern segregation.¹³¹ Indeed, by September 1966 Gene Roberts claimed in a lengthy *New York Times* magazine article that SNCC's unusual style, while 'breathtaking and confusing to many white liberals', had caused some to form 'a cult of "Snick

¹²⁷ James Forman in Trillin.

¹²⁸ For more on the politics of SNCC's dress, see: Tanisha C. Ford, 'SNCC Women, Denim, and the Politics of Dress', *The Journal of Southern History*, 79 (2013), 625–58.

¹²⁹ Morton William Newman, 'Rugged, Ragged "Snick": What It Is and What It Does', *Chicago Daily News*, 20 July 1963, Series A.IX.4A, Reel 23 Slide 1159, SNCC Papers; See also: Fischer.

¹³⁰ Al Kuettnner, 'Would You Believe? Few Remember That Dr. King Founded SNCC', *Chicago Daily Defender*, 12 September 1966, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Records, Box 335 Folder 1, MARBL.

¹³¹ Robert S. Bird, 'Student's Role in Racial Struggle: How Nonviolent Warrior Feels on Firing Line in Rural Dixie', *Chicago Sun-Times*, 20 May 1963, Constance W. Curry Papers, ca. 1951-1997, Box 2, Folder 12, MARBL; Fischer; 'Young Heroes', *The Gazette and Daily*, 28 December 1963, Series A.IX.146, Reel 34 Slide 402, SNCC Papers; Gleason; 'Civil Rights: Waving the Red Flag', *Newsweek*, 12 April 1965, pp. 30–31; Lerone Bennett Jr., 'SNCC: Rebels with a Cause', *Ebony*, July 1965, pp. 146–53.

understanders””.¹³² Competing with larger, more established organisations for funds and resources, this small group of ‘understanders’ was crucial to SNCC’s financial survival and ensured that the organisation remained afloat in the first six months of 1966, when contributions to the movement as a whole fell for the first time in over ten years.¹³³ Indeed, as Herbert Haines has demonstrated, this nucleus of committed supporters actually meant that SNCC’s funding dropped by a lower per centage than the SCLC’s in the run up to the Meredith March and even held for a number of months after the Black Power slogan was announced.¹³⁴ SNCC, therefore, had a financial reason to appear militant, which may explain why this rural Southern uniform was also worn by activists on fund-raising speaking tours in the North.¹³⁵

I.iv

Amongst a certain constituency, then, SNCC’s portrayal as militant could be useful asset to its work in the Deep South. However, when attempting to influence more moderate, mainstream debates – often in contrast to other, more respectable organisations – this militant framing also placed them at a distinct disadvantage. Indeed, the positioning of intra-movement conflict as the battle between two distinct and irreconcilable factions was rarely presented in a dispassionate or objective manner. As *New York Times* journalist Fred Powledge has argued, while the press could ‘enshrine [...a protestor] who wore a neck tie to a sit in’ they could ‘with equal facility isolate forever the activist who rang all the wrong bells’.¹³⁶ Mainstream publications like *TIME* magazine, for example, viewed SNCC’s militant tactics as potentially

¹³² Gene Roberts, ‘The Story of Snick: From “Freedom High” to “Black Power”’, *New York Times*, 25 September 1966, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM27–29, SM119–28 (p. SM120).

¹³³ Herbert H. Haines, ‘Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights: 1957-1970’, *Social Problems*, 32 (1984), 31–43 (p. 36).

¹³⁴ Haines, p. 36; Key staffers including Julian Bond and Program Secretary Cleveland Sellers have since claimed that it was the organisation’s position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, rather than Black Power, that ultimately alienated the remaining core of its liberal white supporters: *Interview with Julian Bond*, December 1975, p. 88, Southern Oral History Program, Southern Historical Collection, The Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, UNC-Chapel Hill; Cleveland Sellers, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (New York: Morrow, 1973), p. 203; For examples of this negative coverage see: ‘Bikel Scores Attack On Jews by S.N.C.C. And Quits the Group’, *New York Times*, 17 August 1967; Richard Hammer, ‘In Relations with Jews’, *New York Times*, 20 August 1967, section 4: The Week in Review, p. E3; ‘Civil Rights: End of the Road?’

¹³⁵ Ford, p. 645.

¹³⁶ Fred Powledge, *Free at Last? The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), p. 311; For examples see: ‘Nation: Beginning of a Dream’, *TIME*, 6 September 1963; John Herbers, ‘Typical Marcher: Middle-Class Adult’, *New York Times*, 28 November 1965, p. 32.

damaging and even dangerous, characterising the organisation in June 1963 as ‘brash, reckless and disorganized’ while arguing that ‘the bigger, better-organized civil rights organizations shudder at SNICK’S bobtail operations’.¹³⁷ Such criticisms spoke to wider cautions against movement militancy, and specifically the use of confrontational direct action. With forty nine per cent of white New Yorkers believing that direct action actually hurt the movement by September 1964, the militancy of groups such as SNCC would often be seen as disruptive, with a piece in *TIME* earlier that year arguing that the ‘pointless, often destructive and sometimes dangerous tactics’ of the movement had triggered a ‘backlash’ amongst whites across the country.¹³⁸ In a manner that would become common, such articles often approached the topic from a paternalistic and white-centric point of view, arguing that ‘some of the staunchest friends of civil rights were worried about excesses in the Negro revolution—and about the white reaction to those excesses’.¹³⁹ Polls in other mainstream outlets, such as *Newsweek*, reinforced the idea that the majority (seventy four per cent) of whites in America now thought that ‘Negroes are moving too fast’.¹⁴⁰ Responding to King’s militancy, rather than that of SNCC and CORE, *Newsweek*’s poll also demonstrated that only thirty four per cent of whites thought that the ‘revolt is supported by rank and file Negroes’, whereas the actual figure was over ninety per cent.¹⁴¹ Indeed, these polls highlighted the inevitable clash between ‘white backlash’ sentiment and an African American community who still believed (by a ratio of four to one) that demonstrations were aiding their cause.¹⁴²

When looking to contextualise the media’s framing of Black Power, then, it is important to realise that the links between black militancy and a supposed white backlash were popular long before the slogan’s espousal.¹⁴³ Indeed *TIME* argued in July 1963 that ‘responsible Negro leaders saw grave dangers in the spiralling Negro militancy’ that it argued might ‘indefinitely

¹³⁷ ‘Nation: The Big Five in Civil Rights.’

¹³⁸ ‘Results of Key Questions on Whites’ Attitudes’, *New York Times*, 21 September 1964, p. 26; ‘Civil Rights: The Backlash, 24 April 1964’; See also Louis Harris, ‘The “Backlash” Issue’, *Newsweek*, 13 July 1964, pp. 24, 27.

¹³⁹ ‘Civil Rights: The Backlash, 24 April 1964.’

¹⁴⁰ ‘Outlook: The Hope for Peace’, *Newsweek*, 21 October 1963, p. 57.

¹⁴¹ ‘Outlook: The Hope for Peace’, p. 57.

¹⁴² ‘The Nature of Revolution’, *Newsweek*, 29 July 1963, pp. 26–28 (p. 27).

¹⁴³ ‘Civil Rights: The Backlash, 24 April 1964’; Harris.

postpone the day when Negroes and whites live side by side in harmony and brotherhood'.¹⁴⁴ Such articles clearly demonstrate that early media support for the civil rights movement was not based on an unequivocal commitment to the cause of black liberation but its confinement to notions of acceptable dissent. Importantly, such notions were largely defined by white media elites and legitimised through the elevation of 'responsible Negro leadership' in the press.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, calls for unity in the mainstream media were inexorably linked to cautions against a rising militancy in the movement and the danger posed if militants failed to obey 'responsible Negro leaders'.¹⁴⁶ When covering tensions between SNCC and SCLC during the campaign in Selma in 1965, for instance, Charles Bartlett of *The Evening Star* argued that, 'this division is unfortunate because the Negroes need to sustain their commotion in a fashion that will not fray the nation's patience'.¹⁴⁷ Indeed, even when it was Wilkins that broke the public show of unity and condemned SNCC, the mainstream media was quick to paint SNCC's militancy as the cause of the split rather than the conservatism, and at times egotism, of Wilkins.¹⁴⁸ Importantly, then, while the characters in each role may have changed during the 1960s, coverage of intra-movement conflict was consistently framed as a battle between divisive and damaging militancy and a more responsible, senior leadership.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the designation of who was deemed to be 'militant' and who was deemed 'responsible' was often left to white editors with little knowledge of the movement and even less personal investment in its success.

This narrative was perhaps clearest during the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's 1964 Convention Challenge, which argued that the disenfranchisement of African Americans in Mississippi rendered the state's official, all-white delegation illegitimate. Despite initial indications that the challenge would make it to the convention floor, the MFDP saw its support

¹⁴⁴ 'Civil Rights: The Dangers of Militancy.'

¹⁴⁵ 'The Birmingham Precedent', *New York Times*, 12 May 1963, section The Week In Review, p. E10.

¹⁴⁶ Sitton, "'Not Token Freedom, Full Freedom'", p. 80.

¹⁴⁷ Charles Bartlett, 'Unruly Emotions to Test Vote Bill', *The Evening Star*, 18 March 1965, Series A.VIII.283, Reel 22 Slide 1085, SNCC Papers.

¹⁴⁸ 'Races: Confused Crusade', *TIME*, 12 January 1962

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,828904,00.html>> [accessed 5 February 2013]; United Press International, 'N.A.A.C.P. Opening Convention Today', *New York Times*, 1 July 1963, p. 14.

¹⁴⁹ M. S. Handler, 'Wilkins Assails CORE and SNCC, Hints Full Break', *New York Times*, 8 July 1966, pp. 1, 16.

melt away as the party machine applied the full force of its political clout to returning dissenting delegates to the party fold.¹⁵⁰ In negotiations that MFDP leader Aaron Henry labelled 'paternalistic', the party leadership offered the MFDP two 'at large' seats while official delegates who swore an oath of loyalty to the party would be seated.¹⁵¹ Not only did the two seats lack voting rights or recognition as representatives of Mississippi but, in what Henry described as 'the typical white man's mistake', the party also specified Henry and white MFDP leader Ed King as the two delegates.¹⁵² Telling reporters that 'this is typical white man picking black folks' leaders, and that day is just gone', Henry highlighted the gap between an increasingly confident movement and a paternalistic Democratic Party leadership that had failed to realise the shifting sands of race relations.¹⁵³ Fulfilling none of the MFDP's aims, this compromise was rejected by delegates including Fannie Lou Hamer who argued 'we didn't come all this way for no two seats 'cause all of us is tired'.¹⁵⁴

Many publications initially supported the challenge. Indeed, the *New York Times* claimed that splitting the Mississippi vote equally between each delegation would be 'a sensible middle ground' while arguing that a failure to achieve such a settlement would leave President Johnson 'open to the charge that he chose silence in order to compete more effectively with his Republican opponent for Southern white racist votes'.¹⁵⁵ The *New York Post* went further, arguing that unseating the official delegation would 'constitute a forceful and logical follow-up of enactment of the civil rights bill'.¹⁵⁶ With their dramatic and moral case, MFDP delegates were initially framed as peaceful petitioners, calling on America to fulfil its democratic promise in the face of violent segregationist resistance – a frame strengthened by Hamer's powerful

¹⁵⁰ 'The South: Trying to Paper It Over', *TIME*, 4 September 1964

<<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,830556,00.html>> [accessed 22 July 2013].

¹⁵¹ George Cable Wright, 'A Freedom Groups Gains Admission', *New York Times*, 27 August 1964, p. 23.

¹⁵² 'Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP)', *The University of Southern Mississippi Civil Rights Documentation Project* <<http://www.usm.edu/crdp/html/cd/mfdp.htm#audio>> [accessed 11 May 2011].

¹⁵³ 'Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP).'

¹⁵⁴ Fannie Lou Hamer, as cited in Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Plume, 1994), p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ 'Mississippi's Delegates', *New York Times*, 19 August 1964, section Editorial, p. 36.

¹⁵⁶ 'Democracy and the Democratic Convention', *New York Post*, 17 June 1964, Series A.XVI.28, Reel 41 Slide 228, SNCC Papers.

speech to the Credentials Committee in which she recounted, live on television, the brutal and often sexualised violence facing black voters in Mississippi.¹⁵⁷

Given strong support for the delegation, then, it could be expected that the mainstream press would criticise the tokenistic compromise. Claiming it was, 'a triumph for moral force and a credit to the party leaders who worked it out', however, journalists instead condemned the MFDP's rejection, which the *New York Times* called 'ill-considered' and 'a serious mistake'.¹⁵⁸ While early support for the challenge was by no means uniform, the near unanimous media criticism of the rejection demonstrates the paternalistic and top-down approaches to the movement which limited the terms of 'acceptable dissent'.¹⁵⁹ For instance, the decision by MFDP members to launch a peaceful and symbolic sit-in demonstration after the majority of official delegates had left the Convention floor was heavily criticised by an editorial in the *New York Times*, which claimed that the protest had, 'accomplished nothing. On the contrary, it dimmed the clear moral and symbolic triumph they had already achieved and provided new fuel for those who argue there is no "satisfying" the Negro militants'.¹⁶⁰

By April 1966, in an interesting example of the reading back of SNCC's militancy, another editorial in the *New York Times* would echo the conservative voices of journalists like Evans and Novak in criticising what it claimed was 'extremism for the sake of extremism', that had led the MFDP to reject 'a generous compromise worked out [o]n their behalf'.¹⁶¹ As this language suggests, many in the mainstream media viewed political concessions as a gift for white officials to give, rather than a right for African American activists to demand. In doing so, they mirrored earlier coverage of John Lewis' original speech at the March on Washington, when commentators focused on Lewis' militancy rather than viewing Archbishop O'Boyle's demands for certain passages to be altered as springing from a sense of entitlement and white

¹⁵⁷ 'Fannie Lou Hamer, Testimony Before the Credentials Committee, Democratic National Convention, 22 August 1966', *American RadioWorks* <<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html>> [accessed 14 September 2014].

¹⁵⁸ 'The Southern Delegations', *New York Times*, 27 August 1964, p. 32.

¹⁵⁹ William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 240.

¹⁶⁰ 'The Southern Delegations.'

¹⁶¹ 'Sabotage in Alabama', *New York Times*, 21 April 1966, p. 38; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, 'Inside Report: Freedom Party Postscript', *Washington Post*, 3 September 1964, p. A15.

paternalism. Implicitly legitimising the notion that establishment figures like the Archbishop had a right to comment upon, and indeed alter, the public pronouncements and views of younger, more militant movement leaders, these narratives demonstrated that support for civil rights was predicted on deference to traditional, often white, authority. Indeed, while March organisers claimed that the speech was ‘not consistent with the tenor’ of the day, Carmichael has argued that instead, ‘what was offensive had to have been the tone and the spirit of the speech. I think it just wasn’t sufficiently humble, and above all, it didn’t sound grateful’.¹⁶²

With close ties to key players within the Democratic Party machine, this paternalistic approach to coverage emerged in part from the relationship between the press and officialdom outlined in the previous chapter. Margaret Herring, secretary to Drew Pearson of the *Washington Post*, has recounted that ‘my boss had access to powerful people [...and he] took their advice from them, and they told him that these SNCC organizers and local people from Mississippi were troublemakers, and worse, even revolutionaries’.¹⁶³ However, this paternalism – which viewed militancy as arising out of inexperience and impetuosity rather than legitimate grievances – was also the result of racist and classist attitudes towards rural, working-class black leadership. During his coverage of the convention, for instance, *New York Times* journalist Anthony Lewis patronised delegates, arguing that it was ‘unfair to hold so new a group, so ridden by emotion, to a standard of such maturity and restraint’.¹⁶⁴ Giving priority to the preservation of order, these articles acted to legitimise the notion that black militancy was the result of misguided and impetuous amateurs who not only ignored the sage counsel of older and wiser leaders, but also threatened to undermine important coalitions with liberal whites. The framing of the MFDP’s rejection, therefore, quickly repurposed earlier adversarial frames, portraying MFDP delegates, rather than Southern segregationists, as intractable opponents of reason and order.

¹⁶² ‘Prelate Objects to Rights Speech’, *New York Times*, 29 August 1963, p. 20; Stokely Carmichael and Ekwueme Michael Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution: The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)* (New York: Scribner, 2003), p. 333.

¹⁶³ Margaret Herring, in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, ed. by Faith S. Holsaert (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), p. 401.

¹⁶⁴ Anthony Lewis, ‘The Negro and Politics: Freedom Party Episode Points Way To Transition From Rights Protest’, *New York Times*, 27 August 1964, p. 23.

