KILLING IN SILENCE: ALTERNATIVE AND MAINSTREAM MEDIA COVERAGE OF DRONE STRIKES

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on the media coverage of U.S. drone strikes by both mainstream and alternative media sources. Chapter 1 introduces some background on alternative media and drone strikes and introduces the main points of the project. Chapter gives an extended literature review of ideology, media and power and alternative media to establish the parameters of the study and establish previous work on similar topics. Chapter 3 establishes both the method and methodology of the study, including why I conducted the study I did and how I processed the information from both mainstream and alternative media. Chapter 4 includes the results from both the mainstream media and alternative media texts I used in this study. Finally, Chapter 5 reviews my contributions to the literature along with future research based on the findings of this study.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The current political landscape continues to move away from the free flow of information from the government to the populace and instead places a priority on security. During the current presidency, the Obama administration has prosecuted more people under the Espionage Act for the leaking of government information than all other administrations combined (Van Buren, 2012). While this attack on truth telling continues, corporate profits are the highest in the U.S. since WWII (Lynch, 2013). In this time of criminalizing dissent juxtaposed with unprecedented corporate wealth, scholars attempt to use a number of different theories to provide a new way to look at both economic and political problems. The relationship between media and power provides a specific lens to examine how a populace engages in the political and economic discussion in society.

The relationship between the government and the media explores one way to define and examine how media and power functions in the larger field of media studies. Mosco (2009) examined political economy and its relationship with both social relations and power. This connection between social relations and power, however, does not happen in a vacuum. The procurement, distribution and consumption of resources guide the directions of the social relations and power. To understand this in a media context, Mosco looked at the continued growth of the media corporation as an entity in modern society. With fewer companies owning all mainstream media outlets, the critical scholar questions how these very few owners produce a diverse amount of content for viewers to consume. While this process may have begun in the western world, the continued growth of the global economy has shown how political economy can be applied to the presence of western media corporations in the developing world. This neocolonial connection also
shows the influence from the continued marriage between the media and the government. Mosco’s understanding of political economy in terms of social relations and power have provided opportunities to question the continued growth of corporate influence in media but also the growing intimacy between the government and the media.

Hale (2010) studied how the media and the dominant government position can also provide context to an emerging international issue. Most of the information people receive about international issues, especially the factual content about those issues, comes from the mass media. The mass media used a particular frame to establish how facts are shown to the public and what facts becomes a part of the media discourse (Hale, 2010). The political climate also helps frame that discourse and provides the lens for the public to view a particular subject, such as war. For example, the media framed the U.S. intervention in Kosovo as a “humanitarian” mission, while the invasion of Iraq followed the dominant government narrative of preemptive war against a dangerous threat from a rogue state that had weapons of mass destruction. For these political reasons, the media consistently referred to Iraq in terms of contest, while never using that type of frame when referring to Kosovo. This example illustrates the continued dexterity of political elites and how they can influence not only media content, in terms of facts, but also how the public digests that content, in terms of frames. Based on these two example, the media content and media frames during a particular international conflict have been influenced by the political aims of the U.S. government.

While the mainstream media provides one depiction of the continued synthesis between governmental and economic power, alternative media provides another lens to examine how the media can function in contemporary society. Comedia (1984) argued
that the alternative media, which developed from the record industry of the late 1960s, did not develop an economic model that faced the reality of the capitalistic system. Some of the alternative media survived based on union membership dues or taking lower rates of pay than a worker would earn from the mainstream media. The financial planning and budgeting needed to make any media outlet run successful did not enter the approach of these alternative media activists. While some alternative media outlets used grant funding into the 1970s, when that source of money disappeared the alternative media remained without a plan for how to produce content in the capitalistic framework of modern economic society.

The lack of hierarchy in the alternative media also left out key management players to deal with a funding crisis that the alternative media dealt with in this time period. At the same time, the alternative media had not found enough legitimacy as a news source to break into the Top 10 of most read media sources. These factors shoved the alternative media into a media ghetto, shut out of the entitlements and access enjoyed by mainstream media outlets. The alternative media had a small readership that focused on an audience that has a certain level of cultural competence to understand the complexity of the issues raised by the alternative media. By ignoring a populist message combined with a lack of focus on market factors limited the alternative media in both scope and influence. For any alternative media to grow out from its media ghetto, the publication needed to realize promotion, marketing and a sizable audience as factors in a sustainable product.

Atton (2002) offered another view of the alternative media, which while not extinguishing all the arguments articulated by Comedia, offered another perspective as to
the role of alternative media in general. Atton used the example of Downing’s (1988) detailing the anti-nuclear movement in Germany, while acknowledging a different physical location. Downing saw the alternative media as a component of the alternative public sphere that had moved beyond coffee shops to numerous social locations with an emphasis on an alternative perspective that respects a less rigid hierarchy and a free flow of information among people committed to another vision on a number of social issues. Using this example, alternative media acted as a megaphone for groups of people engaged in political opposition to the dominant perspectives and used the alternative media as a place to discuss several iterations of that opposition. The alternative media acted in concordance with several movements developed from the grass roots committed to social change.

Atton (2002) also suggested that Comedia’s critique of alternative media depending on the music industry to subsidize their livelihood had some merit while also acknowledging other forms of revenue for alternative media to seek. Atton suggested that using subscription services work well when alternative media texts begin to help facilitate a specific base that will supply income that remains somewhat steady for an alternative media source. Alternative media should still resist the need to use advertising because of the impact it makes on content, while at the same time considering other means of making money such as fundraising campaigns and benefit concerts. Atton also does not abandon Comedia’s assertion that alternative media exists in a type of “financial ghetto”. In fact, alternative media continues to attempt to adopt socialist principles of the alternative publish sphere that reflect the goals of social change. In other words, the alternative media product may never reach the number of readers, listeners or viewers of
the mainstream media, yet those goals should not define the impact or ability of alternative media to produce content that reflects communal purposes.

While alternative media provides another vision for the role of media in society, the mainstream media continues to facilitate relationships with elites in power. However, neither the mainstream media model nor the alternative media model has been adopted for a contemporary study of media coverage of the Obama administration’s decision to implement drone strikes. Through a qualitative content analysis using narrative categories of both mainstream and alternative media sources, I examined cultural militarism through media power, and the how the forms of media power shield ideology from mainstream and alternative media convergence. I am using alternative media sources as well as mainstream media sources for a number of reasons. First, while mainstream media reports from official sources through a professionalization of its reporters and influences a wider spectrum of society, the technological advances made in recent years have allowed mainstream and alternative media to overlap, creating less division from alternative and mainstream media (Kenix, 2011). For this reason, alternative media can provide high-level content for my study. Second, alternative media also has an opportunity to engage with the public in ways that the mainstream media do not because of the mainstream media’s focus on ratings and the economic profile of the individual audience member (Downing, 2003). Finally, the impetus of engaging in some type of social change when producing alternative media content is also part of its mission, by providing a space for voices normally not considered by mainstream sources, such as protesters, dissenters and everyday people (Atton, 2002). All of these points illustrate the political and economic realities that influence mainstream media but also an opportunity
for information from sources outside of the mainstream media to comment and discuss the drone strikes, sources that alternative media may use in its news coverage.

*Drone Strikes*

A drone is an airplane that the United States uses for both combat and noncombat missions around the world. The drones used by the military are pilotless devices. A military official may be controlling a drone over Pakistan while sitting in an office in Virginia. The United States uses two types of drones: predator and reaper. The first drone came from a defense contractor to the military in 1994. The first drone with weapons on it developed in 2000. The first drone strike took place in 2002 in Yemen (Ghosh & Thompson, 2009). The drones not only provide strikes but also video surveillance technology. When the military engages in a strike, it does so after determining behavior from the thousands of hours of video surveillance that a drone can provide. Drone strikes began under the presidency of George W. Bush, who used nine drone strikes in Pakistan from 2004 to 2007 and 33 drone strikes in Pakistan in 2008 (Bergman & Tiedman, 2010)

While neglected by the academic community, the drone strikes, a key component of the Obama administration’s foreign policy practices, have come under fire from a variety of news agencies around the world. This choice by *The New York Times* and other notable journalists including *Moneyball* author Michael Lewis, come at the same time as the Obama administration either refusing to release information about drone victims or managing that information to disperse at their own digression (Greenwald, 2008).

The *Times* and other U.S. media outlets have also adopted specific policy and linguistic choices established by the Obama administration without critical questioning or inquiry. These decisions by media outlets have caused some critics to question the role of
the media in covering this issue (Greenwald, 2008; Friedersdorf, 2008). The policy choices made by the Obama administration in relation to the drone strikes have largely been viewed as something that may not in fact be legal under international law and caused some members of the Obama administration to refer to the drone strike policy as a “cowboy mentality”, (Woods, 2008). These examples illustrate how the U.S. mainstream media has neglected to question the legality and political wisdom of a foreign policy decision by the Obama administration.

In relation to the linguistic choices and media coverage, the use of the term “surgical” by the Obama administration has been used by U.S. media accounts and been adopted into the discourse when talking about drone strikes publically (Friedersdorf, 2008). Another term that has led to some controversy is the use of the term “militant”. The Obama administration has decided to refer to “all adult males killed in strike zones as militants” (Greenwald, 2008, pg. 1). The U.S. mainstream media have continued to use the term militant, even though most of these media outlets rely on a single source, the Obama administration, for their evidence to support their reporting (Greenwald, 2008; IHRCRC & GJC, 2008). These media organizations have continued to rely on the Obama administration for their information almost exclusively even though previous reporting by Greenwald (2011) has shown that the Obama administration has in fact lied about the number of civilian deaths caused by drone strikes in Pakistan. In fact the numbers of civilians killed in these tribal areas are much higher than the numbers being reported by the Obama administration (Zucchino, 2012).

The examples depicted above indicate the complexity of the drone strikes issue because it involves the secrecy of a democratic government, the ability of media to have
access to official governmental sources and the larger economic concerns of making a desirable media product for the consumer. The media outlets, however, seem to continue to trust the Obama administration for information about the drone strikes, even though, the Obama administration has provided figures about the number of deaths attributed to the drone strikes at two percent, a number deemed low based on a joint study by the Stanford and New York University Schools of Law (Cavallaro, Sonnenberg & Knuckey, 2012).

When examining how media and power function on the reporting of drones by the mainstream media, a few key points stand out. First, large portions of the in depth reporting about the drone strikes have come from media outlets outside of the U.S. From The Guardian in England, to the global website The Global Post, to the continued reports coming from the people of Pakistan and transmitted through the Al-Jazeera website, the global media, much more so than the U.S. media have been at the forefront of the reporting on this issue. These media sources have given voice to U.S. critics including constitutional lawyer and journalist Glenn Greenwald and other U.S. scholars (Greenwald, 2008). This initial insight seems to reflect the inability of U.S news agencies, including such stalwarts as The New York Times, to report with the same depth as their foreign counterparts.

Media Coverage of Drone Strikes

The U.S political system continues to provide numerous issues for the mass media to report about and share with the public. One of the main issues with the news media, as illustrated by Chomsky (2002) and McChesney (2004; 2008) involves how the media does not act as a watchdog in its role as the fourth estate; instead, the media, with a desire
to have access to power, have taken on a lap dog mentality that reflects the dominant position of U.S. political elites. While a number of researchers including Bacevich (2005), Kumar (2006), Johnson (2004) and Stahl (2009) have detailed this reality in terms of the Bush Administration, few communication and media scholars have examined drone strikes during the Obama administration. Using search results of the entire Communication and Mass Media database, fewer than 10 academic articles appeared that addressed the drone strikes. A search using the term Iraq War yielded over 500 academic journal articles from the same database.

