

**Thesis:** Citizen journalists should hold themselves accountable to standards of journalistic integrity.

**Literature Review:**

- Citizen Journalism began with the footage of the JFK assassination (Glasser 2011). Ordinary people can contribute crucial information that might otherwise be overlooked.
- Glasser also states that citizen journalism appeared in newspapers as "letters to the editor."
- Allvoices was the first citizen journalism site to measure the credibility of contributed reports and their authors, providing readers with a gauge for accuracy of news accounts (Cohn 2009)

**Main Points:**

- Accountable means to be...
  - Studies show that hyperlinks and information about the author, including a picture, name, biography, and links to published work enhance perceived credibility of stories (Johnson 2009).
  - Citizen journalists have to give up their anonymity in order to be taken seriously (Infohack 2007).
  - Transparency
- Accountability is important...
  - People have an obligation to contribute to their communities, and especially small communities rely on factual information
  - Integrity
  - "Sometimes it's difficult to set aside the pressures of personal or business relationships, especially in a community where everyone knows each other. But a citizen journalist is accountable to a higher authority than a local official, a dominant industry or a next-door neighbor. A citizen journalist is accountable to the public" (Ross 2009).
- Poor accountability
  - Citizen journalism can have unreliable information and are often guilty of libel. (Mythen 2010).
  - Tamara Witschge in "Street Journalists versus 'ailing' journalists" states that bad sources lead to poor quality, which leads to even worse credibility.
  - "But I don't believe in citizen journalism because journalism -- like any profession worthy of the name -- has standards and ethics, and if you don't sign on to those, I can no more trust you than I can a doctor who refused the Hippocratic oath or a lawyer who failed the bar exam" (Pitts 2010).
  - Misinformation
- Good accountability
  - iReport, Youtube, and other large user-generated sites have begun highlighting well produced work from dedicated contributors (Cohn 2009).
  - Create stories that people can trust, you could be paid.
  - Inter-accountability (among journalists)
  - Watchdogs (If we are accountable, we can hold others accountable)
- Ways to stay accountable
  - Cite sources within your story, do not take others work as your own.
  - Citizen journalism is about creating informed citizens for the improvement and continuation of participatory democracy (Ross 2009).
  - Resist the influence of friends, advertisers, powerful people and special interests (Ross 2009).