Indeed, Carmichael argued that 'if we had gone into the convention as the little pets, the clients of the liberals, we came out as outcasts, sho-nuff political pariahs'.¹⁶⁵

Further similarities between coverage of the MFDP convention challenge and Black Power can be seen in the way mainstream outlets framed the actions of key leaders within the movement. By claiming that delegates were led astray by militants, the media's coverage of the challenge involved a mix of condescension and paternalism that mirrored the 'outside agitator' rhetoric of Southern segregationists. The *Washington Post*, for example, argued that 'leading (and seeking to lead) these politically naïve Southern Negroes were a collection of extremists and militants wholly opposed to the natural give and take of partisan politics in this country'.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, Bob Moses and Ella Baker were specifically singled out for criticism, the former for being 'so militant in his championship of Negro rights that at times he approaches black nationalism' and the latter for having 'harangued neophyte Mississippi Negro leaders into refusing a good compromise at the 1964 Democratic Convention'.¹⁶⁷ However, despite criticising Moses and other SNCC leaders for their supposed influence over delegates, the mainstream media expressed no objection to the presence of Wilkins and others whom MFDP delegate Jeanette King claims applied 'a lot of pressure [...] trying to get us to accept'.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, while media commentators chastised SNCC members for unduly influencing delegates, they simultaneously criticised the MFDP for not following the leadership of its white lawyer Joseph L. Rauh Jr. and other outsiders of whom they approved.¹⁶⁹ The mainstream media, therefore, perpetuated the notion that leaders such as Martin Luther King espoused the only legitimate path to black liberation and were thus able to speak on behalf of African Americans with whom they had little or no contact. Indeed, even before the Summer Project, Claude Sitton had lamented that figures such as Wilkins were being side-lined as it became 'increasingly apparent that many Negroes no longer are willing to listen to voices of reason

¹⁶⁵ Carmichael and Thelwell, p. 410.

¹⁶⁶ Evans and Novak, 'Inside Report: Freedom Party Postscript.'

¹⁶⁷ Evans and Novak, 'Inside Report: Freedom Party Postscript'; Anthony Lewis; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, 'Inside Report: A Longer Look at SNCC', *Washington Post*, 9 April 1965, p. A25.

¹⁶⁸ Jeanette King in Holsaert, p. 234.

¹⁶⁹ Anthony Lewis.

within their own ranks [...and] do not especially care what whites think about them and their tactics'.¹⁷⁰

In contrast, Lerone Bennett Jr. at *Ebony* praised SNCC for its belief 'that leadership is specific to the situation and that one does not have to be articulate, college-educated, or clean in order to exercise it'.¹⁷¹ Once again, then, framing of intra-movement conflict over tactics and strategies in the mainstream press furthered a particular understanding of the black freedom struggle that appealed to white Northern priorities and desires. This tendency for 'objective' or 'neutral' reporting to favour the concerns and views of a particular section of American society was not unique to SNCC and was even clearer in framing of the gay and lesbian community.

II

Writing in June 1964, *Life* magazine claimed that the 'sad and often sordid world' of gay men was becoming more visible than ever. Accompanying a two page photographic display of several men at a leather bar in San Francisco, this text was followed by fourteen pages of analysis that framed gay men as promiscuous colonisers of urban spaces and portrayed the gay community as a social and moral problem that ought to be controlled by medical and law enforcement professionals.¹⁷² In the process, *Life* showcased many of the prevailing frames the mainstream media applied to homosexuality and the gay community. While undoubtedly homophobic, this series and others throughout the 1960s received praise from homophile organisations such as the Los Angeles Mattachine Society (LAMS), whose Executive Director, E. W. 'Dane' Mohler Jr., congratulated journalist Paul Welch and *Life* for their 'progressive editorial thinking'.¹⁷³ This congratulatory attitude has fuelled accusations that pre-Stonewall activists had internalised society's negative attitudes towards homosexuality and were

¹⁷⁰ Sitton, 'Civil Rights: Leaders Now Fear That Unrest Will Grow.'

¹⁷¹ Bennett Jr., 'SNCC: Rebels with a Cause', p. 148.

¹⁷² Paul Welch, 'The "Gay" World Takes to the City Streets', *Life*, 26 June 1964, pp. 68–74; Ernest Havemann, 'Scientists Search for the Answer to a Touchy and Puzzling Question, Why?', *Life*, 26 June 1964, pp. 76–80.

¹⁷³ W. E. 'Dane' Mohler Jr. to Paul Welch, 29 June 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 7, Folder 20; Representatives of MSNY, including President Julian Hodges, also wrote to praise the articles: Mabel H. Schubert to Julian C. Hodges, 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4; Renee Vera Cafiero to Life Magazine, 15 July 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4.

complicit in the production of news stories that furthered discriminatory and stereotypical attitudes towards gay men and women. However, as the previous chapter demonstrated, the reality of homophile attitudes towards press coverage was considerably more nuanced and can be re-evaluated when viewed as part of a wider public relations strategy aimed at improving and educating public attitudes towards homosexuality. Furthermore, it is important to understand how mainstream framing of news stories actively prevented homophile activists on the East Coast from presenting a positive voice and often gave groups like the MSNY and MSW little chance to influence the tenor of coverage.

Facing the 'invisible shield' of mainstream prejudice, which acted to silence and ignore news relating to gay men and women in so many areas of life, it is not surprising that homophile activists took great interest in what coverage did make it onto the national scene. Indeed, gay men and women were not alone in searching out cultural and media representations of themselves, or in accepting images that appear stereotypical and offensive to more contemporary viewers. Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., for instance, has recounted that during his upbringing in 1950s Piedmont, West Virginia, 'we were starved for images of ourselves and searched TV to find them'.¹⁷⁴ Recounting that relatives would phone each other to spread the news when a black person was on television, Gates argues that this desire for representation meant adopting and embracing images – such as the *Amos 'n' Andy* show – that were often deeply problematic.¹⁷⁵

It is important, therefore, to differentiate between modern understandings of 'progressive' coverage and how this term would have been defined by activists operating in the 1960s. For instance, the fact that author G. Desmannes failed to challenge some of the underlying negative assumptions within William J. Helmer's 1963 article on New York's growing middle-class gay community – and instead focused on elements that were more positive – is not necessarily evidence of acceptance, but rather a reading of texts that was 'not troubled by the

¹⁷⁴ Henry Louis Gates Jr., 'Prime Time, Colored People, 1994', in *Voices in Our Blood: America's Best on the Civil Rights Movement*, ed. by Jon Meacham (New York: Random House, 2001), pp. 154–61 (p. 155).

¹⁷⁵ Gates Jr., p. 157.

occasional negative reference that would merely have seemed ordinary'.¹⁷⁶ Given that homophiles were 'accustomed to reading against the grain for the faintest hint of objectivity or affirmation in the mainstream media', historians need to understand what activists like Mohler meant when they praised *Life's* 1964 coverage for being 'as objective a piece as we have seen in a National Magazine'.¹⁷⁷ Explaining that *Life* had failed to cover the long term impacts of criminalisation on the gay community, Mohler sought to educate as well as praise, to encourage further positive coverage in the face of anticipated backlash, rather than simply acquiesce to harmful stereotypes.¹⁷⁸ With numerous examples of such watch-dog like activity populating MSNY's archive, it is clear that gay men and women were actively attempting to shift the framing of homosexuality and homophile activity in the mainstream press.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, similar to civil rights activists who used reprints of favourable news articles as fund-raising leaflets, activists such as Renee Cafiero used positive coverage to critique other outlets and provide legitimacy for homophile arguments.¹⁸⁰ While these efforts were largely ineffectual, any failures must be weighed against the considerable barriers homophile activists faced and their willingness to keep pushing for even the smallest of gains in this period.

By far the most common frame employed during the 1960s was the notion that a growing and increasingly overt gay and lesbian community posed a problem for America's major cities and the nation at large. This frame was not new. Fear over communist subversion in the federal government during the early 1950s had focused the media on the large number of gay men being fired from government service.¹⁸¹ Indeed, even when gay men made up a small fraction of those expelled from service – as in the case of the two employees sacked alongside 130 other Americans in various overseas posts in Germany in June 1950 – they were often

¹⁷⁶ G. Desmanes, 'The Gay Bourgeoisie: A Review of William J. Helmer's Article "New York's 'Middle Class' Homosexuals"', in Harper's, March 1963', *The Ladder*, April 1963, pp. 4–7; Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 47.

¹⁷⁷ Meeker, p. 47; Mohler Jr. to Welch.

¹⁷⁸ Mohler Jr. to Welch.

¹⁷⁹ Albert J. de Dion to Adventure Magazine, 5 October 1959, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4; Richard S. Bolin to Turner Catledge, 9 January 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 4, Folder 4; Julian C. Hodges to The Editor, Life Magazine, 15 June 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 9.

¹⁸⁰ Renee Vera Cafiero to TIME Magazine, 24 January 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11; Howard Zinn, 'Registration in Alabama: Negroes Are Dragged off Federal Property as the FBI Looks On', *New Republic*, 26 October 1963, Series A.VIII.283, Reel 22 Slide 1029-30, SNCC Papers.

¹⁸¹ As chapter two noted, the considerable number of lesbians fired from government service on similar charges received very little coverage in the mainstream press.

highlighted in coverage.¹⁸² Associated with communist subversion, this early framing of homosexuality acted to 'other' gay men, who were presented as a threat to American security and, therefore, a problem that had to be dealt with by the federal government and opposed by all law-abiding American citizens.

By the 1960s, however, while associations with communism and subversion had not disappeared from coverage, particularly of gay men, the 'problems' posed by homosexuality were often seen as medical, social, and moral rather than relating to national security.¹⁸³ Building on similar stories in the 1950s, these articles framed gay men and women in a way that could be considerably more damaging to the wider homophile movement.¹⁸⁴ Remaining a dangerous 'other', gay men in particular were presented as a local problem whose presence threatened traditional American values and corrupted public spaces. This narrative was perhaps clearest in Richard Doty's front-page article for the *New York Times*, where even the title – which claimed that the 'growth of overt homosexuality' in NYC had provoked 'wide spread concern' – was framed in way that was clearly designed to alarm readers.¹⁸⁵ Providing a common narrative for future stories, Doty's claim that 'sexual inverts have colonized three areas of [...New York] city' was mirrored in Paul Welch's *Life* article that began with the idea that 'swarms of young, college-age homosexuals' had taken over Greenwich Avenue.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, this notion of colonisation featured in several prominent articles throughout the decade and also extended to discussions of certain professional fields where, mainstream outlets suggested, a 'kind of homosexual mafia – or "Homintern"' ran 'a kind of closed shop'.¹⁸⁷ Importantly, this framing was not new. Indeed, articles in the *New York Times* had

¹⁸² United Press International, 'Security Risks Dropped: State Department Sent Home 130 Employees in Germany', *New York Times*, 17 June 1950, p. 6.

¹⁸³ This narrative, however, did not completely disappear, especially when the MSW began to agitate for the repeal of federal discrimination in employment: 'Rusk Refuses to Meet with Homosexuals', *Chicago Tribune*, 28 August 1965, p. N7.

¹⁸⁴ 'Medicine: The Hidden Problem', *TIME*, 28 December 1953

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,858417-2,00.html>> [accessed 11 September 2013]; Thomas P. Ronan, 'Report on Sex Problems Stirs British Debate', *New York Times*, 22 September 1957, section 4: The News of the Week In Review, p. 4.

¹⁸⁵ Robert C. Doty, 'Growth of Overt Homosexuality in City Provokes Wide Concern', *New York Times*, 17 December 1963, pp. 1, 33 (p. 1).

¹⁸⁶ Doty, p. 33; Welch, p. 68.

¹⁸⁷ William J. Helmer, 'New York's "Middle-Class" Homosexuals', *Harper's Magazine*, March 1963, pp. 85–92; 'Essay: The Homosexual in America', *TIME*, 21 January 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835069,00.html>> [accessed 11 February

applied much the same language to African Americans several decades previously, when front-page articles claimed that there was ‘a threatened invasion of Negro families’ that had aroused ‘disgust’ from local property owners in Brooklyn.¹⁸⁸ With similar arguments being used against immigrant communities, especially communities of colour, this notion that the gay and lesbian community represented a threat to traditional American values and the social fabric of large cities continued a narrative of exclusion and fear that exists to this day.¹⁸⁹

As we have seen, stories relating to the gay and lesbian community often arose from beats, such as crime and health, which immediately associated homosexuality with negatively valenced aspects of society. Even when acting within these constraints, however, journalists had the power to frame stories in a way that positively portrayed the gay and lesbian community. Nevertheless, coverage was often written in a way that accentuated the ‘otherness’ of gay men and women by emphasising and reinforcing traditional stereotypes. This was perhaps clearest in the three extended discussions of homosexuality printed in the *New York Times*, *Life*, and *TIME* in the mid-1960s.¹⁹⁰ Despite extensive research and contact with homophile activists, all three articles emphasised and reinforced traditional prejudices.

In particular, all these investigations focused on the supposed public promiscuity of gay men. Featuring large pictures of a San Francisco leather-bar and several smaller shots of male cruising spots in cities across the US, *Life*’s June 1964 investigation of homosexuality focused disproportionately on the public promiscuity of the gay male community. While this scene may have been one of the most visible aspects of the gay community in many cities, it is clear that Welch and *Life* editors had purposefully ignored other, less stereotypical elements. Indeed, admitting that he ‘felt a little guilty’ about exposing Welch to cruising spots that he would not otherwise have found, Don Slater – then at *ONE Magazine* – claimed that he also

2013]; William J. Drummond, ‘The Male Colony - Who They Are, What They Think’, *Los Angeles Times*, 24 March 1969, pp. A1, A24–25; Again, this was not a new narrative, but had been a source of fear in certain communities for years: ‘Are The Fairies Running Harlem?’, *New York Amsterdam News*, 12 February 1955, p. 5.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Negro Speculator Buys Near Whites’, *New York Times*, 27 July 1910.

¹⁸⁹ David A. Reed, ‘America of the Melting Pot Comes to End’, *New York Times*, 27 April 1924, section 9: Special Features, p. XX 3; Kira Lerner, ‘Islamic Extremists Have Seized Control Of U.S. Cities, Says NRA Seminar’, *ThinkProgress*, 2015 <<http://thinkprogress.org/justice/2015/04/14/3646567/no-go-zones-nra-convention/>> [accessed 21 May 2015].

¹⁹⁰ Doty; ‘Homosexuality in America’, *Life*, 26 June 1964, pp. 66–67; ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’.

'introduced him to more "garden variety" homosexuals [...] but he didn't use anything about them'.¹⁹¹ This focus fed into a wider frame of homosexual relationships that emphasised promiscuity and denied gay men, and to a lesser extent gay women, the capacity for long-lasting connections. Similarly, under the subtitle 'Impossible Dream', Doty's 1963 article argued that 'many homosexuals dream of forming a permanent attachment that would give them the sense of social and emotional stability others derive from heterosexual marriage, but few achieve it'.¹⁹² Ignoring their own complicity in the denial of legal equality to gay men and women, mainstream narratives made it clear that the 'fault' for this promiscuity lay primarily with gay men themselves. For instance, Doty's piece also argued that:

The absence of any legal ties, plus the basic emotional instability that is inherent in many homosexuals, cause most such homosexual partnerships to founder on the jealousies and personality clashes that a heterosexual union would survive. Hence, most homosexuals are condemned to a life of promiscuity – the cruising of bars seeking casual partners.¹⁹³

Similarly, while other articles acknowledged the existence of long-term same-sex partnerships, these were often framed as an exceptional circumstance, with Webster Schott's *New York Times* article claiming that, 'professional scholars of homosexual culture cannot foresee any institutional equivalent of matrimony for homosexuals. The average homosexual marriage lasts at most three or four years'.¹⁹⁴

It is clear that some within the homophile movement mirrored this condemnation of promiscuity; in February 1958 Sten Russell told readers of *The Ladder* that 'there can be no life in constant promiscuity, only animalistic satisfaction and the person living by such standards has an unstable and unfulfilled life'.¹⁹⁵ Many others, however, actively contested this narrative, with Jim Kepner telling readers of *ONE Magazine* in the same year that:

¹⁹¹ Alwood, p. 51.

¹⁹² Doty, p. 33.

¹⁹³ Doty, p. 33.

¹⁹⁴ Webster Schott, 'Civil Rights and the Homosexual: A 4-Million Minority Asks for Equal Rights', *New York Times*, 12 November 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM 44–45, 47–54, 59–72 (p. SM52).

¹⁹⁵ Sten Russell, 'One Symposium: Homosexuality - A Way of Life', *The Ladder*, February 1958, pp. 7–13, 18–23 (p. 23).