While neglected by the academic community, the drone strikes, a key component of the Obama administration’s foreign policy practices, have come under fire from a variety of news agencies around the world. Some news agencies, like The New York Times, have conducted stories on the issue, while at the same time adopting a policy that allows the Obama administration final approval on all quotes from members of the administration (Walker, 2008). This choice by The New York Times and other notable journalists including Moneyball author Michael Lewis, come at the same time as the Obama administration either refusing to release information about drone victims or managing that information to disperse at their own digression (Greenwald, 2008).

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While the drone issues is a new development of U.S. foreign policy in relation to the U.S. media, several examples from history illustrate how the mainstream media and different governmental elites have converged to influence media coverage of complex international issues. The media coverage that serves U.S. interests internationally have continued into the modern political era, which is dominated by neoliberal economic policies and militaristic foreign policies. The United States, with the backing of international organizations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, continue to promote commercial interests and trade liberalization through globalization.
The new political partners that echo the U.S. interest in terms of political partnerships also emphasize cultural militarism, including nations that serve as locations of emphasis for the war on terror (Mullen, 2010). For example, the focus of political activity in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran differ greatly from countries such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The U.S. have very favorable trade relations with Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, with Bahrain providing a location for military training and Saudi Arabia providing continued support through their extremely larger purchases of military weapons that totaled over $33 billion dollars in 2011 alone (Shanker, 2011).

The mainstream U.S. media have also embraced embedded reporting, reinforcing the relationship between media and government when examining foreign policy issues. Additionally, the U.S. mainstream media has, at times, continued the practice of reporting on events directly from governmental documents without any outside critique (Mullen, 2010). These types of media policies have been seen in the reporting of the drone strikes, leading to the reinforcement of the relationship between media and political elites.

Over the last several months, drone strikes have grown in relevance in the larger media culture and political agenda. The oppositions to drone strikes has come from the tea party and high status legal professors, who both question the scope and influence of U.S. cultural militarism on foreign soil. Sen. Rand Paul, a conservative republican, questioned the lengths the CIA would go to in addressing the problem of terrorism with drone strikes. Paul suggested that no geographic area existed that would not permit drone strikes, including on U.S. land. Paul specifically focused on statements from current CIA director John Brennan, who while not advocating drone strikes on U.S. land, did not completely rule out its use to fight a security risk. A Georgetown law professor assessed
the statements that Brennan had made about drone strikes and determined that Paul provided a truthful characterization of unregulated drone strikes, especially during the Obama administration (Moorhead, 2013).

The opposition to drone strikes in 2013 continues to make strange political partners. Long time Democracy Now alternative media journalist Amy Goodman praised the Tea Party Republican Paul for his lengthy March 2013 filibuster against the nomination of Brennan for director of the CIA. In fact, Goodman described Paul’s rage during the filibuster as appropriate for the situation and encouraged more congress people and world citizens to join in Paul’s outrage (Goodman, 2013). This strange support of a conservative Republican senator by the central figure of a leftist alternative media outlet in the United States provides a strange picture for understanding the political bedfellows who question U.S. drone strikes throughout the world. From the right, Paul may be using the drone strikes to crystallize political capital for future presidential aspirations. From the left, Goodman could be seeing the U.S. drone strikes as the latest example of U.S. cultural militarism run amok and impacting the global Muslim population in a significant way. For whatever reason, each source provides an interesting point of unity in an acrimonious and partisan political landscape that dominates U.S. politics in 2013. The public can consume a number of stories, from healthcare reform to immigration to Benghazi, and see the philosophical distance that exists between the two parties in U.S. government. This political distance makes the comments from Paul and the support from Goodman even more intriguing. At a time when the Washington political elite seems as partisan as any time in modern U.S. history, the issue of drone strike can unite the
conservative senator from Kentucky with the liberal alternative media journalist on the left.

The cacophony of voices that have questioned the U.S. drone policy has also grown over the last six months. A former advisor to the state department during the Bush administration has questioned the transparency with which the Obama administration has shared information with both the media and the public (Shane, 2013). Farea al-Muslimi, a Yemeni man who studied in the U.S., agrees with this state department official while also establishing the ill will the drone strikes have created among the people of Yemen (Savage, 2013). Christopher Swift, a Georgetown researcher who spent time in Yemen, echoed al-Muslimi’s words, by explaining that while U.S. policy supports the position of Brennan and other Obama administration officials, the experiences of people who have suffered from the civilian deaths caused by drone strikes show a different side to the policy. The drone strikes also show a strong connection between the U.S and Yemeni governments, both institutions that the people of Yemen view in a pejorative manner (Worth, Mazzetti & Shane, 2013). These examples of critical voices against U.S. drone policy establish a wide range of people who continue to question the use of drone strikes.

With the critique of drone strikes growing during the last six months, the larger social questions of legality and morality have also entered into the media text. While government officials have sold the drone strikes as leaving little impact and the ability to strike a target with precision, the “pilots” who control the drones have reported psychological despair from seeing the humanity of the intended targets—when they eat, when they sleep etc. The person who ultimately pulls the trigger does not feel emotionally detached but instead involved as an agent in that person’s death (Jacobson,
2013). Drones appear to use technology to distance the soldier from traditional combat that defined military conflict. However, with the capabilities of drones to monitor every step a person makes, the humanity has grown not lessened in the pursuit of accomplishing a military objective.

As Paul identified in his filibuster, the limits of drone strikes seem hazy and ill defined by the CIA and the Obama administration. The side effect of this tactical confusion could be the long-term impact of drone strikes on civilians who are not intended target of the drone strikes. This needless loss of life could create blow back situations, where newly radicalized populaces feel slighted and angered at the fallout from U.S. drone strikes (Jacobson, 2013). This blowback could create possible terrorist incidents in the U.S., such as the attempted Time Square bombing in 2010 by Pakistani-American Faisal Shahzad (Mazzetti & Shane, 2010). While the drone strikes seem to solve a military problem with precision and intelligence, the fall out could increase strained relations between the United States and large segments of the Muslim world, including Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia.

Based on the above discussion, this project followed a specific pattern to help explain mainstream media and alternative media coverage of the drone strikes. I conducted a qualitative content analysis using narrative categories to examine whether alternative media, in the forms of convergence discussed by Kenix, can influence in any way the narrative that stands as the foundations of ideological assumptions. If those alternative media organizations did not influence the dominant narrative, I explored the different forms of media power that shielded the narrative fragments. In the next chapter, I examined ideology and the role it plays in shaping cultural militarism in the United
States. Next, I discussed a theoretical roadmap that critically examines media and power to help illustrate the relationship between media content and government policy. Finally, I looked at the literature concerning alternative media and what types of information articulates the connection or disconnection between alternative and mainstream media. The third chapter focused on the methodology and the method I used for this study and why I chose that particular approach. Chapter four consisted of the results from my study and all the information that I examined using the mainstream and alternative media texts in this study. Finally, the final chapter concluded by adding new literature to the alternative media field. The tactical intersectional narrative adjustment, the new concept I found in this study, reflected a media world where mainstream media and alternative media has not converged with the clear intersectionality espoused by Kenix, nor have those media entities completely moved away from each other to provide a clear distinction between the mainstream media and alternative media. Chapter 5 also gave some information about some limitations that I faced in conducting this study. This study attempted to answer questions related to the overlap of drone strikes coverage from both mainstream and alternative media.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter will focus on the theoretical foundation of ideology and the relationship between media and power. I begin the discussion by focusing on a number of different theoretical foundations that connect to ideology before connecting this discussion to cultural militarism specifically. I then focus on the relationship between media and power, with a focus on political economy, the propaganda model, framing theory, hierarchy of influences and indexing theory. I end the chapter with a section on alternative media.

Ideology

This section of the chapter will focus on ideology. The section will include a discussion of the term by four key scholars who have examined how ideology works in the social world, other authors’ examinations of the relationship between ideology and social practices and a discussion linking ideology with narrative. I am grouping Gramsci and Althusser together because much of Althusser’s work builds on Gramscian concepts related specifically to Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) argument. The next two scholarly arguments provided by Horkheimer and Adorno and Habermas are connected through both scholars work on modernity, which rejected a new kind of conservatism that pervaded their common existence (Habermas, 2001). This shared approach to working against conservative concepts connects the work of Habermas and Horkheimer and Adorno when discussing ideology.

*Early Foundations: Gramsci, Althusser, Adorno, Habermas*

Gramsci’s notion of ideology shows the complexity not only of the process involved in shaping ideology but the fluid nature of social institutions. At certain points
in society, the structural forces of culture, politics and money create an atmosphere of domination. At other times, some of these same structures allow for a critical examination into the nature of power and how best to use a subversive movement for emancipatory gains.

For Gramsci (1995), ideology exists as one important factor in the control of one group in society over another. Gramsci uses the example of the Catholic Church to help reinforce his concept of ideology. The church acts as domineering presence in the lives of the individual believer, a guide above human conception that will lead the individual down a just path. Gramsci call this phenomenon a “phantom entity” (Gramsci, 1995, p.16). For the Catholic Church to function in this ephemeral existence, the submission by the individual to the ideological concept allows for the religious tradition to continue. A collective consciousness harmonizes together as one voice, unified against individual interests.

While Gramsci’s concept of ideology through the unexamined and uncritical approach to the Catholic Church tradition enjoys widespread acclaim among the secular academic world, a closer examination into the interests served by its ideologies deserves a more updated understanding. Herman and Chomsky (2002) articulated clearly the role of the propaganda model when explaining the relationship of U.S. military interests and media coverage of Central American uprisings. Much of this research obscures the role of the Catholic Church in helping to galvanize the populace against the political establishment of those countries who shared the interest of U.S. domination. This conflicting ideological example of how the church influenced the populace to challenge the dominant U.S. ideology in the region shows the complex relationship members of the
Catholic Church have with conflicting ideologies. Gramsci’s, and later Althusser’s, indictment of the Catholic Church without the historical legacy of modern day saints, such as Dorothy Day, Petra Kelly, Phil Berrigan, and Dan Berrigan etc. shows the historical context of the Gramscian approach of depicting a dominant social institution through one particular lens.

Gramsci also conceived of ideology as a social structure that depends on other important factors to help shape and disseminate information to the populace as a whole. The printed word acts as the most important part of this ideological structure, yet the meaning of that word takes its shapes from a number of different social factors that help influence the meaning of any word (Gramsci, 1995). These sociological factors that influence words act as a unifier by the dominant class over the working class.

One issue with Gramsci conceiving this approach that emphasizes language to explain the duality of class struggle again ignores the complexity of modern day identity politics and how those identities conflict with traditional ideological conceptions of ruling class vs. working class. American religious scholar and social critic Cornel West established in the 2004 book *Democracy Matters*, the conception of the prophetic Christian versus the Constantinian Christian, as outlined by Constantine’s legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire in the 4th century. West established the prophetic vision and voice of the Christian faith existed in a state of communitarian support as an underground social network which had its organization cataclysmically impacted by its legalization under the Roman Empire. West has continued to work on issues aligned with the prophetic Christian approach including a poor’s people campaign in front of the 2012 presidential election and the consistent critique of President Obama’s foreign policy
decisions including the drone strikes. West’s commitment to prophetic Christianity has put him at odds with other prominent African American voices during the Obama administration. These examples illustrate the complex nature of West’s competing ideological traditions. While West has worked extensively for the examination of the U.S. historical legacy and present day concern with race relations, West has also used his public Christian voice against U.S. policy that engages in military operations throughout the world. Since these competing approaches do not always fit within a specifically ideological framework of modern day political decisions making, West has established an ideological approach of championing the rights of African Americans while questioning U.S. foreign policy decisions from a Christian perspective which has left him without a clear base of support because of these conflicting positions. This modern day complex example of identity based political engagement with religious ideological concerns and class based understandings of poverty show the Gramscian difference of the ruling and working class as a bit dated and lacking the understanding of how different ideological approaches engage with different sections of the population based on complex relationships among people with multiple identities.

Gramsci also sees ideology as a way for people to make sense of the world around them without a complete critical engagement into the why question of existence. By using the example of science, Gramsci (1995) questions the objectivity principle that defines the scientific approach and instead posits the importance of the subjective from social created meanings on the human conception of what is reality. In addition, Gramsci questions the answer of common sense to any given statement without any intellectual rigor. The conception of commons sense comes from an approach that relies on the
continuation of an answer that remains beyond question. Gramsci encourages the populace to define commons sense through the social and political and economic structures that help define a society.

Gramsci (1973) also looks at the concept of hegemony. Williams (1977) defines hegemony traditionally as, “political rule or domination, especially in relations between states,” (Williams, 1977, pg. 108). Williams (1977) also stated that Marxism “shrunk” hegemony from a macrostructure to a microstructure by examining the interrelations between social classes, to a definition of a ruling class. While ideology follows a somewhat formal system that helps define the abstractions inherent in an ideology, hegemony includes the entire process of living, economic, social, political and cultural (Williams, 1977). Eagleton (2000) takes this perspective on hegemony while also building on the works of Schiller (1795) to define hegemony in the quasi-military sense of breaking someone down to build them back up. The fully hegemonized member of society has a docile quality of disinterest that provides few critique to the system that helped shape them. Grossberg (1986) presented hegemony from a next level of ideology approach that Hall (1981) used when he described, “theorizing from the concrete”. In this example hegemony, moves beyond an unspecified way of living and instead becomes a course of action that involves making consumer purchases to feel connection to the larger culture. The concept of hegemony becomes compulsory where resistance involves containment not upheaval. A hegemony exists as a particular social order, a particular system of power, the interests of the ruling bloc become the interests of the people (Grossberg, 1986). All of these examples illustrate how hegemony includes taking part in
oppressive ideologies, even though you yourself are being oppressive. Hegemony is the oppressive constraining force of ideology.

Gramsci used and applied these concepts of hegemony to explain the fundamentals of the power structure and how it reifies certain practices. By using the example of Italy, Gramsci established that the poorer southern peasants produced the labor that allows the wealth of the northern industries to flourish. This unexamined relationship allows a certain type of exploitation to continue without critique because this system reinforces a type of permanence that this social order will continue in perpetuity without a reexamination as to why this system continues. This concept of hegemony where the dominant social group runs the system to maintain power over the others does not take on an explicit tone but instead reinforces patterns of social order that continues without a critique. Gramsci (1973) sees hegemony as a means of social control by a ruling group over the rest of society.

Gramsci (1957) also questioned the underpinnings of liberal ideology by discussing how coercive power works to reify the social order of society. The in-depth and intricate nature of bureaucracy creates a system that coerces a specific caste arrangement in society. For that reason, a specific group dictates the power dynamics separated from the rest of the ruling influence and the public. A good example of this in the drone context involves a new lawsuit introduced by the family of Abdulrahman al-Awlaki, which the presiding judge over the case questions the role of the judicial system that has no power to reign in the executive branch decisions which involve drone strikes as targeted assassinations of American citizens (Doyle, 2013). In this example, the illustration of national security as an executive branch domain has limited the oversight
from other branches of government, let alone the public. The ideological power, and the political power, rests in the hands of the executive branch.

Gramsci (1978) wanted the working class, outside of the domain of the political structure, to develop its own ideology that helps establish what messages resonate with that population. While traditionally the working class in Italy lacked a specific intellectual ideology, they instead developed an ideology based on the lack of information opportunities and choices available to them. Instead of adopting a political ideology that does not serve these working class people, Gramsci instead encourages a working class ideology, which develops from information concerns and voices their perspective through this prism of ideology. This example not only shows the permeable nature of ideology but also how non dominant groups can use ideologies for their own ends of social change but also as means to establish identity.

While many of Gramsci’s ideas have lofty aspirations for radical social change, he also acknowledged the depth and severity of engaging in change to create a lasting impact on a different social world. The aspirations for the working class should always include a specific aspiration to propel the interests and information concerns of the working class (Gramsci, 1978). The struggle for working class interests will continue to exist as a tension with the ruling class, a point that guides Gramsci’s ideological framework. At the same time, Gramsci acknowledges specific information concerns that the working class has that exist outside of theory or ideological principles. Money and working conditions matter more so than any specific ideological principle, which allows for a workers’ rights movement that could include intellectuals, workers and others committed to social justice.
The ability to establish that engagement, however, confounded Gramsci. The vehicle for helping to implement that change, the organization, often times bogged down itself in leadership and specific concerns instead of engaging with the people themselves as to how best to serve their interests (Gramsci, 1978). The idea of leadership and how it fit within hegemony and how best to implement change while also acknowledging outside influences of working class views shows the problems of addressing social change in society.

Gramsci (1973) also advances the concept of the “organic intellect”, a kind of informer to the rest of society about the problems that exist in the excluded group of that time. The organic intellectual, who comes from outside the traditional power structure, believes that this excluded group deserves a better situation in society and can act as critics to the dominant culture of that time period, if that culture does not reflect the best interests of the excluded group. To help facilitate social change, the organic intellectual encourages the entire intellectual community to embrace these concepts and move the ideology from one that serves the ruling class, regardless of membership to one that serves the working class people. The identification with these working class principles includes a discussion with the actors involved in social change about the needs of that time period and the best way to confront injustice to help change the status quo. The relationship with ideology will change over time; yet remain rooted in serving the ruling elite if not for the work of organic intellectuals in confronting these injustices.

Gramsci’s work illustrated both the possibilities of social change from embracing a subversive ideology while also providing enough examples of the challenges facing the working class when confronting dominant exclusionary and exploitative ideologies that
serve the ruling class. These complexities, along with the limitations of a class based
identity construct, indicates how Gramsci’s work on ideology represents a particular time
and place. Modern actors engaged in social change represent several identities at the
same time: some of these identities embrace social change, while others reject these
radical concepts. Gramsci establishes an ideological discussion that at once serves the
interests of the people without the modern context of who those people are.

Althusser builds on Gramsci’s contribution to the discussion of ideology,
especially in his discussion of the Ideological State Apparatus. Althusser lays out
specifically how these ideological frameworks play out in the construction of society and
how specific ideologies serve specific functions. At the same time, Althusser limits this
discussion to straightforward discussions of how this domination occurs in society, which
lacks the dominant introspection that any ideological connection to large issues such as
cultural militarism need for in-depth scholarly discussion.

Althusser (1976) defines ideology by the way in which a concept facilitates an
awareness in a population that previously had been disengaged with such concepts.
Althusser uses the example of the working class as a group of people who need a
philosophical perspective instead of a group only concerned with information gains and
capitalistic accouterments. By establishing a specific ideology, the working class can use
the words and ideas of the ruling class against them while engaging the working class in
ways foreign to the ruling class. This connection to language and social practices shows a
clear distinction between him and Gramsci’s approach to information gains and tangible
improvement of working class people.
The relationship with economic ends also encapsulated how Althusser defined ideology. Borrowing from the Marxist tradition while understanding the complexity of society outside the harsh conditions of the now, Althusser critiqued two tracks of ideology. Hall (1986) illustrated the Althusserian perspective in this way: First, the concept that economic concerns steer all other concerns while other ideologies are expressed at the same time, constructing other realities. This demarcation of economics as the sole factor in ideological construction led to Althusser defining this approach to ideology as the “expressive totality” approach. Althusser offered a new approach to ideology by imagining the profound impact of language. By moving away from the external and moving the ideological discussion to the internal of the human form, Althusser promoted the understanding of how ideology functioned in terms of social relations (Hall, 1986). Hall offered his critique by establishing the notion that only using class or capitalistic structures offer simplistic understandings of ideologies in the modern world. New approaches to ideological concepts indicate that identity relations matter, power dynamics, linguistic, gender, etc. help shape ideological studies in addition to the class concepts adopted and unpacked by Althusser. This change not only reflects Gramsci’s influence on Althusser but also the context of his time.

Althusser applied this concept of ideology when he approached the work of Marx and how Marx made a break from an established bourgeoisie ideology to a working class ideology that attempt to serve the interests of a different group of people. Althusser acknowledged that Marx, and in turn his own work, does not attempt to abandon the term ideology or even the concept of establishing social change without a specific ideological construct. The importance for Althusser resides in the fact of which ideology serves,
which interest and how the ruling class used ideology as form of domination have over
the working class.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, Althusser (1969) looked at the
concept of ideology through the perspective of the state and how it implements power
throughout that state. A specific number of ideological concepts jump out from the
Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) including religion, education, family and politics.
The two different types of ideology emerged as either public or private and how those
ideologies influenced the populace. The difference between the public and the private are
not the main concern to Althusser but instead how they function to create an environment
of complicity by the populace.

The relationship between the theoretical and the information also guides
Althusser’s approach to ideology. Ideology depends on the imaginary relationship that
people have with the information and how they see that relationship playing out in the
everyday nature of life. Althusser (1969) offers a counter to this approach by proposing
that ideology does not exist in the imaginary but in the information as the only form of
understanding. In other words, the information defines the ideology, not the person’s
relationship to the ideology. Without information as the constant, ideology fails to
function in the human conception of the world. This example shows the multifaceted
approach that Althusser used when discussing ideology. While acknowledging the
importance of language, the importance of information always plays a role in helping
shape that discussion.

All of these understandings of ideology depend on the subject (Althusser, 1969).
The subject defines both the person engaging with change and the person who resists the
change. The subject has many different perspectives but the nature of people allow for the creation of differing interpretations based on our nature. For this reason, differing ideologies can prove difficult to bridge because of the importance of the subject as part of the construction of any ideology. The interesting part involves how willing the individual is to engage with an ideology that demands their submission. The subject gives up the free will to choose another path and submits to a specific ideology. This submission can be seen not only on the individual level but the social level in reference to politics, law etc. To engage in society, this level of ideological submission is necessary for basic existence. Again, this example illustrates the possibility of social change. If an ideology is inevitable, the important aspect from a social change perspective involves how you discuss these ideologies that serve the interests of the people while acknowledging the faults and self-interests of the person. The malleable discussion points discussed by Althusser in relation to ideology-subjective, information, ever present, state dictated- allows for a larger discussion into the theoretical tradition of ideology from numerous perspectives, including identity based groups left out of the Gramsci discussion. Conversely, Althusser, while defining ideology clearly, gives several conflicting iterations- the importance of language, the domination of the information- on how ideology functions in society. These conflicting arguments hamper a clear thread to build on for future theoretical work concerning Althusser and ideology.

The consumption of modern life defines the ideological approach disseminated by Adorno and Horkheimer. This ideological approach gives the best examples about not only the neoliberal model embraced in contemporary society but also how such ideologies connect better with and serve different people while also building on previous
understandings of ideologies. Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) define ideology by the influences that dominate modern life both socially and internally. By examining the concept of social relations and its influence on modern life, Adorno and Horkheimer illustrate how ideology not only functions on the internal level, as illustrated by Althusser, or on the structural level, as illustrated by Gramsci, but also how ideologies shape the social engagement that helps define human existence.