Public restrooms aren't very savoury places for sex. Most homophiles take pains to avoid such places, or to cut short any necessary visits. Yet a small percentage of homosexuals, driven by social pressures, and allowed no better outlet, are tempted by sudden offerings and often find themselves in the clutches of the law.¹⁹⁶

Emphasising that it was the repressive nature of society, not the desires of gay men, which promoted public cruising that he described as 'necessary', Kepner avoided the pathologisation and demonization of casual sex so common in mainstream narratives. Indeed, by the mid-to-late 1960s, some homophiles within MSNY and MSW actively challenged what they saw as the hypocrisy of mainstream condemnation of gay men. Leitsch, for instance, wrote a long letter in October 1966 to the Managing Editor of the *Berks County Record*, Herb Kaplan, in which he angrily denounced popular hypocrisy:

You cannot, in fairness, in honesty, or in the spirit of Christianity and American freedom, decry homosexuals meeting on street corners if he is forbidden from meeting anywhere else. You cannot decry homosexual promiscuity if you do nothing to encourage the stability of homosexual relationships, and you cannot call him a "security risk" or a "criminal" if you have passed laws arbitrarily declaring him a "criminal" and making him vulnerable to blackmail, extortion, violence and murder. Most of all, you cannot define him into "sickness" to excuse your own wild imagining that he is an optical illusion that does not and cannot exist.¹⁹⁷

Taking Kaplan to task, Leitsch went on to argue that having created the conditions in which promiscuity and cruising existed, 'then you, the clergy and the police all complain because that guilt isn't enough. The homosexual hasn't done you the favor of dropping dead, or accepting your standards of what life is supposed to be!'¹⁹⁸

II.i

In private correspondence, then, it appears homophile leaders were happy to robustly defend unpopular practices. In public, however, these conversations were often more complex.

¹⁹⁶ Dal MacIntire [Pseudonym of Jim Kepner], "'Tangents, News and Views'", *ONE Magazine*, December 1958', in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 282–87 (pp. 282–3).

¹⁹⁷ Dick Leitsch to Herb Kaplan, 11 October 1966, International Gay Information Center, The New York Public Library [Microfilm. New York: Research Publications International, 1998], Mattachine Society, Inc. of New York Records, Box 1, Folder 12.

¹⁹⁸ Leitsch to Kaplan.

Indeed, when examining the rhetoric and practices of organisations on the East Coast, it is clear that homophiles often attempted to frame their organisations as respectable and sophisticated players in local and national debates and avoided being openly associated with individuals and practices which could tarnish this image. Nowhere was this more evident than the pickets of the mid-to-late 1960s. Kameny, for example, informed Lieutenant George Fenci of Philadelphia's Civil Disobedience Squad in 1968 that, although that year's Annual Reminder March was likely to be the biggest yet:

All of our demonstrations – in Philadelphia and elsewhere – have always been peaceful, orderly, dignified ones, conducted in a fully lawful manner by neat-looking, well-dressed people. We expect this one to be the same, and have no reason to believe that it will be otherwise.¹⁹⁹

Similar narratives accompanied more public declarations, with publicity materials for the Fifth Annual Reminder emphasising that 'the Demonstration will be a fully lawful one, by a group of orderly, dignified men and women'.²⁰⁰ Clearly, then, as Meeker has argued, homophiles were actively constructing a 'Mask of Respectability' in this period that they used in their interactions with the wider public. Accompanied by strict guidelines that mandated that 'dress and appearance will be conservative and conventional', these pickets are seen to typify the timidity and self-hatred that critics argue were implicit in homophile politics.²⁰¹ The 1984 documentary *Before Stonewall*, for example, accompanied footage of these demonstrations with a narration that claimed 'the majority of gay people in the sixties were terribly concerned with the image of the homosexual'.²⁰² Later in the documentary, again against the backdrop of homophile pickets, one unnamed commentator claimed that 'the more conservative elements, their basic feeling was, "well, we're fighting the federal government for jobs, therefore we have to look employable by the federal government"'.²⁰³ Similar narratives have emerged

¹⁹⁹ Franklin E. Kameny to Lieutenant George Fencil, 28 January 1968, Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen Gay History Papers, Box 102 Folder 16, NYPL.

²⁰⁰ ERCHO, *Homosexuals to Picket in Philadelphia July 4th*, 28 June 1969, Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen Gay History Papers, Box 102 Folder 13, NYPL.

²⁰¹ The Mattachine Society of Washington, *Committee on Picketing and Other Lawful Demonstrations: Regulations for Picketing*, n.d., Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Barbara Gittings and Kay Tobin Lahusen Gay History Papers, Box 102 Folder 13.

²⁰² Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* (First Run Features, 1984; Peadarillo Pictures Ltd, 2010).

²⁰³ Schiller and Rosenberg.

within movement historiography, with Marc Stein's recent work, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement*, claiming that 'the self-imposed dress codes used' in some of the demonstrations 'showed that many homophile militants were not as radicalized as were other activists in this era'.²⁰⁴

By deriding the tactics of these pickets, however, commentators overlook the challenge that gay and lesbian inclusion within the bounds of respectability and equal citizenship posed to popular conceptions of gay and lesbian identity. Indeed, when Secretary of State Dean Rusk announced that the department was to be 'picketed by a group of homosexuals' in 1965, the combination of prejudice and novelty drew widespread laughter from the press corps and others in attendance.²⁰⁵ Justifying federal discrimination against gay men and women, Rusk argued that the State department was 'concerned with the safety of the United States' and, therefore, had to 'exact standards of conduct which are far higher than the conduct of the general society in which we operate'.²⁰⁶ While tame by the standards of the decade, therefore, these pickets represented an unprecedented challenge to public discourses on homosexuality and the gay and lesbian community.

Having been dismissed from his work with the government because of his sexual orientation, Kameny was well aware of society's attitude towards gay men and women. Far from being what most would call conservative, he had fought his dismissal all the way to the doors of the Supreme Court, who eventually refused to hear his case. Drawing ideological, rhetorical, and tactical inspiration from the civil rights movement, Kameny and other picket organisers aimed to shift mainstream framing of federal discrimination from one which foregrounded the national security risks posed by gay men and women to one that emphasised a breach in the civil rights of citizens as laid out in the constitution. Consequently, an emphasis on citizenship and inalienable rights was a common frame in homophile literature and publicity materials,

²⁰⁴ Marc Stein, *Rethinking the Gay and Lesbian Movement* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2012), p. 97; Larry Gross, *Up from Invisibility Lesbians, Gay Men, and the Media in America*, E-book (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002; New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 14.

²⁰⁵ Schiller and Rosenberg; Interestingly, this clip is also included within the 1967 CBS documentary *The Homosexuals*, however, the laughter has either been strongly muted or else erased altogether from the clip: 'The Homosexuals', *CBS Reports* (CBS, 1967).

²⁰⁶ 'The Homosexuals'; For more on the relationship between homophobia and federal employment see: Gregory B. Lewis, 'Barriers to Security Clearances for Gay Men and Lesbians: Fear of Blackmail or Fear of Homosexuals?', *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 11.4 (2001), 539–58.

with ECHO titling its Third Annual Conference in 1965, 'The Homosexual Citizen in the Great Society'.²⁰⁷

Writing to the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Sargent Shriver, in November 1964, Kameny utilised this patriotic frame by claiming that 'I write as a homosexual American citizen – with equal emphasis upon all three words'.²⁰⁸ Criticising Shriver's decision to exclude 'boys with homosexual tendencies' from the youth camps planned by the Federal anti-poverty program, Kameny stressed that his position 'as a taxpayer' and someone who had fought 'in front-line combat, under enemy fire' entitled him to complain about federal discrimination.²⁰⁹ Furthermore, taking issue with comments from Office representatives that had compared gay men and women to criminals and drug addicts, Kameny made sure to mention his Harvard PhD and argued that 'I and my fellow homosexual American citizens resent being placed in the company in which your Dr. Lewis D. Eiger has placed us'.²¹⁰

By positioning themselves in this way, homophiles within MSNY and MSW were actively trying to counter mainstream framing of gay men and women that painted them as an un-American other and legitimise homophile leadership as well as the overall goals of the movement. That this attempt reinforced some of the traditional heterosexist, racist, and bourgeois trappings of mainstream American culture is certainly problematic. Indeed, homophile placards that claimed gay men and women were America's 'last oppressed national minority' speak volumes about the racism and chauvinism present within the homophile movement in this period.²¹¹ However, while historian and communications professor Larry Gross has claimed homophiles were engaged in the 'familiar American game of assimilation' that required 'the muting of a group's distinctive coloring in order that they might blend into the fabric of the mainstream', it is important to recognise how their strategic deployment of respectability was also an attempt

²⁰⁷ Hall.

²⁰⁸ Franklin E. Kameny to Sargent Shriver, 28 November 1964, International Gay Information Center, The New York Public Library [Microfilm. New York: Research Publications International, 1998], Mattachine Society, Inc. of New York Records, Box 1, Folder 11.

²⁰⁹ Kameny to Shriver.

²¹⁰ Kameny to Shriver.

²¹¹ Associated Press, 'Pickets Aid Homosexuals', *New York Times*, 5 July 1967, p. 5 (p. 5).

to challenge the 'straight state' by radically appropriating and reinterpreting this mainstream fabric.²¹²

Rejecting the term assimilationist, Meeker has argued that:

Such critiques rest on an incomplete understanding of homophile activism and assimilation [...] Aside from being an outdated sociological concept, assimilation in its precise formulation is the wrong term to describe the motivations and goals of the homophiles who, like immigrant ethnic groups, sought to change American culture as much as they expected that the culture would change them.²¹³

When critiquing homophile respectability, therefore, calculated public relations strategies should not be mistaken for personal prejudice. As poet and gay liberation activist Tede Matthews argued in the 1977 documentary, *Word is Out*:

Clothes are, on one level, very superficial because we're all born naked and everything that anyone wears at any time is drag [...] *What you wear is how you want people to react to you, or how you want to react to yourself [...] and how you see yourself.*²¹⁴

In this usage, dress is not only about personal expression, but becomes an active part of one's interaction with the wider world. For some social activists, this meant that the personal was not only political, but also public. Seen through this lens, the respectability of homophile pickets can be understood as a calculated attempt by activists to encourage positive framing of their activities in the mainstream press and a more favourable reaction from decision makers in Washington. Indeed, when justifying this policy in their 'Regulations for Picketing' the MSW claimed:

People are much more likely to listen to, to examine, and hopefully, to accept new, controversial, unconventional, unorthodox, or unusual ideas and positions, if these are presented to them from sources bearing the symbols of acceptability, conventionality, and respectability, *as arbitrary as*

²¹² Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).

²¹³ Meeker, p. 33.

²¹⁴ Tede Matthews in Nancy Adair, Andrew Brown and Rob Epstein, 'Word is Out: Stories of Some of Our Lives' (Public Broadcasting Service, 1978) <<http://vimeo.com/18655473>> [accessed 12 July 2013]. My emphasis.

those symbols may be. Good order, good appearance, and dignity of bearing are essential.²¹⁵

Consequently, while these policies may have reflected the real prejudices of some homophiles, for Kameny and others they were simply a tactic that framed protest in a way more likely to achieve their goals. For instance, the very same document that claimed, ‘picketing is not an occasion for an assertion of personality’, also claimed that pickets *were* an occasion for ‘an organized effort, by a group or a movement [...] working in a calculated, coordinated fashion, to make its existence, message, and grievances known where they need to be known’.²¹⁶

Indeed, in a long letter to Leitsch – who had questioned whether such restrictive policies were necessary in a period where many were abandoning such traditional attitudes towards appearance and dress – Kameny revealed his motivations behind the respectable attire and demeanour of activists:

There is a difference between evils and unpleasanties. Prejudice and discrimination are evils. The wearing of suits and ties is an unpleasantie for some. I will gladly accept the unpleasantie, as irrational as it may be – on a temporary basis – if it will help me to fight the evil. That is the case here [...] It is not I who am rejecting the beatniks. I emphasize that, rightly or wrongly, it is society-at-large – the employers, the officials, the parents, the professionals, the great mass – who do. Rightly or wrongly, they do. This may be just or it may be unjust, BUT it IS. We MUST work with what IS. I agree with most of your arguments. But they are not going to help us with the general public [...] Much of my life has been devoted to fighting conformity, to going my own way. I have always said that the world will take me on MY own terms, or it won’t get me [...] BUT that applies to MY life, as an individual. When it comes to an entire movement; to an attempt to make society over, [...] strategy and tactics come into play.²¹⁷

Importantly, Kameny’s approach mirrored that taken by organisers of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in August 1963 and the March on Washington for Peace in Vietnam in November 1965.²¹⁸ Organisers of all three demonstrations carefully controlled what slogans demonstrators were allowed to use in order to present a unified voice to the

²¹⁵ The Mattachine Society of Washington. My Emphasis.

²¹⁶ The Mattachine Society of Washington.

²¹⁷ Franklin E. Kameny to Dick Leitsch, 12 July 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 8, Folder 5.

²¹⁸ Garth E. Pauley, ‘John Lewis: “Speech at the March on Washington” (28 August 1963)’, *Voices of Democracy*, 5 (2010), 18–36 (p. 23); Handler, ‘Negro Leaders Issue Manual for Rally in Capital’; John D. Morris, ‘March in Capital Selects Slogans: Saturday Protest Would Bar Militancy on Vietnam’, *New York Times*, 24 November 1965, p. 14.

media that was not ‘muddied up by outside signs’.²¹⁹ While homophile demonstrations received a fraction of the coverage given to these larger scale demonstrations, AP coverage reprinted slogans that referred to gay men and women as ‘the nation’s second largest minority’ and clearly framed the picketers as protesting against unjust discrimination.²²⁰ Similarly, coverage that referred to demonstrators at the third Annual Reminder March in Philadelphia in July 1967 as ‘neatly dressed’ mirrored praise given to the ‘conventionally dressed’ demonstrators at the 1965 March against the Vietnam War.²²¹

While conservative in comparison to the protests of the GLF years later, it is clear that homophile pickets were moving beyond the expected norms of American society. Interviewed by CBS outside the White House during an ECHO picket in 1966, one West Virginian onlooker remarked that:

Well I’m a country boy I guess because I couldn’t believe this, I mean I didn’t know this was a problem or at least I didn’t think anybody would have a sign about it. I just don’t understand, it’s kinda weird, I mean you people are getting much more cosmopolitan than I thought you were over here because this is really something. Let’s face it. Homosexuality is a problem and these people are really advocating that we don’t solve the problem and advocating that we tolerate the problem and I think that these people are a fit subject for a mental health program, these people need help.²²²

Included in CBS’s later documentary, this clip framed homophile demonstrations as pushing at the boundaries of acceptable dissent – even despite the highly respectable and orderly nature of proceedings. Consequently, while critiqued by a younger generation for presenting a respectable image to the public, it is clear that the very nature of these protests framed homophile activists as radical to many across the country and in the mainstream press. Indeed, considering how controversial these pickets were within the movement in 1965, with Kay Tobin and other participants having to defend themselves within the pages of *The Ladder*, demonstrators on the East Coast represented a militant wing of the movement.²²³

²¹⁹ Morris, p. 14.

²²⁰ United Press International, ‘Homosexuals Stage Protest in Capital’, *New York Times*, 30 May 1965, p. 42.

²²¹ Associated Press, ‘Pickets Aid Homosexuals’; Herbers, p. 32.

²²² ‘The Homosexuals’.

²²³ Kay Tobin, ‘Picketing: The Impact and the Issues’, *The Ladder*, September 1965, pp. 4–8.

Consequently, when documentaries such as *Before Stonewall* draw a clear line between the ‘more conservative elements’ who organised these pickets and the ‘more militant assertions’ put forward by those rejecting the sickness theory, they not only ignore that these approaches were happening simultaneously in 1965, but also the considerable overlap in personnel, with Kameny, Gittings, and other ECHO members playing major roles in both aspects of the movement.²²⁴

II.ii

Importantly, while public demonstrations were small, homophile rhetoric consciously alluded to a much larger community of disadvantaged citizens. In a lengthy report to the Supreme Court in 1967, Elver Barker argued that as homophiles were ‘one of the largest of America’s minority groups’, discrimination against ‘so large a group [...] is to go beyond the limits of reason, scientifically verifiable facts, Constitutional authority, and human decency’.²²⁵ As early as 1956, homophile activists such as Jim Kepner had articulated the notion that arguments based on the size of the gay and lesbian community in the United States might find success where those framed around moral or scientific evidence had foundered.²²⁶ Unfortunately for Kepner and other homophiles, however, attempts to frame the diversity and size of the gay and lesbian community as a positive good were almost entirely absent from mainstream coverage. Instead, rather than being used to encourage a process of normalisation, references to the size and nature of the gay and lesbian community in the mainstream press were often used for exactly the opposite effect.²²⁷ For instance, when claiming that ‘for every obvious homosexual, there are probably nine nearly impossible to detect’, *Life’s* editors were not

²²⁴ Schiller and Rosenberg.

²²⁵ Elver Barker, *Is Homosexuality a Disease?*, 19 December 1967, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 1.