By using the term society, Adorno and Horkheimer examine the social relations of a society based on the framework established by the economic standards but taking the discussion to a different milieu that incorporates other social interests including interaction within that society, interaction between different societies and the “products” produced in that society (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944). The intricate nature of human interactions with others on the social level exemplifies the various ideologies in any given society. From one perspective, social relations have provided numerous examples about the differences and metaphorical distance that groups know about each other. A good example of this could be race relations within a given country, the foreign policy of the United States and Russia or the discussion between the public and governmental officials in regards to communication privacy in the United States. While this division among groups of people within a society continues, technology, migration and economic uncertainty indicates a connection among people in a society that also helps to define social relations. Adorno and Horkheimer used ideology to help examine both the connections and departures that people comprehend in modern society and how those ideologies shape these interactions not only on the individual but also more importantly on the social level. This important distinction between the personal and the people in
terms of ideology reflects some of the work by Althusser while also acknowledging the
importance of reflecting on the importance of society in forming any type of ideological
approach. By emphasizing the group as a whole over the individual, Adorno and
Horkheimer illustrated not only how an ideology can spread but also became so ingrained
in any society.

Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) also moved forward the discussion of ideology in
relation to the culture and economic structures that dominate modern life put forth by
both Gramsci and Althusser. The term Adorno and Horkheimer used, “culture industry”,
reflected the movement by the interests of economics to discourage difference in any
form and create a society of similarity and universality through consumption and the
identification with consumption. The identical dominates cultural form, city
development, and the dissemination of information. The entertainment as gospel media
structure encompasses this ideological framework and becomes so ingrained in society
that a news outlet need not justify why it spends so much of its coverage on the birth of a
Royal Baby and not the Bradley Manning trial. The key elements in this continued focus
on the banal include the commitment to mass production through a standardization
process that allows a uniformity of consumption in society that exists as an unchallenged
ideology. The ability of consumerism to maintain its importance throughout the society
infiltrates every cultural crevice. One way this ideology manifests itself in modern
society involves the continuing explosion of advertising in every aspect of daily life and
how little public space exists free from its tentacles. Every part of the earth moves
through the conveyor belt of the “culture industry” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944).
The idea of real life versus the functionality of film disappears in this process, where the power of industry to guide and shape every aspect of life remains unexamined in both real life and film, serves an important ideological function of what is valued in that society. The “culture industry” becomes the norm and allows for people to realize full consumer status while being distracted from their citizenry duties. All iterations of art focus on the style that stresses the universal, serves the interests of industry and allows for the concept of the routine to dominate the discourse. The ideology of submission happens when the least risky choice-culturally, politically, socially-becomes the cultural norm (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944). This sameness of the person as an ideology pushed forward by the “culture industry” allows for the continued importance of the market and the need for a consumer based society that does not challenge these underlying assumptions. The concept of entertainment not only exists as an art form but as a vehicle to sell itself and other things as a product. The culture industry involves the acceptance of the consumer driven economy, which provides temporary sustenance to a specific desire but excludes the concept that the intense desire of want can ever truly be filled with a particular product. The ideological function of the “culture industry” creates an instant gratification by product and removes critical examination of the structure.

The consumerist ideology always sees the consumer wanting more, needing more, and the culture industry allows this desire to be replicated without complete fulfillment from mass production. This reproduction of the entertainment industry also insulates it from other social issues, like cultural militarism, to allow the concept of entertainment as ends in itself to dominate. This focus on the “culture industry” also promotes a duality of competition that forces humanity to make choices about which ideology people will serve
in an either/or context: technology or life, civilization or nature (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944). The “culture industry” provides no escape for personal synthesis of complex ideological principles; instead choices that emphasize unity and not division permeate the social world that people exist in. This duality strays from the Gramscian approach of how an ideology can serve the needs of the working class. At the same time, competing ideologies serve different functions that promote different interests. An interesting twist includes how companies who depend on increased consumption also attempt to serve an ideological interest toward the public good. Adorno and Horkheimer leave out this important factor of corporate engagement that attempts to reflect a positive ideology with civic life.

The complexity of the “culture industry” involves numerous seemingly antithetical concepts that ultimately promote the ideology of consumption on a mass scale. However, if we understand that people are the ones making these choices, how is the person viewed through this prism? While the accruement of a certain level of status in society has allowed the individual unlimited consumption choices, these choices remain above critique from the society around them. The individual exists in a world where the world begins with them alone and forgets the impact the personal has on the group around them. The work of the person who aspires to engage in the greater good for the mass of society becomes obscured by the personal pursuits of the individual. This me first ideology reinforces again the power of the consumer choices versus the citizen choices. The pronouncement of this consumer-based equation involves the growing link between culture and advertising. Artifacts and symbols of cultural connection now exist as products to be bought and sold by the population and established by the demands of
the market (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944). This marriage of consumerism through purchases to the concept of culture as a product encompasses the essence of the “culture industry”: the individual can make consumer purchases through the market to promote a sense of identity of difference as long as that fits an ideology of consumption and ideological coercion which reinforces a dominant capitalist structure (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944).

Jürgen Habermas outlined his approach to ideology with some of the same social parameters as Horkheimer and Adorno but shifted his focus to one that illustrated some type of social change through social engagement in a public gathering space. Habermas defined ideology through the structure and movement toward social change that begins organically with small grass roots groups. Habermas saw this progressive ideology, the kind championed by Gramsci for the working class, as a chance for social integration and the opportunity for a cacophony of voices to speak against the tide of neoconservatism that dominated not only political life, but also the cultural choices people make in connection to language, art and music (Habermas, 1991). Habermas also commented directly on the ideology that helped define his age: technology. By accepting technology as the only way forward and not defining clearly the relationship between human and machine, the dominant approach to living involves the unending progress toward newer and better technology, which shuts down any critique or observations that question this march as irrational (Habermas, 1971). By defining this race to technological utopia, Habermas divided ideological constructs by what is old and what is new. Old ideologies that strictly defined the exploitation of labor and capital are now outdated and replaced by the new ideology of the practical/technical. With technology as the elixir to problems, the
new ideology erases the line between what is practical and technical. Information gains, as well as changes in language, based progress only through the prism of technology (Habermas, 1971). This focus on technology creates a social distance and an information distance from those in power versus those without power (Habermas, 2001). This lack of social engagement with social policies creates an environment and the context for important opportunities for the public sphere to develop and influence social change for the rest of society.

Jürgen Habermas wrote the seminal work on public sphere theory and that ideology helped shape how the public views its social self in society. Habermas first focuses on the public and then expands that definition to look at institutions in the public. Events are considered public that move beyond what is commonly associated with affairs only for a private audience (Habermas, 1991). The public becomes a conduit of information and offers critique of that information. Therefore, the dichotomy is established between the public and private domains. This establishment of public or private is a somewhat recent historical phenomenon. However, elements of the public sphere existed in the Middle Ages in Europe and the realm of the public sphere extended greatly with the development of financial and trade capitalism in the 19th century (Habermas, 1991).

As the idea of the public sphere developed, the categories within the public sphere took shape with advancements in society. The breakdown developed along how the public sphere interacted with politics, the public sphere in relation to social clubs and the media and the culture of products in the market (Habermas, 1991). This integration of the public sphere into different avenues within an established society provides both a
point of similarity and point of contention with Althusser. While Althusser saw these institutions as establishing a social order by maintaining the power structure, Habermas saw different cultural locations - social clubs, coffeehouses etc. - as places open to the opportunity for change that would challenge the dominant ideologies. While both Habermas and Althusser agreed to a certain extent about the social order, Althusser saw institutions as reinforcing the established ideology while Habermas saw other cultural locations challenging those same ideologies.

With more specific parameters of this progressive ideology came a stronger connection to the people involved in these communities. The ability of everyone to participate in the discussion became a critical aspect of the public sphere (Habermas, 1991). Preexisting ranks of social and political rank began to change and the concept of the public sphere became more of an abstract concept and less a rigid and concrete structure that defined social delineations in society (Habermas, 1991). This embracing of different groups and less rigid hierarchy showed some connections with Gramsci. Gramsci saw a working class perspective as an important concept in establishing a link between not only working class people but also those outside of the working class who wanted to work for social change. He also understood the importance of the organic intellectual, a person who came from the working class and could act as a liaison between the ruling class and the working class. Habermas embraced these ideas by moving away from static roles and specific leadership figures to embrace a more autonomous but engaged group that embraced an ideology of the working class and for the interests of the working class.
As these ideas developed, the distance between government and the people took on a greater degree of importance. The terms used for this distance, “sense of the people”, “common voice”, and “the public spirit” led to some friction between the rulers and the people governed by those rulers (Habermas, 1991). As these frictions between people and government continued to widen, the people who worked in the markets who bought and sold commodities and exchanged social labor moved beyond direct subservience to government and defined their own management principles (Habermas, 1991). The lasting impact of this historical transition dealt with how the public interacted with the political structure. In this time period, roughly the beginning of the bourgeois elements in a market society, the public sphere became a mechanized organ for people involved within civil society to voice concerns and have the political authority address those needs and concerns (Habermas, 1991). Based on this historical development, the public sphere became a “place” for the people to establish their position for how an effective government structure should work.

In understanding aspects of public sphere theory, a closer examination of how the theory fits in with the concept of class needs more explanation. As articulated above, the public sphere existed for members of society to engage in a process that questioned government authority. However, in that society, who had access to challenge those institutions? While members of bourgeoisie society had the social capital, working class societies and gendered communities may not have those same privileges (Eley, 2002). The voices of different groups broke away from the traditional conceptual definition of the public sphere and showed the complexities of social and political capital and who could use those avenues. Therefore, the public sphere has not one but many different
definitions depending on the social positioning of the people and the concerns from those communities in a historical context. These challenges mirror the ones that constrained the Gramscian perspective of the working class, a monolith group that agrees on all points in relation to social change.

All four scholars give varying approaches to ideology and how they function in a society. Each scholar takes a clear systematic approach to ideology and how in some instances can reinforce power or in other examples challenge the clearly defined power structure. Adorno provides the best example of embracing a consumerist ideology that offers no examination into the larger political questions of engaged citizenry and capitalistic domination. Althusser establishes his approach to ideology by providing clear points on how existing social institutions reestablish the social order and allow the populace to conduct an existence without questioning the established order. Gramsci and Habermas, conversely, offer new ways to challenge the existing ideology and provide avenues to embrace ideologies that could promote the interests of working class people. All of these examples illustrate not only the changing nature of the construction of an ideology but also how an ideology can be used both as a means for engagement or a means of coercion.

The Discursive Turn: Narrative and Ideology

The examples of Gramsci, Althusser, Adorno and Horkheimer and Habermas provide a theoretical connections of ideology to larger social issues indicate that ideology serves a number of different functions. From promoting the interests of a specific construction of race, to national concepts of service and sacrifice to the reinforcement of power by the executive branch to constructions of masculinity, ideologies serve a number
of different purposes. A common factor in all these examples of ideologies is that rarely
do these ideologies remain static or fixed. In fact, the ideologies change based on the
context, the actors involved and the interests served by a particular ideology. These
important points will help shape the next section of how ideology fits into the prism of
narrative formation and how the stories told by a particular group guide the ideologies of
societies. Narrative provides the vehicle for ideologies to become established in a society
because of the ease with which a populace can accept a particular perspective.

In the previous section, each scholar alluded to the push and pull in the broad field
of communication theory into the relationship between the information and discursive. In
modern communication theories, there has been a sharp turn toward the discursive.
Dougherty (2011) outlines this turn and reasons why attention to the information has
become less of a topic than the discursive construction of reality. Many communication
scholars began to see the world through the prism of social construction. This change
many times overlooks the material construction of reality, a departure from the Marxian
to Gramscian and to a lesser extent Althusserian position. Dougherty augments the
discussion by defining this position as a middle class one, returning to the roots of Marx
and Gramsci that emphasized the everyday reality of material. In communication research
going forward, scholars who have abandoned the material for the discursive should
acknowledge the class privilege that impacts that discussion.

In the formation of the discursive turn, narrative has played a key role in the
depiction of the social construction of reality. The important element of narrative and its
relationship with ideology comes from the same place as outlined by Gramsci, Althusser
Habermas etc.: what interests are served by what stories and how do those interests shape
the stories left untold in any society. Phelan (1989) uses the example of a character from fiction to help establish not only the importance of narrative in shaping discussion about characters but also how the dissection of those characters shape the ideology that pervades from that story. The audience in this example has specific expectations of how a narrative constructs characters and how those characters establish a connection with dominant values. When the characters make decisions that conflict with the dominant values, the narrative acts as the corrective to establish the characters, and not the narrative, as the problematic element (Phelan, 1989). The narrative serves the historical dominant ideologies of that given society, while the characters act as the dissenting voices marginalized and discarded from the important points of discussion.

Fisher (1984) sees narrative as another way to learn information from text. The difference, Fisher would argue, comes from the way to organize the text. Fisher advocates that stories allow for the best way to share information with others. The best stories are the ones told by people, not experts, who act as educators and facilitators of knowledge through a humane channel. The best storytellers convey technical knowledge in a way that makes it palatable to an audience, who then judges the merits of the story against other stories.

Fisher (1984) sees context through the experience of storytelling and what it reflects about the human condition. Narrative gives order to how people experience situations in their lives and that practice becomes part of a commonality that unites people together. These social practices become a historical tradition that attempts to provide a connection to a larger human experience. Fisher uses the idea of narrative but calls it a narrative paradigm that helps construct a social and public meaning. This type of
narrative approach allows reasoning to evolve from all forms of symbolic action, including text. This symbolic action has meaning for those who interpret text.

Many narrative scholars would agree to the importance of text in any research endeavor. Black (1978), however, would disagree as to the function of purpose in a research study. He attaches purpose to those that send and receive messages. The message itself does not have any purpose or any meaning for that matter until the people involved in that process also attach meaning to that message. Black asks the researcher to look at purpose through the eyes of those who create the text that a researcher studies. Black realizes the complexity of the human condition in any type of research.

McGee (1980) offers a heuristic shortcut that many narrative critics have used to help understand text and context through the path of ideology and myth. McGee states that ideographs develop from political language, a kind of vocabulary that establishes the understanding of public motives. This vocabulary functions to control the concept of power and reality. The state uses a discourse of control to help establish these power relations and help the ideograph to guide political decisions, such as a discourse of war. These ideographs function in discourse to establish a political conscious on a social level. A social history develops from the ideograph leaving little chance for a critical examination of how these ideographs function in contemporary society.

Narrative ideology allows for the social meaning to develop from any given context and be influenced by the cultural standards of a specific society. The common language that is shared by a group of people in a society, the values that specific society espouses and the information relevant for establishing norms in that society produce social knowledge (Fisher, 1984). This production of knowledge provides an opportunity
for scholars to find meaning in that social knowledge. Fisher would achieve the goal of meaning through the standards of argument. The outcomes established by either the best argument or the interpretation of a text both aim to achieve a greater understanding of social meaning. While the tools to achieve this outcome may differ, the desire to achieve a social meaning defines narrative critique.

Ideology in narrative form often times take the form of myth and those myths help establish narrative that privilege specific gender norms. Narrative becomes the vehicle of how people understand concepts and which concepts with which to focus on as an observer. The order established by the narrative shows the hierarchy of importance of information and how to decipher the information in levels of importance. For that reason, myth becomes an important aspect in developing and maintaining national ideologies that support a specific position (Lincoln, 1999). Lincoln (1999) outlined an example of Irish folklore where the overall arching theme defines the role of the male as the superior and the role of the female as the supporter. While science may use biology or physiology to help prove this point, narrative functions in much the same matter as far as establishing the parameters of what topics are being discussed and how do people discuss them. Society then accepts these myths, these narratives as ideology, as the norm and leaves few critical questions for dissent. This misrepresentation of society closes discussions about the limitations of narrative of ideology before they happen.

Many of these same gender narrative pervade the military and help establish how the people involved in military service talk about their experiences from a heavily gendered narrative that continues to support masculinity over any other interests. For example, when new recruits join the military, the language choices available to these
recruits exists around two words: ma’am and sir (Disler, 2008). These heavily gendered terms continue manifestations of powerlessness for the feminine and power for the masculine. When using these types of terms then, ma’am does not hold the social significance and attention to respect that sir does, even in the same context. This small example of narrative norms in military language use reinforces the role of the feminine in the language choices that people make in a highly structured hierarchy.

Atkinson and Calafell (2009) look at the concept of ideology in relation to gender and examine the use of narrative in how hegemonic constructed masculinity fits within a specific set of criteria. Masculinity fits within a very specific notion of social construction, including physical force and heterosexuality. These ideologies manifest themselves in Hollywood narrative depictions of masculinity, including the example they use, Anakin Skywalker. These specific concepts of masculinity reinforce the standard and norms of how dominant ideologies are performed in society and how those narrative reinforce a specific construct of masculinity. In addition, when considering how masculinity continues to change, along with other broad ideologies such as whiteness, class and sexual orientation, the fixed nature of ideologies proves false. Instead, ideologies act as a permeable membrane or chameleon that changes as the culture and social forces around it change. The impact of ideology comes not from its inability to change but instead how these concepts continue to remain important and reify specific behaviors and social choices. For these reasons, narrative become the vehicle to describe and detail these stories that reimagine but still reinforces specific conceptions of gender.

This concept of ideology through the conduit of narrative changes in certain ways while reifying specific concepts of masculinity in every day men. Vavrus (2002)
examined the hegemonic construction of masculinity in relation to stay at home dads. While the stereotypical construct of masculinity in the workplace bringing home information resources was challenged by stay at home dads, the television accounts showed these men as still resourceful and strong. These media accounts, which establish specific narrative patterns that make these types of stories palatable to the masses, do not challenge the status quo of masculine or reinforce feminist perspectives. Instead, the ideology of masculinity has changed to incorporate different iterations of masculinity without questioning its status as the focus of media depictions. The malleable nature of ideology changes without the questioning of the dominance of masculinity. The ability of this type of ideology to become ingrained in popular assumptions about masculinity comes from the narrative format.

The media also feeds into the masculinity ideology in situation comedies. While the masculine nature depicted on TV has changed since the 1970s, the preponderance of typical masculine behaviors has not. Hanke (1998) examined the concept of mock macho in situation comedies and extends the notion of masculinity to the bumbling idiot commonplace on TV depictions. These depictions do not challenge the notion of male power, however, and limit the critique of masculinity to one man instead of the concept of male power and privilege. In addition, the broadening conception of masculinity to include the idiot reinforces the primacy of masculinity without questioning or depicting any form of feminism as a comparison. The primacy of masculinity remains while its ideological structure changes and endures. The narrative changes without a critical examination into the role of men as the dominant gender norm in society.
The relationship between ideology and narrative can be defined as a system of beliefs for how a society should be organized. More broadly, ideology can refer to the political and what kind of society is best for the general good of society (Schwarzmantel, 2008). While ideologies have many times been associated with extreme repressive or totalitarian governments, freer societies also include ideologies to shape their own political perspective. Ideologies also act a vehicle to unite a population together and help shape discussion about the importance of specific political projects and goals over other competing projects and goals. These ideologies allow specific narratives to emerge to the limitation of others, not only of gender, as detailed earlier, but also the construction of society and the nation. In this example, the narrative not only emerges from ideology, but also shapes ideology.

While this definition of ideology plays into the concept of building nationalism and helping to determine specific aims of partisan political leadership, ideologies also play a main role in galvanizing movements. Ideologies cannot easily be separated from movements, which use these concepts to help articulate opposition to a particular political position (Schwarzmantel, 2008). These movement groups use that oppositional stance as means to critique power rather than reinforce the power structure. In essence, the movement groups use the concept of ideology against the dominant political elites who are attempting to use the same concepts to cajole these same people to acquiesce to a specific political policy or perspective, such as cultural militarism. In many instances, especially in relation to cultural militarism, the media provides the location and the vehicle for the connection and construction of narrative and how that shapes the U.S. populace view.
Narrative also provides the structure for an ideology to become part of the public discussion about political affiliation. Ellis and Stimson (2012) break down this distinction between elite political actors and the general public, including movement participants, into two intertwined but distinctive ideologies. Symbolic ideology refers to how citizens might view themselves and how that view fits on the political continuum, from liberal to conservative. Operational ideology emphasizes how the actual concrete policy decisions of what people think the government should be doing about a specific problem.

According to Ellis and Stimson’s research, while Americans think of themselves as generally more conservative, when it comes to policy decisions they support liberal policies, such as increased taxes and greater government spending. This finding would help explain why some people may not always vote in their best interest or support a position privately that they might oppose publicly. When considering all this information, the ability to give a clear and definitive definition of ideology does not fit a singular definition. In addition, the narrative becomes important when discussing these topics. The conservative narrative allows a particular perspective to emerge that people can act as a champion of small government as long as in policy the narrative to one that allows for public spending for their community.

While academics will help you believe of the wide partisan gulf that exists in the American political system in 2013, some narratives remain even larger than political partisanship. One of these narratives that help set a national ideology is the discussion of war and how the narrative serves as way to understand it. Ehrenhaus (1993) took the understanding of ideology as an opportunity to create a distinctive public memory that articulates a specific position of national policy. By using the example of the dedication
of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the ruling elites established a specific ideological place for how to understand the Vietnam War as a sacrifice by the soldiers instead of foreign policy debacle that impacted the lives of numerous young men and women in the U.S. and in Vietnam. The narrative serves the ideological purpose of remembering the service instead of the policy. These examples illustrate the permeable nature that ideologies serve as well. While some members of ruling groups change, the ideologies change and continue to serve the elite interest regardless of membership. Any real type of change that embraces a change in ideology has to come from the grass roots.

Some of the permeations developed by Gramsci reflect in this example even though the issue and time period has changed. The ideology of power and how it changes to reinforce dominant narratives of personal sacrifice and specific problematic choices obscure the competing narratives about the social structure and political choices made on the systemic level. The Vietnam War lens is viewed as a problematic choice where individual soldiers suffered severe consequences and continue to deal with the ramifications. The competing narrative of questioning the national military policies or neocolonial domination remains outside the talking points of the social discourse. The ideological power of this narrative reinforces particular concepts.

The concepts in this example are the soldiers’ individuals’ narratives and attempts to reintegrate into society, while ignoring the national narratives that involve the over reach of cultural militarism and use the expansion of empire with foreign policy. The cooptation as outlined by Gitlin (1980) allows ideology to remain a powerful construct by amending the ideology to include the other narratives. The Vietnam Veterans themselves find solace but only when power is reinforced in the dominant social ideologies such as
the importance of country and sacrifice. These ideologies work to reinforce cultural militarism through the vehicle of narrative and allow the power of U.S. cultural militarism to remain critically unexamined.