²²⁶ Lyn Pederson [Pseudonym of Jim Kepner], ‘“An Open Letter: Do Constitutional Guarantees Cover Homosexuals?”’, *ONE Magazine*, January 1956’, in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s’ Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 91–97; This frame is also a feature of scholarly works: *We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics*, ed. by Mark Blasius and Shane Phelan (New York: Routledge, 1997).

²²⁷ Doty, p. 33; Helmer; ‘Homosexuality Is an Illness and Is Curable In Some Cases, Major Doctors’ Group Says’, *Wall Street Journal*, 19 May 1964, p. 7; ‘God and the Homosexual’, *Newsweek*, 13 February 1967, p. 63; Enid Nemy, ‘The Woman Homosexual: More Assertive, Less Willing to Hide’, *New York Times*, 17 November 1969, section Food, Fashions, Family, Furnishings, p. 62.

attempting to frame gay men and women as similar to ‘ordinary’ Americans.²²⁸ Instead, this focus on detection – alongside other negative frames employed throughout the piece – implied that the anonymity with which many gay men and women existed in American society was a problem that needed to be addressed. This idea of a disguised enemy operating largely unseen in America was even more explicit in coverage by *TIME*, who discussed how gay men used ‘camouflage’ to blend into ‘every walk of life, on any social level’, often at the expense of those around them.²²⁹

While simultaneously scaring readers with the threat of ‘anxiously camouflaged’ gay men and women operating in the ‘shadows’, mainstream coverage also frequently acknowledged that, ‘virtually all societies in history have known homosexuality’.²³⁰ When explaining the reason for their increasing coverage, then, mainstream accounts did not present homosexuality itself as a new phenomenon, but instead focused on the growth of what Doty’s front-page headline called ‘overt homosexuality’.²³¹ Claiming that ‘homosexuality shears across the spectrum of American life [...] It always has’, *Life* informed its readers that ‘today, especially in big cities, homosexuals are discarding their furtive ways and openly admitting, even flaunting, their deviation’.²³² Opinions on why ‘increasingly, deviates are out in the open’ were mixed.²³³ Some framed growing pride within the gay and lesbian community as responsible for an increase in ‘open and obtrusive’ behaviour that was becoming much more difficult to ignore.²³⁴ Others, such as *TIME* raised the spectre of ‘conversion’, framing increased gay and lesbian visibility as an inherent problem:

Homosexuality is more in evidence in the U.S. than ever before [...] Whether the number of homosexuals has actually increased is hard to say [...] But chances are that growing permissiveness about homosexuality and

²²⁸ ‘Homosexuality in America’, p. 66.

²²⁹ ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’.

²³⁰ ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’.

²³¹ ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’; Doty, p. 1.

²³² ‘Homosexuality in America’.

²³³ ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’.

²³⁴ Robert Trumbull, ‘Homosexuals Proud of Deviancy, Medical Academy Study Finds’, *New York Times*, 19 May 1964, pp. 1, 75 (p. 75).

a hedonistic attitude toward all sex have helped "convert" many people who might have repressed their inclinations in another time or place.²³⁵

Regardless of the cause, mainstream narratives in print and on television agreed that there was a 'growing concern about homosexuals in society' that stemmed from 'their increasing visibility'.²³⁶

In light of fears that coverage could promote an immoral and dangerous lifestyle, it would have been reasonable to expect editors and publishers to continue to ignore the gay and lesbian community. However, with coverage claiming that homosexuality was 'a problem that has grown in the shadows, protected by taboos on open discussion that have only recently begun to be breached', mainstream outlets often framed their decision to begin covering the gay and lesbian community as a way of combating – rather than promoting – a worrying trend.²³⁷ *Life*, for example, justified its 1964 study by claiming that:

This social disorder, which society tries to suppress, has forced itself into the public eye because it does present a problem – and parents especially are concerned. The myth and misconception with which homosexuality has so long been clothed must be cleared away, not to condone it but to cope with it.²³⁸

Often failing to recognise their own complicity in the censorship that had surrounded homosexuality, mainstream outlets thus framed their coverage as a public service, educating their readers on a problematic topic that was now too visible and dangerous to ignore.

Importantly, even coverage that actively called for more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality in both law and society contained implicit or explicit assumptions that this would solve a problem, rather than emancipate a community from oppression. Citing medical professionals, coverage in the *New York Times* towards the end of the decade argued that greater permissiveness regarding sex 'might lead to an increase in casual homosexuality but it would sharply reduce the number of the exclusively or predominantly homosexual because

²³⁵ 'Essay: The Homosexual in America'; For an examination of conversion narratives on the movement in the 1970s see: Tina Fetner, 'Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims', *Social Problems*, 48.3 (2001), 411–28.

²³⁶ Mike Wallace in 'The Homosexuals'.

²³⁷ Doty, p. 1.

²³⁸ 'Homosexuality in America', p. 66.

fewer youngsters would feel themselves “locked into” the subculture’.²³⁹ Indeed, utilising ideas from anthropological studies, Webster Schott argued that as ‘hard-core homosexuality is all but unknown in highly sexually permissive cultures in Africa, Samoa, and the other islands of Polynesia’, a more relaxed attitude towards same-sex experiences in youth would mean that ‘when [people] reach adulthood, they choose heterosexuality as their dominant sexual pattern’.²⁴⁰ As a consequence, Schott argued:

To reduce homosexuality it appears that we must promote homosexuality. I know of no authority in the field who believes we can deal with the problem without taking on the cultural underpinnings of taboo and repression that seem to produce homosexuality [...] Wherever a culture is restrictive and rigid it produces aberrations. If we want integration instead of burning cities, Negroes must live next door. If we want heterosexuals instead of deviates, we must grow them early.²⁴¹

This framing presented homophile activists with a dilemma, praise coverage that called for the repeal of harsh laws or challenge homophobia and risk undermining those campaigns? As with most tactical battles, this was answered differently in different places.

With media narratives obviously trailing behind homophile activism, the inclusion of this more nuanced approach to homosexuality represented an advance on earlier coverage that had used the work of Dr. Edmund Bergler to argue that that all gay men and women exhibited ‘inner depression and guilt, irrational jealousy and a megalomaniac conviction that homosexual trends are universal’.²⁴² Once again, then, it is important to understand the context in which homophile activists in New York, such as Nancy Clark, praised Schott’s article as ‘one of the least-biased articles about homosexuality that has appeared in print’.²⁴³ Indeed, with other letters to the *Times* claiming that the ideas laid out in Schott’s article were a challenge to ‘the moral fiber of our nation’ and were likely to threaten America’s ‘national existence’, it must be remembered that positive readings of these articles can highlight a

²³⁹ Tom Buckley, ‘All They Talk About Is Sex, Sex, Sex’, *New York Times*, 20 April 1969, section The New York Times Magazine, pp. SM 28–29, SM 93–106 (p. SM94).

²⁴⁰ Schott, ‘Civil Rights and the Homosexual: A 4-Million Minority Asks for Equal Rights’, p. SM69.

²⁴¹ Schott, ‘Civil Rights and the Homosexual: A 4-Million Minority Asks for Equal Rights’, p. SM70; SM72.

²⁴² ‘Essay: The Homosexual in America’.

²⁴³ Nancy Clark, ‘Letters: Homosexuals: Rights and Wrongs’, *New York Times*, 3 December 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, p. SM 32, SM 34 (p. SM32).

process of improvement that homophiles were actively trying to encourage in a hostile atmosphere.²⁴⁴

Similar difficulties emerged on the crime beat, where mainstream critiques of police practices and repressive laws often focused on whether this policy was the best way of reducing homosexuality, rather than representing any sympathy for the effects these laws had on gay men and women. Citing New York City Police Commissioner Michael J. Murphy – who called homosexuality a ‘constant concern [...] that] has been given, and will continue to be given special attention’ – Doty’s coverage made it clear that any moderation in police attitudes did not suggest a softening of societal condemnation. Instead, Murphy’s claim that ‘the underlying factors in homosexuality are not criminal but rather medical and sociological in nature’, allowed Doty to question repressive laws while simultaneously presenting a highly homophobic understanding of homosexuality.²⁴⁵ In doing so, they mirrored earlier discussion around legal reform that had emerged in the United Kingdom, where *New Statesmen* editor Kingsley Martin argued that homosexuality was ‘a social evil, but its bad effects are greatly aggravated by our stupid, savage, and out-of-date criminal law’.²⁴⁶

Once again, however, this view should be contrasted to far less favourable popular attitudes. Indeed, according to a *CBS News* survey:

Most Americans are repelled by the mere notion of homosexuality [...] Two out of three Americans look upon homosexuals with disgust, discomfort, or fear. One out of ten says hatred. A vast majority say that homosexuality is an illness, only ten per cent say it is a crime and yet, and here is the paradox, the majority of Americans favour legal punishment for homosexual acts performed in private between consenting adults.²⁴⁷

Consequently, while sometimes problematic, the pronouncements of any publicly legitimised official who advocated for changes in the law represented a significant deviation from popular opinion and helped to shift media frames in favour of progress that, it should be noted, would take the full weight of the Supreme Court and almost forty years to fully achieve.

²⁴⁴ Sol Kravitz, ‘Letters: Homosexuals: Rights and Wrongs’, *New York Times*, 3 December 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, p. SM 12.

²⁴⁵ Doty, p. 1.

²⁴⁶ ‘Homosexuality Rise Is Troubling Britons’, *New York Times*, 3 November 1953, p. 28 (p. 28).

²⁴⁷ ‘The Homosexuals’.

In New York, similar tensions emerged around the campaign against entrapment and the decision to show public support for Mayor Lindsay in late 1965. Writing to the Mayor, Leitsch claimed that ‘we feel certain that the problems of the homosexual community – such as police entrapment, police harassment of homosexuals, and other matters – will receive a far more just hearing and correctional action wherever possible under your leadership’.²⁴⁸ Given Lindsay’s later involvement in a series of clean-up operations in Times Square and Greenwich Village that led to hundreds of gay men and women being arrested, this endorsement could be seen as evidence that the MSNY had divorced itself and its goals from large sections of the community. Indeed, telling the *New York Times* two months after these operations that ‘most homosexuals like the Mayor and [Police Commissioner Howard R.] Leary – they’re tremendous men’, it would be easy to see Leitsch and others in MSNY as increasingly out of touch with the needs of those they claimed to represent.²⁴⁹ However, Leitsch’s comments to the press can be better interpreted as an attempt to frame coverage in a way that praised achievement while encouraging further progress. A month earlier, a MSNY spokesman (probably Leitsch) had told the *New York Times* that Chief Inspector Sanford D. Garelik had shown ‘a certain naïveté’ when he claimed that entrapment was not encouraged by the NYPD. Following calls by the Chief Inspector for gay men to report what he argued were isolated cases of entrapment to the authorities, the spokesman claimed that it was ‘alarming to think that the chief inspector doesn’t know that a large number of police spend their duty hours dressed in tight pants, sneakers and polo sweaters...to bring about solicitations’.²⁵⁰ In doing so, the MSNY’s comments undermined the authority of the NYPD and fed into a narrative that was becoming highly critical of entrapment in light of a ‘growing tolerance by the general community [that] has made it easier for homosexuals to assert themselves in public’.²⁵¹ As Leitsch argued in a long letter to the DOB in San Francisco in September 1966, MSNY played an active role in both public and private conversations about entrapment and other repressive police tactics in

²⁴⁸ Dick Leitsch to John V. Lindsay, 10 November 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

²⁴⁹ Eric Pace, ‘Policemen Forbidden to Entrap Homosexuals to Make Arrests’, *New York Times*, 11 May 1966, p. 36 (p. 36).

²⁵⁰ Eric Pace, ‘Garelik Urges Public to Report Police Trapping of Homosexuals’, *New York Times*, 2 April 1966, pp. 1, 60 (p. 60).

²⁵¹ Pace, ‘Garelik Urges Public to Report Police Trapping of Homosexuals’, p. 60.

NYC.²⁵² Claiming that the MSNY sent letters to the editors of every newspaper that published accounts of such arrests – in which the organisation would ‘question the mentality of a man who would stand staring at a urinal all day’ – Leitsch demonstrated how homophile activists in New York were attempting to shift mainstream media narratives.²⁵³ Importantly, when justifying this work, Leitsch criticised the timidity he saw in other homophile groups and argued that the government was not ‘going to do a thing for homosexuals – until they have to. The only way to make them have to is to create such a scene, so many issues, and such embarrassment, that they’ll have to do something to shut you up’.²⁵⁴

Despite employing very different methods of creating ‘a scene’ than gay liberationists, this attempt to shift public narratives on entrapment and other harmful police practices produced results. For instance, coverage of police clean-ups during the late 1950s and early 1960s often presented these operations as a force for both moral and societal good.²⁵⁵ Similarly, while Doty had mentioned the ‘bitter’ protest of MSNY against entrapment in his 1963 article, critiques of the practice were almost entirely absent from his narrative. Instead, Doty’s framing of entrapment relied on traditional stereotypes of gay men, arguing that, ‘the tendency of homosexuals to be promiscuous and seek pick-ups – a tendency recognized even by the gay writer Donald Webster Cory, in his book “The Homosexual in America” – makes them particularly vulnerable to police entrapment’.²⁵⁶ In contrast, having previously recruited respectable allies – in the form of the New York Civil Liberties Union – that could also speak on their behalf, the MSNY was able to encourage a more balanced framing of these clean-up operations and subsequent operational changes in NYPD procedure.²⁵⁷ Given the citation of both the NYCLU and Leitsch in coverage of the subsequent decision to formally ban

²⁵² Dick Leitsch to Dear Ladies, 6 September 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

²⁵³ Leitsch to Dear Ladies.

²⁵⁴ Leitsch to Dear Ladies.

²⁵⁵ ‘State Aids Clean-up of Taverns in City’, *New York Times*, 14 October 1959, p. 50; ‘2 More Bars Closed: Total of 12 Shut Down in State Clean-Up Drive’, *New York Times*, 31 October 1959, p. 47; Joseph Lelyveld, ‘Time Sq. Arcade Goes Respectable: But Transit Authority Goes Ahead on Plans for Wall’, *New York Times*, 7 March 1964, p. 24.

²⁵⁶ Doty, p. 33.

²⁵⁷ Eric Pace, ‘Times Sq. Cleanup Brings A Protest: Arrest of Deviates Scored by Civil Liberties Union’, *New York Times*, 18 March 1966, p. 42.

entrapment practices in May 1966, it is clear that homophile campaigns had successfully helped to reframe harsh police practices as ineffective and, in some cases, immoral.²⁵⁸

Consequently, when Leitsch claimed that the gay community had been 'taken aback' by recent clean-up operations, but would 'vote 100 per cent for Lindsay next time' if the Mayor and Leary continued to act in 'good faith', his praise can be seen as an attempt to build on hard fought gains rather than praising homophobic leadership.²⁵⁹ Indeed, while this episode obviously did not revolutionise police-community relations, it is clear from private correspondence that limited gains were made, with Leitsch joking to one friend in October 1966 that 'the bar situation is almost getting out of hand. There is practically a gay bar on every corner in New York City now, and everybody seems to be having a ball'.²⁶⁰ Indeed, alongside similar gains in their campaign to prevent the SLA closing down bars that served gay men and women, this reduction in police repression, according to Randolfe Wicker, meant that by 1967 there were 'half a dozen private clubs in New York, chartered by the state, run by homosexuals for homosexuals and not harassed by the police if they are orderly'.²⁶¹ Furthermore, MSNY was aware of the fragility of these gains and advised members to consider candidates' attitudes on these issues in local and state elections.²⁶²

Often appealing to the self-interest of the heterosexual majority rather than the inherent rights and virtues of the gay and lesbian community, however, homophile framing was certainly not without flaws. Writing to the editor of the Long Island *Suffolk County News*, Leitsch argued that:

Entrapment is an ugly thing, and it is a social danger far more harmful to the community than homosexual conduct. You can turn your back on the homosexual, even if he is performing fellatio on Main Street, but police entrapment can ruin anyone's life: yours, [...] your clergyman's or anyone's [...] Once police entrapment becomes prevalent in a community, once it is

²⁵⁸ Pace, 'Policemen Forbidden to Entrap Homosexuals to Make Arrests', p. 36.

²⁵⁹ Pace, 'Policemen Forbidden to Entrap Homosexuals to Make Arrests', p. 36.

²⁶⁰ Dick Leitsch to Nancy Garden, 1 October 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12; This optimism was reflected in later coverage: Murray Schumach, 'Morals: On the Third Sex', *New York Times*, 7 May 1967, section 4: The News of the Week in Review, p. E5.

²⁶¹ Schumach.