The relationship between ideology and narrative becomes an extremely important relationship in the social construction of historical figures. Lucaites and Condit (1990) examine ideology through the lens of the black martyred vision in relation to the more well-known story of Martin Luther King and the less known more radical understanding of Malcolm X. By using the construct of equality, both King and Malcolm X give a vision for how the U.S. should look at race relations with a focus on the similarity of the races and a revolutionary view, which promoted a point of diversion. In his vision of equality, King focuses on the similarity by using a rhetoric that spoke mostly to middle and upper class blacks and to whites. Malcolm X focused his message to inner city and working class blacks. Since their audiences diverged so clearly, the rhetoric used by both men changed while still using the broad constructs of equality. Based on Malcolm X’s experience of growing up in a white foster home, the concept of equality, while promoted through law as applying the same to all people regardless of race, took on different forms because of the different value society placed on one race to the detriment of another. Malcolm X then embraced in a Black Muslim identity, which offered a new version of separation and equality, which valued black over White, and allowed for a subversion of the consensus social order. Malcolm X saw this as a separatist equality. This new vision of blackness espoused by Malcolm X challenged the ideology of white supremacy and allowed for an alternative ideology that challenged that approach with blackness as separate but equal. Malcolm X reinforced this separate but equal picture of equality by
not focusing on governmental changes or public policy initiatives but instead the ability of the black population to understand their relevance and provide their own sustenance because a historically racist government could not provide the black population equality. The narrative of Malcolm X, while challenging the dominant racial order, did reinforce traditional American narratives of hard work, the conservative narrative of providing for your own people without government spending and the importance and prevalence of masculinity. The relationship of ideology and narrative, therefore, can at the same time reinforce and challenge dominant social norms.

Martin Luther King, on the other hand, came from a middle class background and that provided him access to opportunities such as education that installed a very different vision of equality. King focused on the construct of the typical American picture of equality through unity and similarity to examine the difference in power between black and white. King hoped to use an ideology of transformation to stamp out racial injustice that would bring about more unity and opportunities available to blacks in this time period. King also emphasized the Christian tradition that would not only emancipate the black population but offer a lens for how the white racist system could go about a social change in its approach to race relations. The narrative adapted by King based on ideological constructs includes one of social integration and connection with the white culture, narratives that embrace the experiment called American democracy.

Both King and Malcolm X adapted these competing ideologies of equality not only from their lived experiences but how they shared that message together. The ideological approach of each man cannot be separated from the other, so while King and Malcolm X produce different pictures of society from the same time period, a
commitment to social justice and the improvement of racial equality link both ideologies from differently constructed narratives.

Both King and Malcolm X redefined the ideological construct of equality based on the work they did for social change through drastically different means while talking to vastly different audiences and adapting distinctive narratives. One of the problems of emphasizing equality from both men involved the ideological construct of difference. Since both men focused on an attempt to promote equality, the concept of difference is omitted from the movement for social change. In this example, from cultural standpoints, blacks had to move toward a cultural whiteness to achieve equality. This reality neglects the difference between races in an attempt to achieve equality. When constructing a picture of racial equality from a contemporary perspective, both conceptions of equality are used in addition to the importance of maintaining cultural identity in the ongoing transition toward social change.

The link between ideology and narrative also plays a key role in the political arena. The importance of talking points defines not only what issues are talked about but also how the public talks about those issues. Biesecker (2011) examined the need for radical politics as a means for engaging in social change and how the concept of ideology plays a role in reducing the impact of attempting to engage in that change. This type of social change need not conform to typical understandings of the political but instead imagine other forces changing ideological assumptions including using love as a tool for change, an uncommon narrative U.S. politics. People play a huge role in this process not just from the object of change but as the subject committed to change. In this understanding of ideology as a means of social change, the subject plays a role but the
larger impact remains acting in community with others to engage in structural change or impacting the systemic entitlements of one group over another. The ideology of social change involves a reimagining of the value of the person, a perspective echoed by Habermas and the unit of analysis for any American narrative, the individual.

When looking at perspectives that contribute to a critical approach, ideology becomes an important element. Ideology involves not only the party involved but also what interest is served by that ideology. The possibility of change always exists in this theoretical perspective and allows for emancipator elements (Wander, 1983). The dominant power of that particular society uses ideologies to “sell” a specific mindset. This understanding proves extremely dangerous juxtaposed against any type of discussion that differs from the dominant group in power. By accepting the dominant ideology without clear critical discernment allows for a gross misrepresentation of both the level of the problems associated a governmental policy, such as drone strikes.

Ideologies exist at the highest level of government in American society as a means of social control. Narratives act as the means in reinforcing that social control. A main tenet of any U.S. presidency lies in the process of giving speeches and how those speeches help define a presidency and the ideologies that president will emphasize. Presidential speeches become a main part of the establishment of how we understand the discourse of democracy in the history of the United States (Benson, 1996). Speech writing gives the presidency the chance to wed the ideas of how to manage policy effectively while giving an oratory explanation for those policies. However, in understanding the previous research that scholars have done on this process, presidents use speeches to control how the public at large thinks about issues and does not care
about what the public or American voters think in regards to those same issues. In essence, the offices of the president uses speeches in an attempt to self-govern a process that has continued since the dawn of the republic (Milkis, 2010). The narrative becomes how the government creates a structural distance from the people, an ideology that reifies elite power, the same conceptions that Gramsci criticized.

The narrative of how the president should act plays itself out in the ideological construct of speechmaking that emphasizes power and privilege. The reality of that speech making process calls to mind the struggle between the ideology of a president and the institution of the president (Stuckey, 1996). The exercise of the power institutional to the president may in fact subvert any ideological patterns that helped that person get elected by the populace (Stuckey, 1996). With this ideological pattern in mind, presidents focus less on clarifying their position on issues and instead want to galvanize the supporters they have on a particular agenda, an ideology that emphasizes the politician’s ability to get elected and less about the issues the official established with the public. The role of the president has moved beyond the ability to educate and focuses mostly now on arousing the attention of voters when delivering a speech, an ideology of emotional connection instead of political policy (Milkis, 2010). The parameters of the job of the president constraints that official to follow the prescribed role of the institution, an example of how Althusser explains the Ideological State Apparatus (Stuckey, 1996).

Hall (1992; 1984) looked at ideology and how we as a populace make sense of our social reality based on some form of ideology and the narratives these ideologies represent. Ideologies take place not as a basis of individual understanding but through the prism of a social construct that helps set standards of behavior. In modern society, the
media act as an ideological construct in helping establish media content. The media uses inferential racism to show the outcomes of situations with blacks as the source of the problems instead of the white system. The portrayal of people of color in this system usually includes caricatures of clowns, slave figures and the native. The narrative becomes one of exclusion and privilege of the white establishment to the detriment of the black characters.

*Narrative and News Media*

A number of studies have connected the news media with the construction of narrative and how that construction helps to facilitate the understanding of information through a specific format. Ott and Aoki (2002) examined the use of frames and how those frames impact how the public consumes a story. They use the case of Matthew Shepherd to establish specifically how he was viewed from news media portrayals and how those portrayals influence the public understanding of Shepherd’s loss of life.

Specific types of narrative emerged from the media accounts by focusing on Shepherd’s stature, the location of his death and his race to develop a narrative that led to public sympathy from outside sources not traditionally aligned with the gay rights movement. In addition, the narrative of drama helped sell the Shepherd story to the masses who consume news media products, helping to reinforce the for profit nature of a news media that depends on ratings and readership. Using this example, the narrative of news media must fit within the confines of a business model that sells a product while engaging the public through the human experience of loss and drama.

While the Shepherd case proves insightful for how to handle the construction of a narrative group stigmatized in the U.S, the importance for my study consists of how a
stigmatized people, the people impacted by drones, have their narrative constructed by the news media. Oliver, Dillar, Bae & Tamul (2012) broke this construction down in relationship to the audience of the news media as an “engagement with the narrative” (Oliver et. al, 2012, p. 206). If the news story is constructed using narrative categories familiar with the audience, the news story in a narrative form created empathy with a stigmatized group. For this reason, it becomes incumbent for media to help establish these narratives clearly to engage in the possibility of social change through news media consumption.

This engagement leaves open the possibility for media coverage a multiplicity of approaches to all parties engaged with the drone strikes. For the purposes of this study, I have to consider not only the political ramifications of how the news media constructs a narrative, but also how the people who have suffered under the drones strikes have their narrative constructed by both the mainstream and alternative media. With the majority of information from the mainstream media coming from sources in the Obama administration, the narrative will have a clear influence from governmental sources. However, alternative media, with access not as far reaching as the mainstream media, have an opportunity to engage with other sources of information, such as the families of drone strike victims and the types of narrative that could emerge from this type of coverage. Journalists such as Jeremy Scahill have already provided a standard for this type of engagement through his work on both Democracy Now and in The Nation. For this reason, the construction of narrative could in fact influence the public to demand more public accountability with the drone strikes if the alternative media sources, and
mainstream media sources, engage with the communities impacted by drones and not just the words of governmental elites.

Nossek & Berkowitz (2006) tried to establish this tricky connection when they looked at narrative through the construction of terrorism in the news media. When journalists produce news stories, they intend to put together a professional narrative that realizes the constraints of the news industry with the professionalism associated with newsgathering. However, when new stories threaten the established order of what society values, these same journalists attempt to move the story back to a cultural narrative that the media audience can connect with based on information they already know. For that reason, the stories constructed through these narrative often times fall back into simplistic portrayals of particular groups. These news media narratives could prove problematic for my study because of the fact that news coverage identifies with the cultural norms of a specific national area, especially in times of turmoil. While the incidents of 9/11 may have taken place over 10 years ago, the narrative constructed from that point has included a very specific picture of countries in the Middle East, including heavily targeted drone areas in Yemen and Pakistan. The U.S cultural values and its impact on news coverage could focus on U.S interests to the detriment of the people on the ground in Yemen and Pakistan. This reality again reinforces the need for alternative media to not only provide source information from nongovernmental source but also use information from journalists who have visited or contacted people in the drone influenced areas of Yemen and Pakistan.

All of these examples indicate a complex relationship between the media producers and the narratives used by those media producers. The main point I wanted to
focus on for my study was to look at the narrative component that is developed by a source, and how they develop it. In other words, mainstream media focus on setting (Middle East) and characters (Western political leaders), while alternative media sources might very well focus on the same setting, but on different characters (victims of drone strikes, Middle Eastern political leaders). The question, then, will be if those alternative media narratives actually cross over into the mainstream and then become part of the over-arching narrative about drone strikes.

Cultural militarism

This section will focus on U.S. cultural militarism as an ideology through the role of media content in shaping these ideologies. Cultural militarism has evolved over the last 50 years to not only illustrate a profound connection between war and product but also as a growing intellectual discontent between the U.S. and the rest of the world. The United States shows its unique place in the world through the development of cultural artifacts, media content that emphasizes a cultural militarism of exceptionalism through sports and news coverage of wars, some of the films produced by U.S. corporations and the technological advancements in communication that help contribute to the establishment of U.S. interests above all other interests.

Stahl (2009) indicated that cultural militarism as an ideology grew with the expansion of the Vietnam War as a cultural artifact in 1960s America, a product to be digested in the “culture industry” sense outlined by Adorno and Horkheimer. With the explosive growth of television, Vietnam became the first “living room war” in U.S history. The pursuits of the U.S military had grown from forging resistance in distance lands to the homes of everyday people as media product. Cultural militarism grew from
something done away from the family and loved ones to a product for the news media to hook potential consumers of both news and advertising, while generating revenue at the same time. The Vietnam War allowed for cultural militarism as an ideology to develop from a national policy to a capitalist entity, a transition from battles and strategies to another show on TV. Stahl charts this progression as “militainment”.

Militainment can mean a variety of different things based on the milieu and the social location of cultural militarism. For example, different college basketball teams play basketball games on Air Craft Carriers in California and military bases in Germany and South Korea. This Bakhtinian spectacle has also extended to American football, with the San Diego Chargers working out on the USS Ronald Reagan in 2013 (Petchesky, 2013). This combination of military installations and cultural pursuits reflect the Der Derian (2009) concept of the Military Industrial Media Entertainment Network (MIMENET), an amalgamation of the culturally important work of sport, the power of military capabilities, and the asinine nature of modern sports media coverage and the grease of capitalistic profit to bring all these entities together.

Since the events of 9/11, researchers have seen a greater connection between the cultural relevance of sports in the U.S. and the connection to the military apparatus of the U.S. Empire. Butterworth (2008; 2012; 2013) connected the modern sports figure to the larger cultural impact of mythmaking in American society and extends the connection between sports and the military to forge a greater synthesis between two secular forces that act as civil religions in the U.S. Many of the same cultural symbols that dominate both sports and the military—the U.S. flag, the hyper masculine body type, and the reliance on one specific heroic figure—ascibe the most important qualities of American
exceptionalism. Sports acts as conduit of military importance and significance by giving the military a cultural location for flyovers, acknowledgements and promotion to the importance of military service and a language to discuss sports and military events in much the same matter. By normalizing cultural militarism and adding to its cultural importance, sports exists as a location of support for the cultural connection of cultural militarism as a normalized and significant part of the larger American culture.

While sports exists as an important location in the establishment of the larger cultural connection of cultural militarism in American society, other entertainment locations establish the cultural importance of cultural militarism. The next logical step for cultural militarism becomes how the military industry can reinvent the pain, heartache and sacrifice of soldiers throughout the world fighting numerous wars into a fun entertainment experience. The leaders at the Department of Defense have figured out many different ways, through video games and child friendly toys, to accomplish that most lofty of goals. Cultural militarism becomes another product in the increasing expansion of entertainment in American popular culture (Stahl, 2010). The relationship between video games and the military dates back at least to the Gulf War and has continued to grow so much that designers of the unmanned Predator drones wanted to design a controller that would more closely resemble a Sony PlayStation (Stahl, 2010). When a video game designer replicates a war instrument, and more importantly vice versa, the significance of cultural militarism can do nothing but grow in the public’s larger cultural practices. It would seem unfathomable for a young soldier returning from the trench warfare of WWI would want to somehow recreate that experience through an entertainment outlet. At this point in cultural militarism, not only can the modern day
solder replicate their own experience but through video games so can Troy from Oxford, who has never even stepped foot on a military base.

The video game manufacturers, however, have not stopped at recreating a war experience for the consumer. The Department of Defense has not stopped looking for ways to use video games to simulate the soldier experience for prospective foot soldiers. This new entertainment military synergy allowed corporate behemoths such as Lockheed Martin, a weapons manufacturer and Sega game systems, to forge a deal that allowed Sega to make software for Lockheed (Stahl, 2010). This modern day marriage of video games and weapons manufacturers have led to video game manufacturers using modern day conflicts, such as the Iraq War, as the theme for their games, an entertainment console designed to also help soldiers detach themselves from their combat realities (Stahl, 2010). This fusion of entertainment and cultural militarism indicates just how critically obvious and completely opaque the term cultural militarism has become throughout American culture. Cultural militarism has completely influenced an entire industry, video games, that through a cursory glance would have no obvious connection to it. The industry of cultural militarism does not even need a war for its complete cultural domination to happen. The wars may provide a background for the entertainment product, but the brand of cultural militarism grows beyond a specific conflict connection.

The tricky part in understanding the critical significance of cultural militarism becomes when a cultural artifact, such as a video game, becomes the new canvas for military battle without the consumer always knowing how entertainment and the conflicts are connected. When manufacturers released the SOCOM: Navy Seals trilogy of video games, the creators of the game could not have imagined how much the game mimicked
the real military missions happening in a different part of the world. While the game involved a mission to take Algeria, the U.S. led invasion of Iraq caused numerous civilian deaths. The makers of the game racked up large profits from the sale of SOCOM: NAVY SEALS as the Iraqi people struggled under the strain of the consequences of war (Mirrlees, 2009). Cultural militarism, through its video game connection, distances the consumer from the realities of war. The critical significance of cultural militarism becomes an American distraction from human suffering.

Video game designers and military advisors understand the relationship their industries have with each other. The video game industry relies on a somewhat particular age bracket of consumers, mostly in the teenage and young adult demographic. Toy manufacturers that produce military figures want this relationship to begin even earlier. While military themed toys have been around for several generations, the Afghanistan and Iraq War generation has seen a spike in military toy interest. The toys include a “Desert Tactical Advisor” and a “World Peacekeepers PlaySet”, something for a new generation of young consumers to play with in their free time (Stahl, 2010). These new toys, however, increasingly connect to the larger wars around them, providing the impetus for a George Bush action figure, complete with flight suit (Stahl, 2010). The encroachment of cultural militarism on to childhood practices of play, while connected in years past, indicate the growing relevance of cultural militarism on American youth culture. In the example of an action figure, cultural militarism becomes a way for parents to reach out to children and provide them endless hours of entertainment through military, and political, figures. With contemporary figures, cultural militarism has found new ways to critical influence the children of America.
The impact of cultural militarism is derived from these entertainment artifacts.

The significance of cultural militarism develops from the industries that depend on cultural symbols for their economic survival: video game manufacturers and toy distributors. It is not in the best interests of these economic entities to critically examine how significant cultural militarism really is, especially in the United States. These examples of both video games and military themed toys in the larger context of cultural militarism become the means of survival in a capitalist society, the information realities from cultural figures.

While cultural militarism depends on entertainment avenues for gravitas with the public, other social locations provide a place for critique. Cultural militarism as product also comes in the form of news coverage of specific military conflicts and how the media industry packages that content for mass consumption. In the 1990s, the media industry first focused on the first Persian Gulf War as the location for war but soon moved to Bosnia to cover the new war of the day. The new industries of media consumption and their links to the larger culture, industries and links based on speed and structured by brief insights, failed to show the centuries old dispute that encompassed a complex inter-ethnic conflict that engulfed the Bosnian state (Der Derian, 2009). The “realness” of this type of conflict presented images for the TV industry that lacked the “cleanliness” of smart bombs and Otherness associated with the Persian Gulf conflict. This media content conundrum showed the complicated nature of producing war coverage for the larger American culture: how do you sufficiently sanitize the horrors of war for the mass consumption of the public?
As indicated in the earlier part of the 1990s, TV producers and media content distributors found that type of product in their cultural production of the first Persian Gulf War. While the U.S. remained uncertain how many Iraqi actually deployed to Kuwait, the U.S. military prepared for the worst. While after the war the number was actually much lower than the U.S. estimated, ABC news refused to use satellite images that reflected the lack of Iraqi troop buildup in the region (Kellner, 1992). The *New York Times* joined ABC news in disseminating figures related to Iraqi troop levels that did not reflect that reality of the actual troop levels. In fact, much of the information that came from these news reports did not get a critical analysis from news agencies about the accuracy of the number of troops involved (Kellner, 1992). This specific example illustrated not only the cultural connection between the media and military but also how the production of news can at times obscure the facts for the news story that is being consumed by the public.

This connection of narrative and how it guides the lens of cultural militarism can lend itself to important locations for cultural pushback from the larger society. While the dominant images and media coverage from the mainstream U.S. media develops a particular story from the mainstream media, the struggle over how those meanings play out in the rest of society remain open for debate (Hodkinson, 2011). In these openings, alternative media can provide not only alternative narratives but also alternative perspectives that allow for a check on cultural militarism produced by the structures of government but also by the structures and content that define mainstream media.

A more modern connection between media and cultural militarism existed in the buildup and coverage of the Iraq War in 2003. Some of the biggest changes that have transformed the media coverage from the First Persian Gulf War to the War in Iraq in
2003 included both media companies and media content. In relation to media companies, many news organizations joined media conglomerates like CNN and Fox News, in reporting directly from the region (Fuchs, 2005). This growth of media companies provide not only politically and culturally influenced content, i.e. Fox and conservatives, MSNBC and liberals, but also the types of coverage that mainstream media depicted. The largest cultural shift in media coverage from the Persian Gulf to the Iraq War involved the emotionalization of not only the troops connected to the U.S. military but also the superiority of the U.S. forces based on their technological advantages (Fuchs, 2005). These advantages provided the most valiant U.S. soldiers the chance to remove a significant regime through the exalted U.S. forces. The larger cultural product sold to the mass U.S. audience reflected this approach, while the line between the “reality” of the War in Iraq and the product seen by the U.S. public continued to diminish.

These more modern understandings as to the evolution of cultural militarism can also be shown in how military operations can be quantified in relations to speed. Stahl (2008) looks at the process of “social militarism” in relation to the ability of time to shape how we judge the effectiveness of a tactical military operation. In the days following 9/11, the need for a precise measure of time invading every aspect of U.S culture. Cultural militarism adapted to this new cultural mindset, especially in terms of the “Shock” and “Awe” offensive that began the Iraq War.

The advancements of U.S military power showed how fast and easy conflict could be ended through military means, keeping pace with the overall tone of the rest of society. The speed of media to report on war also changed. From the Vietnam War to the Gulf War, the turnaround on a battlefield story changed from two weeks to immediately.
The ability of war to change with the quick twitch nature of modern society showed another aspect in the evolution of cultural militarism. The use of cultural militarism in the media became another example of the pleasures and pains of modern life by acknowledging the importance of brutal efficiency without the languid nature of cultural exchange. The evolvement of cultural militarism mirrored the evolvement of society through instant gratification. Cultural militarism not only embraced the “cultural industry” in the Adorno and Horkheimer capitalist sense but also the highly prioritized concepts in U.S. society including efficiency and speed indicated that cultural militarism could reinforce and complement multiple ideologies.

As illustrated by Hanke (1998), ideologies rarely stay static and continue to change and evolve within a particular epoch of time. These examples not only show cultural militarism’s ability to adapt to permeable cultural standards but also indicate how cultural militarism invokes the technological advancements in society. One of the benefits of technological innovation is the need to make life easier, not only physically and mentally but also morally. To expand on the shock and awe term not from a time perspective but from an impact on society, contemporary wars now not only allow for brutal precision but also lessen the impact on civilians. Schiller (2008) details this process that helped cultural militarism expand through the continued technological development of communication. Embryonic communication advances included military radar and radio as a way to increase the speed of communication throughout the burgeoning U.S. global military presence. These technological innovations continued moving forward along with increased elements of trade and commerce that dominated foreign policy in cohesion with U.S military expansion. Communication acted as the
conduit in this ever-expanding relationship between commerce and cultural militarism, ultimately allowing a company like AT&T to become one of the largest recipients of military contracts. One modern day example of communication and cultural militarism includes ARAPNET, the rudimentary communication system that would one day become the present day Internet. The Department of Defense provided the funding at universities and research labs to make this type of communication system a reality. Without cultural militarism, one could argue, that the world may not know the Internet today. While it may seem unrelated, cultural militarism gains critical significance when you examine its interconnected web to everyday practices, such as communication. Cultural militarism, in this example, created an environment for easier communication for the entire population in any number of countries. In this example, the ideology of cultural militarism became an example of soft power, how continued military spending will lead to technological advances that help facilitate the possibility of cultural engagement.

All of these examples of cultural militarism and ideology indicate again the languid concept of ideology and the important function an ideology serves during particular time periods. The context of the situation changes within a society and the concept of cultural militarism as an ideology changes with that concept to best serve the interests of the dominant political class.

*Media and Power*

In this section, I will examine the relationship between media and power by detailing specific theoretical traditions including a focus on political economy, the propaganda model, framing theory, hierarchy of influences on media content and media indexing theory in relation to media coverage. Before I begin that discussion, I wanted to
give a brief discussion about how to examine media power for the purposes of this study. The mass media function primarily on three distinct features: content, production and reception (McCullagh, 2002). My study will examine theoretical traditions through these three distinct features. This examination will provide insight into not only how the theoretical traditions functions in particular studies but also the larger issue of how the mass media functions in current U.S. society.