²⁶² *Elections, 1966*, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

accepted, no-one is safe. An unscrupulous policeman can make a case against anyone.²⁶³

On the one hand, this narrative proved useful when attempting to recruit outside allies such as the ACLU, who felt in 1957 that it ‘was not within the province of the Union to evaluate the social validity of laws aimed at the suppression or elimination of homosexuals’, but did agree to take on police brutality cases because ‘homosexuals, like members of other socially heretical or deviant groups, are vulnerable to official persecution, denial of due process, and entrapment’.²⁶⁴ While leading to important gains, however, this framing failed to challenge the assumption that homosexuality was, at its core, a problem. Indeed, having engaged with the gay and lesbian community on such terms, it was perhaps not surprising that ACLU statements in defence of that community used similar frames, with the New York branch telling *New York Times* crime beat reporter Eric Pace that, ‘it is not a crime to be a “degenerate, derelict or alcoholic” [...] Surely our police have enough to do in enforcing the criminal law not to need to spend their energies enforcing laws that don’t exist’.²⁶⁵ What this framing revealed – whether put forward by the mainstream media or homophile activists themselves – was the way in which gay men and women were often not considered to be part of mainstream audiences. Consequently, whether making positive appeals to majority self-interest or raising the spectre of a shadowy and dangerous gay world, the gay and lesbian community was consistently framed as an alien ‘other’ to be pitied, feared, or tolerated, but never seen as ‘one of us’.

II.iii

The continued reference to gay men and women as ‘perverts’, ‘inverts’, ‘deviates’, or simply ‘them’, was certainly designed to accentuate this psychic distance between the subjects of

²⁶³ Dick Leitsch to The Editor, *Suffolk County News*, 8 November 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

²⁶⁴ Dal MacIntire [Pseudonym of Jim Kepner], “‘Tangents, News and Views’”, *ONE Magazine*, April 1957’, in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s’ Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 173–77.

²⁶⁵ Aryeh Neier, as cited in Pace, ‘Times Sq. Cleanup Brings A Protest’.

news stories and their audience.²⁶⁶ The inclusion of so many different terms, however, demonstrates how mainstream prejudices and journalistic style could overlap. When challenged by MSNY member Clayton Montgomery over his usage of ‘queer’, ‘deviate’, and ‘pervert’ in a recent review, *New York Post* theatre critic Richard Watts replied that, ‘it is unreadably monotonous to keep employing the one word, “homosexual”, repetitiously, and I have tried to find alternative variations simply as a matter of prose style’.²⁶⁷ Claiming that these terms had been used by English reviewers – the play having started in London before moving to New York – and that he ‘thought they were acceptable’, Watts’ letter to Montgomery highlights the ignorance with which many approached the subject of homosexuality. However, telling Montgomery that ‘I don’t much like them either, and, if you could provide me with a couple of preferable synonyms, I’ll not only substitute them in my coming pieces but will be grateful to you’, Watts’ letter also highlights the important role that homophile activists could play in shaping coverage of a relatively new topic.²⁶⁸ Recognising the importance of this exchange, the next letter came directly from Leitsch as MSNY President who provided a thorough explanation as to why ‘to refer to a homosexual as a “pervert” is like calling Martin Luther King a “non-white”’, that ““Deviate fails because it lacks specificity”, and that ““Queer”, like “pansy” or “fruit” is the homosexual’s equivalent of “nigger” and certainly has no place in the *New York Post*, though the [*New York*] *Daily News* may well make full use of it’.²⁶⁹ Despite having run into similar issues when writing the MSNY’s newsletter, Leitsch told Watts that, ‘the simple fact is that there is no synonym for homosexual [...Unless] we want to offend, or to hurt feelings, we’re stuck with “homosexual”, unless we can substitute the adjective “gay”, which is the only acceptable one of which I can think’.²⁷⁰ Having described himself in private correspondence as ‘screaming for equal rights for faggots’ and referred to of other homophile leaders as ‘two or three old aunties who seem to use the organization as a front for cruising activities’, Leitsch’s insistence on the use of ‘homosexual’ or ‘gay’ in media

²⁶⁶ Helmer, pp. 85–6; ‘The Homosexuals’; Webster Schott, ‘In Lesbos’, *New York Times*, 12 November 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, p. 49.

²⁶⁷ Richard Watts to Clayton Montgomery, 6 August 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

²⁶⁸ Watts to Montgomery.

²⁶⁹ Dick Leitsch to Richard Watts, 4 October 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

²⁷⁰ Leitsch to Watts.

coverage is a clear indication of the power he and others in MSNY saw in public naming.²⁷¹ Indeed, several months later, MSNY member Renee Cafiero wrote to *TIME* claiming that she ‘quarrel[ed] violently with your use of the word “deviate”’, telling editors that it was ‘a maliciously negative term, implying that anyone who is not grossly horrified by the homosexual is himself a deviate’.²⁷² Mirroring Leitsch’s earlier letter, Cafiero argued that a desire to vary terms was understandable:

But just as in the Negro Civil Rights Movement [where] the word Negro must be used in every other sentence, so in material about homosexuality must the word homosexual be used in every other sentence, even if it is a long word that the typesetters get tired of setting.²⁷³

In doing so, it is clear that homophile activists recognised that, ‘names can be more than tags; they can convey powerful imagery’.²⁷⁴ While there may have been considerable discussion about what terms such as homophile meant within the movement, and private language often varied ‘from time to place to class’, the interaction between activists and the media suggests that they were both interested and involved in the ‘political exercise’ of naming that included, ‘proposing, imposing, and accepting names’.²⁷⁵ For instance, when describing the Student Homophile League (SHL) in 1968, Charles Alverson of the *Wall Street Journal* informed his audience that ‘Homophile is a coined word that indicates the group consists of both homosexuals and heterosexuals who support the homosexuals’ aims’.²⁷⁶ In doing so, it improved upon earlier coverage in the *Times* that had drawn letters of protest from SHL leaders.²⁷⁷ Indeed, while not commonly used within national magazines such as *Life* and *TIME*,

²⁷¹ Dick Leitsch to Vincent Damon, 7 June 1965, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

²⁷² Cafiero to *TIME* Magazine.

²⁷³ Cafiero to *TIME* Magazine.

²⁷⁴ Ben L. Martin, ‘From Negro to Black to African American: The Power of Names and Naming’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 106 (1991), 83–107 (p. 83).

²⁷⁵ Dal MacIntire [Pseudonym of Jim Kepner], ‘“Tangents, News and Views”, *ONE Magazine*, December 1957’, in *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s’ Pioneer Gay Press Journalism*, ed. by Jim Kepner (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), pp. 209–16 (p. 213); Ben L. Martin, p. 83; For the debate about the meaning of ‘homophile’ and how it differed on the East and West Coasts see: Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s’ Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1998), p. 406 fn 6; ECHO, *The Homosexual Citizen in the Great Society*, September 1965
<<http://www.rainbowhistory.org/pdf/echoprogram.pdf>> [accessed 5 May 2014].

²⁷⁶ Charles Alverson, ‘A Minority’s Plea: U.S. Homosexuals Gain in Trying to Persuade Society to Accept Them’, *Wall Street Journal*, 17 July 1968, pp. 1, 23 (p. 23).

²⁷⁷ Stephen Donaldson, ‘Letters: Homosexuals: Rights and Wrongs’, *New York Times*, 3 December 1967, section The New York Times Magazine, p. SM 32.

it is no coincidence that the term 'homophile' appeared most often in articles that had been produced after reporters had spent time working with groups such as the MSNY.²⁷⁸

This process of engagement, however, was not equal. While some, such as Watts, were seemingly responsive to the appeals of homophile activists, others continued to refer to gay men and women in ways that denied them legitimacy and acted to 'other' their lives and their goals.²⁷⁹ Even when included in news stories, the frames employed by mainstream journalists often meant that positive statements were immediately contradicted and invalidated by testimony from medical and police officials.²⁸⁰ In Doty's article, for instance, homophile claims that gay men were 'just another minority' and that homosexuality was 'an incurable, congenital disorder', were immediately followed by the caveat that such ideas were 'disputed by the bulk of scientific evidence'.²⁸¹ Describing homophiles as 'militant' and psychiatrists as 'analytical', Doty framed his article in a way that clearly communicated his doubts about the legitimacy of homophile claims.²⁸² Nor was Doty alone. Writers at *Newsweek*, for example, included the voice of Dr. Wardell B. Pomeroy, an MSNY board member, in their June 1964 article entitled 'The Third Sex'.²⁸³ Again, however, his positive claims that current scientific studies were 'lopsided' because they focused only on those in therapy and that 'Homosexuality is not an illness, but a preference', were sandwiched between homophobic commentaries from Dr. Bieber and Abram Blau, a psychiatrist at the local Mount Sinai Hospital in New York who claimed that 'kleptomania [...] could be called a preference for taking things, rather than paying for them, but it's still a psychiatric problem'.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, even when avoiding such explicit rejections of homophile authority, media framing could employ more subtle approaches that nevertheless delegitimized homophile positions. Writing in April 1966, for example, Peter Bart claimed that the legal defence fund established by NACHO would be

²⁷⁸ Welch; 'Essay: The Homosexual in America'.

²⁷⁹ Schott, 'In Lesbos'.

²⁸⁰ Francis X. Clines, 'L.I. Homosexuals to Get Legal Aid', *New York Times*, 24 July 1967, p. 19; Steven V. Roberts, 'Homosexuals in Revolt: Nation's Homosexuals Show Militancy in Revolt Against Alleged Persecution', *New York Times*, 24 August 1970, pp. 1, 28 (p. 28).

²⁸¹ Doty, p. 33.

²⁸² Doty, p. 33.

²⁸³ 'The Third Sex', *Newsweek*, 1 June 1964, p. 76.

²⁸⁴ 'The Third Sex', p. 76.

used ‘to fight against “restrictive” sexual laws’.²⁸⁵ By purposefully including the word ‘restrictive’ within quotation marks, Bart was practicing a common technique that was used by journalists to undermine homophile claims.²⁸⁶

Denying credibility to homophile groups who actively challenged this narrative and sought to present gay men and women – rather than society at large – as the victims of an un-American and dangerous influence, this process was tied to media frames that consistently portrayed homosexuality as a problem that needed to be solved. For instance, paraphrasing Bieber, who had been established earlier in the article as a leading authority on homosexuality, Doty’s discussion actively sought to combat the very notion that gay men constituted a minority, ‘since their minority status is based on illness rather than on racial or religious factors’.²⁸⁷ Indeed, directly citing Socarides, the article also argued that, ‘the homosexual is ill, and anything that tends to hide that fact reduces his chances of seeking and obtaining treatment’.²⁸⁸ Warning of the dangers of ‘normal abnormality’, Doty framed homosexuality in a way that communicated to readers that ‘assiduously propagated’ homophile claims were not only disingenuous, they were actively harmful.²⁸⁹

The erasure and distortion of homophile voices in coverage, therefore, can be seen as a reaction to what some saw as an unhealthy pride in a negative condition and a misplaced resistance to ‘cure’. With the word ‘gay’ often appearing in quotation marks – a policy formalised at the *New York Times* in 1975 – media framing of homosexuality actively attempted to counter and discredit positive displays of pride by gay men and women.²⁹⁰ Indeed, during the 1967 CBS documentary ‘The Homosexuals’, Socarides informed TV audiences that ‘the whole idea of saying the “happy homosexual” is to [...] create a mythology

²⁸⁵ Peter Bart, ‘War Role Sought for Homosexuals’, *New York Times*, 17 April 1966, p. 12 (p. 12).

²⁸⁶ This was also present in wire press coverage: United Press International, ‘Homosexuals Stage Protest in Capital’, p. 42.

²⁸⁷ Doty, p. 33.

²⁸⁸ Doty, p. 33.

²⁸⁹ Doty, p. 33.

²⁹⁰ For background on this decision see: Alwood, pp. 162–4; Joseph C. Goulden, *Fit to Print: A.M. Rosenthal and His Times* (Secaucus: L. Stuart, 1988), pp. 396–8; Max Frankel, *The Times of My Life and My Life With the Times* (New York: Dell, 2000), pp. 473–4; This policy is still in effect in some conservative outlets, such as the American Family Association: Mary Ann Akers, ‘The Sleuth: Christian Site’s Ban on “G” Word Sends Homosexual to Olympics’, *Washington Post*, 1 July 2008 <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/sleuth/2008/07/christian_sites_ban_on_g_word.html> [accessed 27 July 2015].

about the nature of homosexuality'.²⁹¹ This emphasis on framing homosexuality as a preventable, curable problem was even clearer in subsequent analysis from narrator Mike Wallace, who claimed:

It should be pointed out that Dr. Socarides' views are not universally held. There is a smaller group who do not consider homosexuality an illness at all. Instead they regard it as a deviation within the realm of normalcy, but the thrust of diagnosis and treatment in recent years has been mainly along the lines that Socarides details and although the prognosis for cure is uncertain, studies indicate that as many as one-third of those who seek help eventually become heterosexual.²⁹²

Similar frames were also used in coverage of a report by the New York Academy of Medicine's Committee on Public Health in 1964. Highly homophobic in content, the report was heavily cited in mainstream coverage, with the *Times* reporting its charge that 'homosexuals have gone beyond the plane of defensiveness and now argue that their deviancy is "a desirable, noble, preferable way of life"', while the *Wall Street Journal* printed its referral to homophiles and other openly gay men and women as 'the aggressive homosexual[s]'.²⁹³

When it came to framing activism in the 1970s, however, this early emphasis on 'militant' and 'aggressive' homophile activism was often absent. For instance, describing the CSLDP that took place on the first anniversary of the Stonewall riot, Lacey Fosburgh argued that 'the passive climate of guilt and inferiority that has long subdued the homosexual world is changing'.²⁹⁴ Writing that 'not long ago the scene would have been unthinkable', Fosburgh claimed that the Parade demonstrated a new 'spirit of militancy and determination' that had emerged 'since a battle on June 29, 1969, between a crowd of homosexuals and policemen who raided the Stonewall Inn'.²⁹⁵ Indeed, it is easy to see the seeds of the 'Stonewall Myth' in *New York Times* coverage that called the riots 'the Boston Tea Party of the "gay revolution"' while claiming that they represented the 'first time within anyone's memory' that lesbian and

²⁹¹ Charles Socarides in 'The Homosexuals'.

²⁹² Mike Wallace in 'The Homosexuals'.

²⁹³ Trumbull, p. 1; 'Homosexuality Is an Illness and Is Curable In Some Cases, Major Doctors' Group Says', p. 7.

²⁹⁴ Lacey Fosburgh, 'The "Gay" People Demand Their Rights', *New York Times*, 5 July 1970, p. 100 (p. 100).

²⁹⁵ Fosburgh, 'The "Gay" People Demand Their Rights', p. 100; Lacey Fosburgh, 'Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park', *New York Times*, 29 June 1970, pp. 1, 29 (p. 29).

gay men had ‘fought back’ against police brutality.²⁹⁶ While accurately reflecting the view of a visible minority that placed an emphasis on coming out and gay pride, however, such statements served to draw a false dichotomy between pre- and post-Stonewall activism that ignored how an increasingly open gay and lesbian community had inspired so much fear earlier in the decade. Claiming that there was ‘a new mood among the nation’s homosexuals’, writers in the early 1970s overemphasised the extent to which the post-Stonewall radicalism of gay liberation differed from the actions and feelings not only of militant homophiles, but also those men and women whose overt participation in the gay and lesbian subculture had helped foreground the issue of homosexuality throughout the 1960s.²⁹⁷

In creating this dichotomy, the *Times*’ was undoubtedly aided by gay and lesbian activists who exaggerated the differences between their activism and that of the generation before them. This process was not unusual. Indeed, remembering how she and Barbara Gittings had pushed against the conservatism of other DOB leaders, Kay Lahusen has argued that, ‘the new wave frequently tries to put the last wave out of business’.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, while an important rhetorical and political device, the emphasis that gay liberation activists placed on coming out and gay pride served to reinforce the ‘mythology’ that ‘before Stonewall gays lived furtive, closeted, miserable lives, while after Stonewall gays could be free and open’.²⁹⁹ As the previous chapter demonstrated, the lack of regular gay beat reporters and minimal initial coverage given to the Stonewall riots themselves, meant that gay liberation activists were able to have a considerable impact on the framing of Stonewall’s importance to the community. Through an examination of this coverage, it is clear that the nature of the parades and the rhetoric that surrounded them helped to retrospectively cement the riots as a landmark event in LGBT history. Narratives on the march – including those from new MSNY President Michael Kotis – placed Stonewall at the centre of what many called the ‘new pride’ in the

²⁹⁶ Steven V. Roberts, p. 28; For a concise debunking of these myths see Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, ‘Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth’, *American Sociological Review*, 71.5 (2006), 724–51.

²⁹⁷ Steven V. Roberts, p. 1.

²⁹⁸ Kay Lahusen, as cited in *Making Gay History: The Half Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights*, ed. by Eric Marcus (New York: Perennial, 2002), p. 136.

²⁹⁹ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, ‘Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of Pre-Stonewall Lesbian History’, *Radical History Review*, 1995 (1995), 59–79 (p. 66).

community.³⁰⁰ However, claiming that ‘the main thing we have to understand [...] is that we’re different, but we’re not inferior’, Kotis’ message mirrored slogans on homophile banners and placards that had demanded first-class citizenship for all, regardless of sexuality five years previously.³⁰¹ While it would be wrong to argue that positive gay and lesbian identity in the 1960s was identical to the militancy of gay liberation, which saw coming out and pride in gay identity as a political statement, it is important to recognise how the nature of news construction made the self-affirmation of pre-Stonewall activists less likely to gain, and retain, coverage unless it was presented in a way that suited mainstream, rather than homophile, prerogatives. Furthermore, while later activists would reject this reconstructed vision of respectability as assimilationist, and instead adopt what they believed to be a more authentic and self-affirming identity based on shared minority values, this should not be used to deny or discredit the radicalism of this earlier challenge. While their more radical successors have rightly criticised the compromises made by these earlier groups, it should be acknowledged that such radicalism may not have been possible without them. As Armstrong and Cragge have argued, ‘the Stonewall story is [...] better viewed as an achievement of gay liberation rather than as a literal account of its origins’.³⁰²

Conclusion

Often lacking insider access to the political and economic machines that affect their daily lives, minority pressure groups rely on outside forces, most often the nebulous force of public opinion, to pressure officials into accepting the legitimacy of their proposals. When doing so, activists often engage in a purposeful and conscious negotiation between the aims and desires of those they claim to represent and the stereotypes and prejudices of the mainstream audience they hope to convince. While common to a range of minority movements, this process came under increasing scrutiny as the 1960s progressed, when more radical activists

³⁰⁰ Michael Kotis, as cited in Fosburgh, ‘Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park’, p. 29.

³⁰¹ Michael Kotis, as cited in Fosburgh, ‘Thousands of Homosexuals Hold A Protest Rally in Central Park’, p. 29.

³⁰² Armstrong and Cragge, p. 725.

began searching for and articulating what they saw as a more authentic and inclusive vision of community identity and aspirations.

For instance, whether shifting the allegiances of race beat reporters or making certain actions more likely to gain coverage, the notion that nonviolent demonstrators were facing off against a powerful and barbaric enemy deeply influenced civil rights coverage. However, as this chapter demonstrated, the good-versus-evil narrative that emerged in Southern coverage was problematic because of the way that it emphasised the role of whites, downplayed African American agency, sanctified nonviolent direct action, and focused attention on a small number of places, organisations, and individuals. Furthermore, by narrowing the confines of protest, this framing of Southern activism disproportionately affected militant organisations such as SNCC, who, as ‘a revolutionary action agency dedicated to the proposition that racism is only one symptom of a deeper sickness at the heart of our society’, were always likely to clash with mainstream movement frames.³⁰³ Out-resourced by older, more established organisations, SNCC was not able to control how the civil rights movement was framed to the American public. Instead, dominant narratives – and SNCC’s early conformity to these narratives – helped frame SNCC’s rejection of acceptable dissent as something that broke forth in the mid-1960s rather than a gradual evolution in the organisation’s *modus operandi* that grew from the everyday functioning of SNCC activists. Conforming to white, Northern interpretations of what that movement was, mainstream media framing of the civil rights movement was never likely to be responsive to SNCC’s more militant demands. As Charlie Cobb claimed in his vision for SNCC’s Communication Section after taking over from Julian Bond in 1965, ‘what we have to say is accepted by white people only to the degree in which it satisfy’s their vision’.³⁰⁴ Indeed, romanticised movement histories, which view the loss of liberal media support as the result of Black Power fanaticism, ignore the inherent tensions between the paternalism of the mainstream press and SNCC’s conception of the black freedom struggle.³⁰⁵ While SNCC and

³⁰³ Bennett Jr., ‘SNCC: Rebels with a Cause’, p. 146.

³⁰⁴ Charles Cobb, *Towards a Theory for Communications*, n.d., p. 320, Series A.IV.417, Reel 11 Slide 320, SNCC Papers.

³⁰⁵ This notion that Black Power drove a wedge between the movement and a liberal media is particularly common in narratives focused on Great Society liberalism: Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Gareth Davies, *From*

the civil rights movement in general were beginning to ask harder questions of white America, this growth was almost entirely ignored by mainstream journalists who had little personal connection to the lives of African Americans. Consequently, by Carmichael's first press conference as Chairman, activists and journalists were largely talking past each other, with Carmichael remembering 'how little they seemed to understand, as though they were stuck in 1960 with the student sit-ins and we were speaking in unknown tongues'.³⁰⁶

By 1968, even the Kerner Commission – which entirely rejected Black Power as a philosophy – recognised that dominant media narratives had created a situation whereby the African American community increasingly viewed mainstream publications 'as mouthpieces of the "power structure"'.³⁰⁷ While comparisons with Malcolm X would evoke fear in white Americans, SNCC increasingly believed that it was "'time out" for nice words' with Carmichael arguing in Chicago in July 1966 that 'we have to say things nobody else in this country is willing to say'.³⁰⁸ Indeed, in what Carmichael calls 'the Malcolm effect', heavy criticism in the press could actively encourage African American participation with people attending conferences he organised for the United Front in Washington D.C. in 1968, 'because they felt instinctively that anyone the media hated so much had to be doing something right'.³⁰⁹

This new disregard for positive coverage caused Carl Rowan to argue in *Ebony* in November 1966 that 'the public relations element virtually disappeared from the civil rights movement'.³¹⁰ Praising how Whitney Young had 'been so shrewd at making whites feel guilty about the Negro's plight', however, it is clear that when talking of the movement's 'public relations element', Rowan was referring to the restrictive public discourse dictated by the politics of civility that was aimed almost exclusively at a white audience.³¹¹ In doing so, Rowan mirrored the white centric nature of the mainstream press and fundamentally misunderstood

Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas Press, 1996).

³⁰⁶ Carmichael and Thelwell, p. 487.

³⁰⁷ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, p. 374.

³⁰⁸ 'Negro Rights and the American Future: A Symposium', *Negro Digest*, October 1966, pp. 18, 57–60 (p. 18).

³⁰⁹ Carmichael and Thelwell, pp. 642–3; Gordon Mantler, "'The Press Did You In': The Poor People's Campaign and the Mass Media', *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture*, 3 (2010), 33–54.

³¹⁰ Carl T. Rowan, 'Crisis in Civil Rights Leadership', *Ebony*, November 1966, pp. 27–37 (p. 28).

³¹¹ Rowan, p. 28.

the purpose of Black Power rhetoric which, SNCC argued, was that ‘for once, black people are going to use the words they want to use – not just the words whites want to hear. And they will do this no matter how often the press tries to stop the use of the slogan by equating it with racism and separatism’.³¹²

Among those that espoused Black Power, then, there was a growing feeling that the psychological needs of African Americans were more important than superficial programmes which required the support of the mainstream media and the patronage of white liberals. As Julian Bond has argued, ‘it becomes less a matter of doing something as of preparing people psychologically for something’.³¹³ Consequently, rhetoric became an important tool for the organisation in its efforts to raise black consciousness. Indeed, paraphrasing Carmichael in an article for *Ramparts* magazine in April 1967, Eldridge Cleaver argued that ‘one of the most important aspects of the struggle for Black Power was the right to define’.³¹⁴

Similar struggles occurred in the homophile movement. Viewed through the prism of later radicalism, it is easy to see why homophiles, dressed in markers of respectability dictated by a white, heterosexist society could be seen as somehow betraying or denying a more authentic identity based on group solidarity. However, while there is a tendency to see respectability as a form of dress that was enforced by mainstream society, it can also be viewed as a strategy that was purposefully adopted by these activists to combat media frames that denied any credibility to gay men and women to speak about their own lives. As Tanisha Ford has argued in relation to the sit-in protests of 1960, appropriating markers of respectability can be viewed as a radical act when undertaken by groups that had been forcibly excluded from such categories.³¹⁵ Furthermore, while a future generation of activists may have rejected bourgeois standards of dress and behaviour, the inclusion of gay men and women within those standards has had a much longer and greater reaching legacy for the gay and lesbian community at large.

³¹² Communication Section, ‘No Title’, n.d., Series A.VII.1, Reel 13 Slide 627, SNCC Papers.

³¹³ Julian Bond, as cited in Stoper, p. 279.

³¹⁴ Eldridge Cleaver, ‘My Father and Stokely Carmichael’, *Ramparts*, April 1967, Series A.VIII.134, Reel 20 Slide 882, SNCC Papers.

³¹⁵ Ford.

Acknowledging the distaste with which many in America still approached the topic, mainstream coverage was most commonly framed as a response to a new wave of increasingly coordinated homophile visibility, which had unbalanced a long-held tradition of ignoring a disparate community. Given such hostility, it is easier to understand the praise that accompanied more positive narratives that – to more modern viewers – still appear highly homophobic. Furthermore, this praise was rarely without caveat and was often designed to encourage and influence gains that, while meagre by modern standards, were significant to homophiles operating in a much more oppressive atmosphere. Despite limited success, it is worth noting that the struggle to shift mainstream framing of homosexuality in the US press is an issue of ongoing concern that represents a process of gradual change rather than rapid revolution.³¹⁶

As Melissa Wooten has demonstrated in relation to the United Negro College Fund during the 1940s, framing practices in such a hostile atmosphere often involved compromises that would outrage a later generation of activists.³¹⁷ Aimed at an audience that didn't share many – if any – of their assumptions and attitudes towards homosexuality, homophile activists often framed their rhetoric and activities in a way that aimed to close this psychic gap. In doing so, homophiles were focused on the 'centrality' of their framing activities that, Benford and Snow argue, dealt with the resonance of the belief in question to the potential audience.³¹⁸ Viewed through this notion of resonance, it is easier to understand why homophile rhetoric often focused on the wider effects of repressive attitudes when speaking to mainstream audiences. This is not to excuse narratives that served to reinforce the notion that the oppression of gay men and women in-and-of-itself was not grounds for public outcry or action. However, any critique of the way in which homophiles framed their activism also needs to recognise the considerable barriers erected by mainstream media practices that denied early projections of pride and celebrations of diversity in the community.

³¹⁶ 'GLAAD Media Reference Guide - 9th Edition', GLAAD <<http://www.glaad.org/reference>> [accessed 5 July 2015].

³¹⁷ Melissa Wooten, 'Soliciting Elites: The Framing Activities of the United Negro College Fund', *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 15 (2010), 369–91.

³¹⁸ Benford and Snow, p. 621.

As the overlap between 'conservative' homophiles who organised respectable pickets and 'militant' homophiles who rejected the sickness theory demonstrates, homophile strategies took different forms in different periods and were often actively pushing at the boundaries of what mainstream society deemed to be acceptable dissent.³¹⁹ Indeed, while admitting that a British play in February 1966 included a number of gay characters, Leitsch questioned whether the homophobic framing of these characters warranted the strong recommendation it had been given by the MSW's newsletter *The Homosexual Citizen*. Aware of the changing landscape that homophiles had helped to facilitate, Leitsch warned that further involvement with such framings of homosexuality meant, 'we may well find ourselves deploring tomorrow what we said today'.³²⁰ Interaction with media frames, then, was an evolving process that cannot be rigidly defined into 'waves' or 'phases' of activism.

³¹⁹ Schiller and Rosenberg.

³²⁰ Dick Leitsch to Lily Hansen, 16 February 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

Conclusion

‘Journalistic work is almost always performed under difficult conditions of one kind or another, and most of the important imperfections [...] reside in the structures of the news media’
(Herbert Gans, 2003)¹

‘The lens through which we receive [media] images is not neutral but evinces the power and point of view of the political and economic elites who operate and focus it. And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible’
(William A. Gamson and others, 1992)²

Barbie Zelizer has argued that the inter-disciplinary nature of journalism history has pulled the subject in different directions, ‘making it a stepchild within a number of largely indifferent family set-ups’.³ As chapter one highlighted, nowhere is this indifference more apparent than within the field of history. Although a common historical resource, newspaper data has suffered from a more general aversion to methodological engagement within the discipline that has prevented historians from discussing and analysing the specific failures in this record. The same, however, cannot be said of research in other fields. As Christopher Anderson’s study of 564 articles within the *Journal of Sociology* and *American Sociology Review* has shown, the 1970s saw a shift away from critiquing journalistic practice towards embracing media data as the subject of empirical study.⁴ Evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of this data, some scholars sought to test how representative the media record actually was, while others tried to create models that could explain – and hopefully predict – what events were most likely to gain coverage and why.⁵

¹ Herbert J. Gans, *Democracy and the News* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 45; See also Abe Peck, *Uncovering the Sixties: The Life and Times of the Underground Press*, 2nd edn (New York: Carol Publishing Group, 1991), p. iii.

² William A. Gamson and others, ‘Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 18 (1992), 373–93 (p. 374).

³ Barbie Zelizer, *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2004), p. 86.

⁴ Christopher Anderson, ‘Empirical Passions: The Survey Graphic, the Progressive Movement, & the Prehistory Data Journalism’ (presented at the Research Seminar Series, School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds, 2015).

⁵ Roberto Franzosi, ‘The Press as a Source of Socio-Historical Data: Issues in the Methodology of Data Collection From Newspapers’, *Historical Methods*, 20.1 (1987), 5–16; Gaye Tuchman, *Making News: A Study in the Construction of Reality* (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1978).

This research is useful to historians seeking to understand the logistical processes that guided mainstream coverage, and can help to challenge historical exceptionalism by placing particular movements or events in a wider context. As this thesis has demonstrated, however, while media logistics affected coverage in a myriad of ways, they did so in a way that intersected with human agency and defies quantitative study. Routinisation, therefore, can never fully explain the process of news production because it places ‘organizational constraints’ over ‘the values, ethics, roles, and norms of individuals’.⁶ In doing so, Zelizer argues, there is a danger of creating ‘versions of how journalism works [that are] overgeneralized beyond their applicability in the real world of news’.⁷ This heterogeneity, then, requires historians to think more critically about the limitations of the media data they use, but it also necessitates a sustained commitment to investigate the process by which such data is produced. By utilising data from the archives of *Newsweek* and the *New York Times* – as well as the private papers, memoirs, and oral interviews of other journalists and editors – this thesis has demonstrated the importance of viewing journalists and editors as individuals, rather than faceless servants of monolithic institutions. Furthermore, by exposing the personal and institutional motivations of those with the power to decide what was ‘fit to print’, this study has highlighted the need to resist claims by certain publications that their records are more complete or objective than others. Instead, each outlet had its own unique atmosphere, with its own set of rules that set the parameters of its coverage.

Dividing news production into four separate but overlapping sets of practices, chapters two through five demonstrated how the social composition of the mainstream media and its audience could influence the kind of coverage these processes produced when applied to different communities, events, and rhetoric. Indeed, while each mainstream publication maintained its own unique atmosphere, all were dominated by white, heteronormative men who were a product of a highly patriarchal, homophobic, and racist society. Serving similarly privileged audiences, with similar prejudices, journalists and editors reacted differently to the civil rights and homophile movements of the 1960s than they did to other social movements, undermining sociological frameworks that attempt to universalise the process of accessing and

⁶ Zelizer, p. 63.

⁷ Zelizer, pp. 80–1.

influencing media narratives. Importantly, however, these chapters also demonstrated the desire and capacity of social activists to influence the news-making process and noted how the relationship between news gatherer and news producer was often symbiotic. Having questioned the authenticity of news reports and examined the processes by which events did, or did not, make it into the news, these chapters aimed to understand the role that media logistics played in the emergence of flawed popular narratives that continue to hold power despite decades of revisionist reinterpretation.

Focusing on the processes by which editors and journalists designated certain communities or event types as newsworthy highlights how the mainstream media exhibited significant geographic biases that affected each movement differently. Concentrated in the urban North, mainstream outlets were slow to pick up on the growing black freedom struggle in the Jim Crow South. Investing more heavily in coverage after the *Brown* decision and federal involvement in Little Rock, Arkansas, the shifting priority given to the Southern movement was a response to, but also encouraged, growing activism and demonstrates how the symbiosis between the movement and the media has influenced common periodisations of the movement. Furthermore, committing greater resources to the South than many other newspapers combined, publications such as the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and the *Washington Post* often covered the Southern movement earlier and in much greater detail than other outlets and can give a misleading impression of the media's commitment to the civil rights movement and the African American community more generally. Consequently, while useful as a source for information, their record is not indicative of the information many millions of Americans would have received from more localised papers across the country and should never be equated with public opinion or interest.

On the other hand, this praise for mainstream coverage should not overlook the racial disparities evidenced in the emerging race beat. Despite heavy praise in subsequent histories, the beat was largely confined to the Deep South and ignored similar struggles in the urban North. Indeed, while news editors expressed alarm as Northern cities erupted in violence during the mid-to-late 1960s, Jeanne Theoharis argues that this surprise was 'the surprise of

intransigence – a wilful shock’.⁸ Focusing specifically on the Watts Riot of 1965, Theoharis claims that white Angelinos used surprise as ‘a way to deny the longstanding nature and significance of those grievances – to erase a pattern of racial struggle within the city’.⁹ Mirrored in other major cities across the US, this equation of violent protest with Northern activism is crucial to understanding the emergence of the declension hypothesis in early narratives. Contributing to the rigid periodization of the movement and the decade itself, Dan Berger argues that this mainstream narrative creates a division between ‘a noble southern movement that had violence done to it and a misguided northern movement that was itself violent’.¹⁰

Emerging in the latter half of the decade and focused on the structural and institutionalised racism that typified Northern cities, Black Power was always likely to face an uphill battle for positive coverage, regardless of the actions and rhetoric it employed. Indeed, while commonly associated with a white backlash that undermined the gains of a previously ‘heroic period’ of civil rights activism, the shift in race beat coverage in the latter half of the 1960s can be seen in the wider context of Northern white priorities. Pollster Louis Harris, for instance, had published articles in *Newsweek* as early as 1964 that claimed that, ‘the root of this white minority backlash is the deep resentment that Negro pressure tactics, thought to be reserved for the white South, are now being turned on them’.¹¹ As Southern liberal Hodding Carter III of the Greenville, Mississippi, *Delta Democrat-Times* noted in 1968, ‘whether it is the Vietnam dissent or reaction to Stokely [Carmichael] or anything else, what much of the white community is actually doing is finding the handiest stick to use as a pretext for reacting to a thrust which has finally reached him’.¹² It is important, then, to avoid simplistic narratives that paint Northern papers as heroically exposing the lies and absences in Southern coverage. In reality, editors both North and South fulfilled much the same role for their local audiences.

⁸ Jeanne F. Theoharis, ‘“Alabama on Avalon”: Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black Protest in Los Angeles’, in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 27–54 (p. 50).

⁹ Theoharis, p. 50.

¹⁰ Dan Berger, ‘Rescuing Civil Rights from Black Power: Collective Memory and Saving the State in Twenty-First-Century Prosecutions of 1960s-Era Cases’, *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 3 (2009), 1–27 (p. 12).

¹¹ Louis Harris, ‘The “Backlash” Issue’, *Newsweek*, 13 July 1964, pp. 24, 27 (p. 27).

¹² Hodding Carter III, ‘Comment By Hodding Carter III’, in *The Black American and the Press*, ed. by Jack Lyle (Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie, 1968), pp. 38–41 (p. 49).

While this created vast differences in their approach to the Southern movement, the abandonment or increasingly negative tone of racial coverage in the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated that the Northern mainstream media was just as capable of replicating the racist prejudices of their audience as their segregationist counterparts.

The perceived need to please audiences also influenced coverage of the homophile movement. Fearing that their respectable middle-class audiences would react badly to the faintest mention of homosexuality, many mainstream papers and magazines suppressed stories relating to the large gay and lesbian communities that were an open secret in major cities such as New York. While discussion of gay characters or relationships in the latest play or novel was not uncommon in the review section of the *New York Times* or *TIME*, mainstream publications rarely went beyond euphemism when alluding to the gay and lesbian community and were extremely hesitant to classify homophile activism as 'news'. Indeed, the extension of First Amendment rights to an ever increasing array of sexually explicit material highlighted the cultural and social – rather than legal – underpinnings of this censorship in the mainstream press. Importantly, however, this censorship was not universally applied by all media in this period and scholars wishing to discover some of the earliest examples of homophile activism need to concentrate on local and independent outlets rather than the 'national' mainstream press.

Indeed, even when dealing with the mainstream press itself, it is often better to consider the coverage of outlets such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post* as local rather than national publications. Conceived of as a local problem, the gay and lesbian community of other cities across the nation – and the homophile activists who claimed to represent them – rarely appeared in these outlets. As such, the 'first draft' of gay and lesbian history created by these publications is disproportionately focused on the experience of men and women operating in New York City and other urban centres. Given that the most famous and recognised event in LGBT history took place only a few miles from mainstream outlets in Manhattan, this regionality has important repercussions for movement historiography. Indeed, in the absence of a unified and diverse national movement that could provide a record of its own history, any attempt to respond to Craig Loftin's call to 'declare an end to the gay

historiographical frontier for local urban case studies and write histories at the national and international levels' is further complicated by this localism.¹³ Consequently, the flaws within the record of mainstream outlets means that historians who wish to examine national narratives surrounding the homophile movement – and the gay and lesbian community more generally – may have to rely on a high number of localised news sources to do so.

This disproportionate focus on particular geographic areas, however, was not just the result of commercially or logistically motivated localism or the desire of a racist Northern press to ignore the problems in its own back yard. Instead, this focus on particular areas or communities could also be a function of the kinds of activism taking place. For instance, although concentrating on the civil rights movement in the South, not all states were treated equally. Interested in spectacular protests that could interest readers who had little personally invested in the movement, the mainstream press focused on areas of the South where demonstrations – and the segregationist violence they provoked – were at their height. The words 'Mississippi' and 'Negro', for example, appeared in combination in the *New York Times* almost as frequently during the 1960s as they had in the previous 110 years of the newspaper's existence – indelibly associating that state with a particular historical moment, while simultaneously creating a misleading impression of the Southern movement.¹⁴ Furthermore, although many Southern states received considerably more coverage in this time period than ever before, the intensity of that coverage was often much lower than that given to Mississippi and underwent different cycles of fatigue. With just over twenty per cent (1108/5078) of comparable articles, civil rights activity in South Carolina received significantly less coverage than that in Mississippi in the 1960s.¹⁵ Similarly, while 1964 was by far the most popular year for coverage of Mississippi's African American population by this simple metric, other states in the Deep South saw peaks in 1965 (Alabama, Louisiana), had far more stable

¹³ Craig M. Loftin, 'Los Angeles and the Closing of the Gay Historical Frontier', *Reviews in American History*, 37.1 (2009), 101–9.

¹⁴ These figures were found via a proquest search using the search term: (Mississippi AND Negro). Only articles, front-page articles, editorials and letters to the editor were included in the count. Searches with a wider parameter of documents produced very similar per centages. The searches are not case sensitive.

¹⁵ These figures were found via a proquest search using the search term: ("South Carolina" AND Negro). Only articles, front-page articles, editorials and letters to the editor were included in the count. Searches with a wider parameter of documents produced very similar per centages. The searches are not case sensitive.

coverage across the decade (South Carolina, West Virginia), or had already witnessed a peak in the 1950s (Arkansas).¹⁶ Even when talking of Southern coverage, therefore, it is important that historians realise the impact that the media's focus on a particular kind of activism can have on who, what, and where received coverage.

Almost identical patterns of coverage can be observed in the records of the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Washington Post*, reinforcing the notion of common media cycles in the mainstream press. Importantly, however, while patterns may have been the same, levels of coverage were not. Printing less than half the number of articles that featured 'Mississippi' and 'Negro' as the *New York Times*, the reduced coverage in the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times* can partly be explained by the shorter length of their newspapers; as Fishman has argued, 'the size of news staff is based on the amount of news space to be filled, not on the size of the community being covered, or on the amount of happenings journalists consider newsworthy'.¹⁷ Nevertheless, with over fifteen per cent (770) of the sampled *New York Times*' articles during the decade featuring on the front page, compared to less than eight per cent (176) of those in the *Los Angeles Times*, it is also clear that different mainstream outlets had different priorities when it came to news.¹⁸

Given that 1,000 (c. twenty per cent) of the 5,078 articles mentioning 'Mississippi' and 'Negro' in the *New York Times* during the 1960s were concentrated in the same year that SNCC brought in hundreds of white volunteers into the state for its 1964 Summer Project – and almost ten per cent (462) concentrated in just the three months (June-August) when these volunteers were actually present – it is clear that coverage in the *New York Times* correlated with a particular kind of activism. Importantly, while increased coverage was a function of racial bias in the media, the decision to include whites was a conscious strategy to raise the organisation's profile and provide protection for workers. Successful in the short term, however, this strategy unintentionally contributed to the notion that white volunteers were an

¹⁶ These figures were found via a proquest search using the search term: ("Relevant state" AND Negro). Only articles, front-page articles, editorials and letters to the editor were included in the count. Searches with a wider parameter of documents produced very similar per centages. The searches are not case sensitive.

¹⁷ Mark Fishman, *Manufacturing the News* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1980), p. 150.

¹⁸ At just over thirteen per cent, figures for the *Washington Post* were much closer and suggest that comparisons between the two papers may obscure wider differences.

integral part of the Southern movement and created a vision of interracial organising that simply was not realistic across much of the Deep South, never mind the country as a whole. The impact of this public image is even more important when considering the role that white involvement in the summers of 1963 and 1964 also played in the rise of Black Power within SNCC – particularly a feeling among African American staffers that the movement needed formal policies to protect and promote the gains made in cultivating local black leadership. Contributing to a disjunction between rhetoric and reality, the intersection of media and movement logistics would allow critics of Black Power to misrepresent the slogan as a fundamental break in SNCC's strategy, rather than a more honest articulation of what the movement required of its supposed allies and the role these allies should play in the black freedom struggle.

This focus on the spectacular had very different effects on the homophile movement. While small, the pickets of the mid-to-late 1960s continued to break records for the largest number of gay and lesbian people who had ever demonstrated for their rights. Attempting to convince readers of *The Ladder* in May 1965 that picketing was a necessary and important tool in the armoury of the movement, Franklin Kameny highlighted the radical nature of these demonstrations and the shift that their adoption would cause in movement tactics:

As little as two years ago, "militancy" was something of a dirty word in the homophile movement. Long inculcation in attitudes of winging meekness had taken its toll among homosexuals, combined with a feeling, still widely prevalent, that reasonable, logical, gentlemanly and ladylike persuasion and presentation of reasonable, logical argument, could not fail to win over those who would deny us our equality and our right to be homosexual and to live as homosexuals without disadvantage [...] Unfortunately, by this approach alone we will not prevail [...] It is thus necessary for us to adopt a strongly positive approach, a militant one. It is for us to take the initiative, the offensive – not the defensive – in matters affecting us.¹⁹

The failure to cover these pickets, however, demonstrates that activists and the media did not always share similar definitions of 'spectacular' activity. Despite adopting the previously successful strategies of civil rights organisations, homophile activists were constantly behind the media cycle, utilising a style of protest that had since lost its power to shock and entertain

¹⁹ Franklin E. Kameny, 'Does Research into Homosexuality Matter', *The Ladder*, May 1965, pp. 14–20 (p. 14).

America. In choosing sites that were amongst the most media saturated in the country, homophiles clearly understood the importance of symbolism, but they did not fully grasp the subjective nature of news that meant definitions of 'newsworthiness' were constantly adapting and changing in a competitive environment. In other words, just because homophiles felt something should be newsworthy, or that similar activism had been newsworthy in the past, did not guarantee that it would make it into the mainstream press.

As the coverage given to the MSNY sip-in in 1966 demonstrated, dealing more directly with the localism of general news could bring relatively impressive results. The large increase in coverage following the Stonewall riots, and more particularly following the first CSLDP, however, cannot simply be explained by the shift of activism from media saturated sites hundreds of miles from NYC to the heart of Manhattan. Unlike homophile activists, who were often a step behind media trends, gay liberation activists fit neatly into the caricature of radicalism that was being portrayed by the mainstream media in the late 1960s, embodying what commentators – both positive and negative – saw as the ultimate breakdown of traditional norms regarding gender and sexuality. Consequently, organisations such as the GLF received most of their coverage through association with other radical groups. Indeed, while the homophobia of supposed allies would lead many to reject these radical coalitions, early alliances were crucial to the initial coverage of the movement within the mainstream press. Whatever gains the gay liberation movement made in this period, however, were solidified and intensified by the record breaking numbers brought out on the streets of Manhattan to commemorate and celebrate the Stonewall riots. Fundamentally different in tenor and tone than the riots themselves, the parade represented and accelerated a much a larger shift in the mainstream media's treatment of gay and lesbian activism and the narratives formulated and propagated by gay liberation leaders. As Crage and Armstrong have argued, it was the 'annual design, compatibility with media routines, cultural power, and versatility' of the CSLDPs that helped create the 'Stonewall Myth'.²⁰

²⁰ Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crage, 'Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth', *American Sociological Review*, 71.5 (2006), 724–51 (p. 725).

Arguing that ‘gaining coverage is a measure of an SMO’s cultural influence’, Edwin Amenta and others demonstrate the tendency of sociological research to adopt a quantitative framework that equates the frequency of coverage in papers such as the *New York Times* with movement success.²¹ For instance, when seeking to understand the ‘issues of the sixties’, Ray Funkhouser used this methodology to examine the frequency of topics while paying ‘no attention [...] to the actual amount of space, nor to the content of the material, nor to any bias or slant that might be involved’ in that reporting.²² For some scholars, then, simply appearing in the news was enough to signify that issues were important, regardless of how or why they were presented. Indeed, viewed as a ‘critical link’ between activists and wider society, the mainstream media has been seen as a vital component in the success of a wide array of social movements.²³ As we have seen, however, simply appearing in the newspaper did not guarantee that activists would be able to speak for their own communities or that their activism would not be misrepresented in ways that affected mainstream narratives and have persisted in popular historiographies.

While journalistic notions of objectivity are crucial to the very conception of the mainstream press, all news stories, and especially those relating to marginalised communities, bear the subjectivities and prejudices of their authors. This was not always negative. An examination of the close relationship between race beat journalists and the communities, officials, and activists they covered, for instance, demonstrated how SNCC and the movement at large was able to use the liberal and moral sympathies of reporters to secure coverage that gave civil rights activists a greater voice. Creating a professionalised communications network, SNCC entered into a mutually beneficial relationship with reporters in which they supplied reporters with tips and leads on major news stories and journalists gave the organisation ‘publicity and legitimation’ as a routine news source.²⁴ Having achieved this status, SNCC was able to wield ‘tremendous power in defining public knowledge of a world outside the individual’s immediate

²¹ Edwin Amenta and others, ‘All the Movements Fit to Print: Who, What, When, Where, and Why SMO Families Appeared in the New York Times in the Twentieth Century’, *American Sociological Review*, 74.4 (2009), 636–56 (p. 636).

²² G. Ray Funkhouser, ‘The Issues of the Sixties: An Exploratory Study in the Dynamics of Public Opinion’, *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37.1 (1973), 62–75 (p. 64).

²³ Maryann Barakso and Brian F. Schaffner, ‘Winning Coverage: News Media Portrayals of the Women’s Movement, 1969–2004’, *The Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics*, 11.4 (2006), 22–44 (p. 23).

²⁴ Fishman, p. 152.

experience', including that of race beat reporters themselves.²⁵ As Mark Fishman has argued, the process of 'controlling what a reporter sees' often does not require active concealment or censorship. Instead, 'news promoters put themselves in the path along which newswriters are driven by the bureaucratic, normative, and economic logics of news reporting'.²⁶ In other words, SNCC did not often have to actively hide growing disenchantment with nonviolence or tensions between white and African American members of staff from reporters – although it did both of these things in specific instances. Instead, the organisation simply had to present a particular vision of the Southern movement – interracial and peaceful – in places that journalists were most likely to cover. For their part, race beat reporters were rarely capable or motivated to penetrate this particular account of the movement. As we have seen, journalists often approached events in the South with a narrative already partially formed, with actors assigned roles that varied little from one story to the next. As long as this plot suited SNCC and other civil rights organisations in the South, they had a vested interest in maintaining the play for as long as they were able. For a growing number of activists, however, the parameters of acceptable dissent that this script produced became restrictive and increasingly ineffective at solving the problems they were confronting in the South.

On the other hand, however, scholars must remain critical of the efforts taken by civil rights organisations to frame their own activism. Peniel Joseph's pioneering work has highlighted how the declension narrative allows Black Power to be 'conveniently blamed for the demise of the Civil Rights Movement, rather than being viewed as an alternative to the ineffectiveness of civil rights demands in critical areas of American life'.²⁷ What Joseph omits, however, is that by adopting and reinforcing certain strands of movement discourse, the early rhetoric and public actions of civil rights organisations helped to associate the legitimate and popular criticisms contained within Black Power with urban unrest and violent rhetoric, rather than the grassroots communities of the rural South where they were formed. While one can understand why SNCC felt it necessary to craft its public face to match the demands and needs

²⁵ Fishman, p. 152.

²⁶ Fishman, p. 153.

²⁷ Peniel E. Joseph, 'Introduction: Toward a Historiography of the Black Power Movement', in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–26 (p. 3).

of a white mainstream media, it is nevertheless important to understand how the early rhetoric of civil rights organisations strengthened and legitimized the now debunked declension narrative.

Attempts to breach this narrative, however, demonstrated that the power conferred on SNCC as a routine news source was neither permanent nor under their control. SNCC was not alone. In the run up to the 1963 Birmingham Campaign, for example, correspondent Joe Cumming told *Newsweek* headquarters in New York that, 'those of us who watch the Civil Rights Dow Jones had noticed that King hadn't really done much since he put Kennedy in as president. In Albany he came late and left early, and achieved nothing'.²⁸ By comparing the reputations of civil rights organisations to stocks on a national exchange, Cumming highlights the nature of news construction. While activist groups were able to influence their market value by controlling their image and producing specific products that appealed to certain audiences, ultimately their value was defined by a predominantly white, male, and privileged audience who were beholden to an entirely separate system of rewards that had little interest in the success or failure of these organisations.

Nowhere was this clearer than in coverage of the urban North. Indeed, by comparing the routines of race beat reporters with journalists covering the Northern movement, we can see how the construction of a reporter's 'news net' influences the types of stories they cover and the frames that accompany them. Reliant on official sources of news – such as courts, police stations, and political offices – correspondents in the North were far less likely to employ the good-versus-evil narratives that had portrayed Southern activists as lamb-like victims of segregationist brutality. Denying African Americans in the South agency in their own struggles, the mainstream press simultaneously denied the role that *de facto* segregation played in the urban unrest of the mid-to-late 1960s. Indeed, the Kerner Commission argued in 1968 that the mainstream news media had 'not communicated to the majority of the audience – which is

²⁸ Joe Cumming, 'Birmingham, Possible Cover', 5 May 1963, Newsweek Atlanta Bureau Records, 1953-1979, Box 3 Folder 13, MARBL.

white – a sense of the degradation, misery, and hopelessness of life in the ghetto'.²⁹ Instead, the Commission argued:

The media report and write from the standpoint of a white man's world. The ills of the ghetto, the difficulties of life there, the Negro's burning sense of grievance, are seldom conveyed [...] This may be understandable, but it is not excusable in an institution that has the mission to inform and educate the whole of our society.³⁰

Consequently, while the rise or fall of a particular organisation may have been of little personal interest to newsmakers, they were heavily invested in systems that institutionalised racism and prevented the free articulation of minority grievances.

Moreover, many publications adopted paternalistic stances towards the movement that counselled the African American community to reject leaders it painted as demagogic and destructive and follow the 'responsible' leadership of those like Roy Wilkins who continued to operate within the dominant narrative. Critiquing the sourcing practices of the mainstream media, Carmichael told those assembled at a staff meeting in June 1966 that former allies such as the *New York Times* had 'picked for us who our moderate was [...] and when we said, look he's not what we want, they said you're racist – you won't listen to us – you're out of line. We're defining for you what freedom is'.³¹ By doing so, journalists and editors at these publications overlooked the growing radicalism within the African American community that had – according to James Meredith – 'tired of the way every American President uses the NAACP national office as the 20th Century house Negro, and the way the NAACP bows to play that role'.³² Indeed, this growing dissatisfaction was clear even within the NAACP's own ranks, with Philadelphia Branch President Cecil Moore telling *TIME* that, 'I'm in full accord with black power. You name me a Negro who isn't antiwhite'.³³ When seeking to understand the media's

²⁹ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), p. 20.

³⁰ United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, p. 366.

³¹ Stokely Carmichael, as cited in *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966, p. 710, Series A.VI.19, Reel 12 Slide 697-715, SNCC Papers.

³² James H. Meredith, 'Big Changes Are Coming', *Saturday Evening Post*, 13 August 1966', in *Reporting Civil Rights, Part Two: American Journalism 1963-1973*, ed. by Clayborne Carson, 2 vols. (New York: Penguin Putnam, 2003), II, 520-32.

³³ 'Civil Rights: At the Breaking Point', *TIME*, 15 July 1966

<<http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,835991,00.html>> [accessed 5 February

framing of Black Power, therefore, it is important to realise the hostility and fear that independent, militant, black self-determination had traditionally engendered amongst a white press corps and the impact of SNCC's shift in rhetoric that made it clear that the organisation no longer felt it necessary to placate or indulge these feelings.

Formulated in response to the heavy criticism of SNCC's position on the Vietnam War, Forman's comments to *New York Times* journalist Gene Roberts aptly summed up how many within the organisation felt about Black Power; 'if Snick falls on this issue, then I say let it fall [...] civil rights is not the art of compromise'.³⁴ Purposefully avoiding the term 'public relations', SNCC's approach to media strategy had always differed from that of other civil rights groups. Complaining to the *New York Post* in May 1962 that 'it is distressing commentary when to exist, one must have an "image" and to have an "image" one must often compete with others whose "image" is built on publicity alone', Bond and others within the organisation saw publicity as reinforcing, rather than replacing, active field work.³⁵ It is not surprising, therefore, that SNCC's approach changed when the benefits of media coverage were no longer seen to outweigh the logistical, operational, and strategic costs of securing publicity. Indeed, in light of the increasingly hostile reaction SNCC's activism was generating, Ivanhoe Donaldson explained the need to re-orientate the organisation's rhetoric, arguing that:

The fact is that when we get an unfavourable article in a publication like the *New Republic* you just lose money, and the whole organisation's project just freezes up because there's no way to get money in...we feel maybe there's one group of people in the country that won't react negatively and that's the ghetto community.³⁶

This movement towards the working-class black community meant that SNCC's communication efforts would be aimed at a fundamentally different audience and so would take on a fundamentally different tone. In order to understand SNCC's espousal of Black Power, then, it is necessary to understand how this rhetorical strategy was intrinsically linked

2013]; For more on Black Power within the NAACP, see: Simon Hall, 'The NAACP, Black Power, and the African American Freedom Struggle, 1966-1969', *The Historian*, 69 (2007), 49–82.

³⁴ Roy Reed, 'Rights Group Widely Criticized For Attacking Vietnam Policy', *New York Times*, 16 January 1966, p. 60 (p. 60).

³⁵ Horace Julian Bond to New York Post, 17 May 1962, Series A.VII.1, Reel 12 Slide 940-73, SNCC Papers.

³⁶ Ivanhoe Donaldson, as cited in *Staff Meeting*, 13 June 1966.

to shifting attitudes towards the mainstream media and its role as a gateway to mainstream white America. By electing Carmichael and announcing Black Power, SNCC was discarding the rhetorical mask it had used to woo white liberals and instead was speaking directly to a growing African American audience that felt it had been chanting 'Freedom Now' for far too long. Rather than simply condemning the 'bully pulpit' of mainstream narratives for the hostile reaction to Black Power, therefore, it is important to grant civil rights activists agency in their decision to strike rhetorically at the 'white progressive hegemony' that had dominated the early movement.³⁷ Importantly, this challenge was not borne out of impotent frustration, but the notion that prevailing movement narratives were preventing meaningful dialogue on issues that really mattered to millions of African Americans.

In contrast, with even revisionist accounts arguing that homophile groups hid their radicalism behind a 'mask of respectability', the absence of homophile groups from the mainstream media record is often taken as fulfilling the wishes of 'furtive' men and women who actively avoided publicity of any kind.³⁸ Instead, groups such as the MSNY and MSW are portrayed in historical scholarship as remaining focused on producing their own periodicals, which Martin Meeker argues 'nurtured and expanded the homosexual world and helped to end the isolation and invisibility suffered by so many'.³⁹ Indeed, a number of scholars have examined the role that these periodicals played in defining movement aims and generating a conversation about what it meant to be a gay man or woman in this period.⁴⁰ However, while this interpretation deserves praise for the way in which it encourages historians to look beneath the veneer of public declarations, homophile educational efforts were not simply aimed at the gay and

³⁷ Peniel E. Joseph, 'The Black Power Movement: A State of the Field', *The Journal of American History*, 96 (2009), 751–77 (pp. 755–6); William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 240.

³⁸ Martin Meeker, 'Behind the Mask of Respectability: Reconsidering the Mattachine Society and Male Homophile Practice, 1950s and 1960s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 10 (2001), 78–116; John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 239.

³⁹ Martin Meeker, *Contacts Desired: Gay and Lesbian Communications and Community, 1940s-1970s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 35.

⁴⁰ Kristin Gay Esterberg, 'From Illness to Action: Conceptions of Homosexuality in the Ladder, 1956-1965', *Journal of Sex Research*, 27.1 (1990), 65–80; Marianne Cutler, 'Educating the "Variant," Educating the Public: Gender and the Rhetoric of Legitimation in The Ladder Magazine for Lesbians', *Qualitative Sociology*, 26.2 (2003), 233–55; *Letters to One: Gay and Lesbian Voices from the 1950s and 1960s*, ed. by Craig M. Loftin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012); Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).

lesbian community. Homophile leaders such as *Ladder* editor Barbara Gittings, for example, have argued that ‘one of the major successes of the movement in the 1960s was our breakthrough into mainstream publicity’, claiming that the ‘whole idea’ of the movement was ‘as much publicity as possible [...] to crack that shield of invisibility that had always made it difficult for us to get our message across’.⁴¹ Consequently, while Martin Meeker’s *Contacts Desired* charts the importance of organisational newsletters and other forms of intra-community communication, it fails to examine the resources that groups like MSNY, MSW, and the DOB committed to the ‘education of the public’ and the assumption that such education would lead ‘to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices’.⁴²

Despite appearing insignificant in contrast to the millions of words written on the civil rights movement in the same period, it is worth noting that homophiles saw the scattered columns and news programmes as evidence of real progress and believed that they would lead to more tolerant attitudes in the future. Claiming in November 1966 that he was ‘simply spoiled by the enormous amount of press coverage we’ve gotten in the past year’, the private correspondence of Dick Leitsch and other MSNY and MSW members provides an insight into how these articles, many of which now appear virulently homophobic, would have been read by men and women totally accustomed to such views.⁴³ With similar views expressed in homophile periodicals such as *The Ladder*, it is clear that many activists saw media coverage as playing an active and important role in their struggle and scoured the pages of a diverse range of outlets to find positive examples that could be used to challenge negative coverage elsewhere.⁴⁴

Furthermore, by examining this correspondence, and cross referencing it against voices which did appear in mainstream coverage, it is clear that the work MSNY and MSW conducted with

⁴¹ Barbara Gittings in Greta Schiller and Robert Rosenberg, *Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community* (First Run Features, 1984; Peadarillo Pictures Ltd, 2010).

⁴² Daughters of Bilitis Statement of Purpose, as reproduced in Marcia M. Gallo, *Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement* (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2006), p. 11.

⁴³ Dick Leitsch to Bill Glover, 29 November 1966, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 12.

⁴⁴ Philip Gerard, ‘Symptom of the Times’, *The Ladder*, December 1964, pp. 9–12; Kay Tobin, ‘A Rebuke for TIME’s Pernicious Prejudice’, *The Ladder*, April 1966, pp. 20–22; Jane Kogan, ‘In the Media: A Review’, *Daughters of Bilitis (DOB): New York Chapter*, July 1968, p. 4, Lesbian Herstory Archives Newsletter Collection, (Primary Source Media, Thompson Gale, 2006, Microfilm Edition), Reel 14.

legal, religious, and medical professionals was not simply, as Kameny argued in 1965, 'endless talk (directed in the last analysis, by us to ourselves)'.⁴⁵ Indeed, considering how many of the positive voices that did appear in the mainstream record were either connected, or became connected, to the homophile movement, the oft derided educational seminars and meetings with legitimised professionals seems to have had a constructive influence on media coverage and professional institutions such as the APA. For instance, Dr. Evelyn Hooker, whom Nicholas Edsall argues 'perhaps did more than anyone else to upset the prevailing psychiatric view of homosexuality', has admitted that prior to contacting and working with homophiles, she had 'taught the usual junk that homosexuality is psychopathological, that it's a criminal offense, and that it's a sin. I had no reason to think that these things weren't true'.⁴⁶ This is not to argue that some homophiles did not see professionals, especially psychiatrists, as experts on their lives and were content to be 'educated' on their 'condition' by men and women with inherently negative views of homosexuality. However, it is also clear that a sizeable number of homophile leaders on the East Coast saw these meetings as a chance to educate professionals who had much greater standing in society and were able to contribute to forums that openly gay men and women could not yet penetrate.

Importantly, this relationship was in a constant state of flux as research and public opinion shifted. As homophiles grew in strength, they could afford to be increasingly selective in the alliances they created and the work they promoted. Compared to similar struggles within other movements, gay men and women quickly felt able to articulate their own grievances, with Kameny telling readers of *The Ladder* in 1965 that:

We ARE right; those who oppose us are both factually and morally wrong. We are the true authorities on homosexuality, whether we are accepted as such or not. We must DEMAND our rights, boldly, not beg cringingly for mere privileges, and not be satisfied with the crumbs tossed to us.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Kameny, p. 14.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Edsall, *Toward Stonewall: Homosexuality and Society in the Western World* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2003), p. 310.

⁴⁷ Kameny, p. 14.

This did not mean that homophiles disregarded the approaches and work of liberal professionals.⁴⁸ Indeed, with Kameny emphasising his PhD in correspondence with government officials, this move was not a rejection of the socially legitimised status given to certain professions and qualities within society.⁴⁹ Instead, this shift in rhetoric represented an attempt to redefine who was able to speak for the gay and lesbian community and was considered radical by contemporaries even if it bore many of the markers and values associated with middle-class, white America that would be viewed by a later generation of activists as oppressive and inauthentic. While this attempt was not always successful, the marked increase in the appearance of homophile voices within the press allowed gay men to articulate their grievances in a way that subtly shifted mainstream narratives and helped to redefine the notion of balance in relation to articles on the gay community.⁵⁰ Consequently, when arguing that the Mattachine's public image was the result of 'a deliberate and ultimately successful strategy to deflect the antagonisms of its many detractors', scholars such as Meeker overlook the complex relationship between early homophile organisations and the mainstream press and erroneously equate media outcomes with media strategies.⁵¹

Consequently, while certain outlets may have acquired the reputation of a 'Newspaper of Record', it is important to recognise that no publication can truly contain a complete – or even representative – sample of news events. Instead, the events these outlets chose to print fit a unique set of circumstances that can be investigated through qualitative study. Too often, however, historians seeking to learn more about the journalistic source material on which they rely are forced to consult semi-autobiographical works that tend to ignore the impact that social activists had on the nature of mainstream coverage. In contrast, the increasing number of studies that examine the communication efforts of social movements have often focused too heavily on the creation of internal structures and networks rather than analysing how these systems aided activists in their interactions with the outside world.

⁴⁸ Fritz A. Fluckiger, 'Research Through A Glass Darkly', *The Ladder*, July 1966, pp. 16–26.

⁴⁹ Franklin E. Kameny to Sargent Shriver, 28 November 1964, MSNY Records, NYPL, Box 1, Folder 11.

⁵⁰ Indeed, the increased visibility of male homophiles – and subsequent focus on particular issues such as police entrapment – would lead DOB leaders such as Shirley Willer to criticise movement sexism and call for greater autonomy from male leaders in organisations such as ECHO: Shirley Willer, 'What Concrete Steps Can Be Taken to Further the Homophile Movement', *The Ladder*, November 1966, pp. 17–20.

⁵¹ Meeker, 'Behind the Mask of Respectability', p. 81.

By combining an analysis of the mainstream media record with the efforts of activists operating within two very distinct movements, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of viewing news production as a symbiotic process involving a wide range of participants. Unlike radical and minority-owned publications – that pushed at the boundaries of what was considered to be ‘fit to print’ – more traditional, mainstream publications were deeply affected by the institutionalised values and prejudices of the society they claimed to serve. Representing communities that were often seen as ‘other’ by white, middle-class, and heteronormative audiences, activists within the civil rights and homophile movements faced particular challenges that complicated their efforts to publicise their work and achieve their goals. As a consequence, when activists within both movements re-directed their public rhetoric to speak to – rather than for – their particular communities, they exposed the ways in which previous activism had adapted to (and at times exploited) institutionalised prejudices within the mainstream press. Importantly, however, by breaking away from conceptions of a monolithic, hegemonic, mainstream media, the analysis above has also challenged historians to interrogate the unique circumstances in which certain publications and their staff operated. Noting how individual, human agency could have far-reaching consequences on the coverage of marginalised communities, the thesis has provided a methodological framework for future study that has important ramifications outside of the historiography of the civil rights and homophile movements of the 1960s. While such in-depth study is often beyond scholars for whom newspaper data is only a part of their research, this thesis has demonstrated the need for historians to critically engage with the subjectivity of the media data they use and approach sources in a way that honestly recognises their limitations. If newspaper data represents the ‘first draft of history’, it is important that all historians become revisionists, critically interrogating journalists’ motivations, sources, and the impact that their reporting had on others.

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