Media and power in the United States has grown out of a number of cultural and economic traditions that have helped establish the importance of media in the larger modern culture of today. While Cottle (1993) would argue about the lack of consensus of decisions that come from the power elite, the focus of this discussion will illustrate how the media can function in a variety of different examples as a purveyor of information from the dominant political voices, to the extent of the degradation of alternative voices, which will be discussed alternative media.

**Political Economy and Media**

Many political economists have used traditional Marxian ideas to help explain how communication and media scholars can adapt these principles to the specific field of communication and media studies. These scholars emphasize that production involves creating a product and transforming that product for use in the market through technology and labor. This process rings true with both the dissemination of communication and how that fits with the media structure. Specific types of communication, i.e. the fastest and easiest, are privileged over others. The media acts in many of the same ways, as compartmentalizing specific facets of gathering information and sharing that information with the larger culture (Atton, 2006). As the consumerist society has grown, however, the
complicated intersections between the larger populace and the product have led many to question the Marxian perspective (Lee, 2010). However, when considering the relationship between political economy and media, the focus of time allotted any alternative perspective that challenges any form of capitalism seems to reify the importance or at least acknowledging the importance of Marxian ideas in outlining a specific political and economic perspective.

A clear and concise definition of the synthesis between political economy, communication and the media is needed to narrow down the talking points from generalized understanding of politics and economics to the field of media and communication. Here is one example:

Messages are situated within political and cultural assumptions about what is normal and acceptable within the society. In news production these include beliefs about hierarchies of access, about who has the right to speak, what are the key political institutions and what is "acceptable" behavior. On an everyday level, the television, media and radio also provide information about specific events, which tacitly relate to these unspoken assumptions. (Harmon & Lee, 2010)

Based on this definition, the larger structures that dominate a society impact the type of communication and what type of media will inform and entertain a specific country and the larger society. In the United States, some of these structures include an emphasis on capitalism; the importance of monetary accumulation and a two party dominated political system. These structures rarely come under critical intellectual examination in the larger culture. One reason for this lack of engagement could be that the media does not attempt to challenge these institutions and their shared importance.
The marriage of political structures and economic structures help to define the role of media in society. Political economy does not look at a media system as something that cannot be changed or something that is not without significant room for growth in a multitude of ways (McChesney, 2008). The U.S. media model depends heavily on professional journalism and revenue streams that primarily come from advertising. This model has been exported to media sources around the world, primarily from U.S. based media corporate conglomerates. These types of neoliberal policies have caused changes to virtually every media sources in every country throughout the world. These giant U.S. media corporations understand how local audiences work and adjust their content to fit the cultural interests of their audience. These corporations also partner with local media sources in their effort to distribute content, while growing their global brand. These media corporations, however, do not abandon all “good” U.S. commercial practices. The global advertising giants have continued to consolidate, showing that U.S. economic practices in both media and industry that depend on media increasingly adopt the U.S. media model (McChesney, 2008). This media phenomenon shows the crafty adjustments transnational media corporations make as they continue to stake their economic claim to a larger portion of the global media landscape.

Mainstream media outlets ignore extreme political positions in lieu of “politically neutral” topics such as crime, health and lifestyle choices (Bagdikian, 2000; McChesney 2008). The political topics that journalists once covered voraciously lessened to include political positions that reflected existing standards and elite opinion. In addition, the professional journalist reinforces the capitalistic viewpoint through media content as the dominant way of life for the American people. Finally, the continued development of
democracy did not explode with professional journalism; in many ways, democracy in contemporary U.S society has in fact reached a very weak point (McChesney, 2004).

While the drone issues is a new development of U.S. foreign policy in the U.S. media, several examples from history illustrated the propaganda model and how different governmental elites have used the propaganda model in terms of media coverage of complex international issues. Historically, the U.S. media coverage from mainstream media companies have not challenged the dominant governmental positions in a number of international locales, including, Nicaragua, when those governments supported U.S. interests abroad (Chomsky, 2002). These types of media coverage that serve U.S. interests internationally have continued into the modern political era, which is dominated by neoliberal economic policies and militaristic foreign policies. The United States, with the backing of international organizations as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, continue to promote commercial interests and trade liberalization through globalization (Mullen, 2010). The mainstream media has also allowed its workers to become “part of the military” through embedded reporting, again reinforcing the power of the dominant political ideology in the U.S. These types of media policies have been seen in the reporting of the drone strikes, leading to the reinforcement of the propaganda model during the current political timeframe.

As the propaganda model illustrates clearly, the relationship between the interests of the government and the interests of the mainstream U.S. media overlap to a proportion that frames the type of news coverage received on international issues, such as drone attacks. While mainstream media reporting is intended to provide the public with objective “knowledge”, the continued rise of digital media outlets have led to the
weakening of traditional mainstream media news. These new trends and the continued economic devaluing of news production have forced many traditional mainstream media outlets to purge their foreign news bureaus as a way to save money (Curran, 2009). This trend in media production may explain why the mainstream media relies so heavily on governmental sources: these media outlets do not have the revenue to hire international reporters to report on the drone strikes in the Pakistani theater. The lessening of this “social responsibility” between U.S. mainstream media and the public on issues such as the drone strikes can lead to a public less informed about international issues and a greater influence from governmental sources on the overall content of news reports, a practice that shows the significance of the propaganda model in critical media studies research.

Framing

This section will focus on framing and its influence on media content and relationship with U.S. foreign policy interests. Framing involves a variety of concepts related to both internal psychological processes but also sociological frames of how meaning is constructed in the social world. In fact, framing may involve anything from how we develop meaning from a particular text, connecting a specific message of health to the populace, the ability of sustainability groups to sell their message to the populace at large and how framing allows for a variety of research methods and an inclusive process of how we look at the world epistemologically (D’Angelo, 2002; Entman, 1993; Garcia-Retamoro & Galesic, 2010; Reese 2007).

A clear definition of how communication scholars define framing theory will begin this discussion. To frame something in a particular way 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,” (Entman, 1993, p.52). Framing involves the idea of text and how the frames work themselves into the meaning we derive from those texts; however, how that process works is not completely clear (Entman, 1993). While framing may involve numerous particular functions in a specific section of a paper, a sentence within that section may provide no particular frame at all (Entman, 1993). Framing usually helps illustrate specific parts of text as more important than other parts of the text while making that section stick more saliently in that person’s mind (Entman, 1993). From this particular definition, framing changes with how the information is presented and how salience works from that particular text.

Christie (2006) looked at the Iraq War and the relationship between public policy and the news media. When public support is high, the media will represent the policy favored by the governmental elites. When that support diminishes, the media will play against the public policy from that same government structure (Christie, 2006). In the case of the Iraq War, the media did not take a critical approach to the information presented from the White House. The media just used the language and statements put forth from the Bush Administration (Christie, 2006). In this example, the media frame developed directly from the stance taken by the political actors in power.

Arsenault (2006) also looked at media framing and the war in Iraq about the decisions that remain unclear about the lead up and execution of the war became socially produced by the elites in charge of that war. Since the public has a limited access to all the information from the government, the communication aspects of news agency take on
a greater importance during a national dialogue (Arsenault, 2006). Without a clear commitment from the news agencies to the public, the public can rely on misinformation when formulating their choices about foreign policy decisions, such as the war in Iraq. To combat this tendency, news agencies should use multiple sources, multiple frames and a diversity of opinions when relaying that information to the public.

Dimitrova and Stromback (2005) looked at the media narrative related to the Bush proclamation of Mission Accomplished in Iraq. In examining *The New York Times* accounts of this event, Dimitova found news frames that focused on the military conflict and how that coverage shaped the meaning in news production. By emphasizing specific aspects of the media coverage of the war in Iraq, such as military conflicts and not emphasizing other news events related to the war in Iraq, such as antiwar protests, *The New York Times* helped shape the public meaning about the Iraq War. In addition, Dimitrova and Stromback found that the public that sees military success and not the fall out of war, such as war victims, will view the war in a more positive manner and that perspective relies heavily on media emphasis and interpretation of events. In this example, *The New York Times* framed the Iraq War in simplistic militaristic frames.

Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern (2007) looked at media frames on the Internet and examined how different sources covered and reported on the war in Iraq. The immediacy of the Internet provided a different milieu to examine the frames put forth by media during a time of conflict. The Internet provided more frames that focused on episodes of the war i.e. specific battles and daily updates of military conflict and moved away from thematic content which provides a larger landscape of the ultimate goals of the war in Iraq and issues related to the bigger message the war sent to the rest of the world. While
the Internet provides a new landscape for the consumption of news, the Internet does seem to limit the news accounts to the traditional frames of episodic accounts verses thematic accounts of news events and issues, illustrated by Iyengar (1993). Specific countries that favored the war saw media content focused on the positive aspects of the war in Iraq in their initial reporting (Dimitrova and Connolly-Ahern, 2007).

In the age of globalization, different countries reported on the conflict in Iraq with a more nationalistic frame. Fahmy and Kim (2008) looked at different representations of visual coverage of the war in Iraq from both The New York Times in the U.S. and The Guardian in Britain. The photographs from the Guardian provided more spontaneous or more direct coverage in their visual depictions and accounts of the war than The New York Times. The New York Times focused on the process and production of the allied forces in their quest using militaristic means and not as much time on the impact to the Iraqi civilians. From this example, the media frame comes from the national origin of the news producers and not from the media source itself.

Hierarchies of Influence

The role and influence of media content exists in a strange symbolic location in modern American society. According to a July 2013 poll from the Pew Research Center, while Americans have an overall distrust of most media content, these same Americans say the media criticism of political leaders play an important role in keeping governmental officials in power from exercising more control over the populace as a whole (Greenwald, 2013). The role of media as a watchdog of political officials, while significantly influenced by economic and political factors, still remains a relevant source for media content that confronts the power of political leaders. Several scholars have
examined the role that outside sources and other factors play in shaping media content and the significance that content holds in relation to public interest and as a check on power (Sigal, 1973; Covert & Wasburn, 2007; Fahmy & Johnson, 2012). In the U.S., structural economic factors related to capitalism, along with political considerations of the people in legislative power in Washington have influenced the type of media content. Many reporters remain connected to elites within government for the chance to report on information almost directly from the information provided by governmental sources. While this strange amalgamation of economics and politics connect, several other influences help shape how the public views media content and why that has importance in the larger structure of U.S. media.

Shoemaker and Reese (1991) and Reese (2001) examined what factors play a role in influencing media coverage that moves beyond simple economic and political influences. While many studies have focused on macro level influences that include the structural factors mentioned above, a number of studies also focused on micro level media influences that examined violent content in media, along with individual levels of social control as performed alongside the viewing of media content. While a worldwide study of individual level studies of media content could prove problematic, the individual still proves the cultural and social norm for the United States (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). This individual mindset indicates a connection between the macro level and the micro level as far as influences in the U.S. media content. With advertising continuing to grow in the macro level structure of consumer driven media content, the individual level consumer still provides the example of how best to connect with the populace (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). This meeting point of both macro and micro level
influences on media content show that while specific elites and capitalist framework establish the structure of media content, the individual level indicates a pathway for both researchers and advertisers to study just what sources influence their connection to the media content.

These influences have a strong role in establishing their impact on media content.

Media content studies remain important for a variety of reasons, from establishing underlying forces that help shape media content, to cultural representations of people involved in the sporting world, to the continual striving of adding more entertainment sections to traditional news coverage about political and social issues (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991; Moretti, 2005; Cooper-Chen, 2005). Many of the cultural norms in terms of journalist training and construction of news coverage have been outlined by McChesney (2008) Bagdikian (2000). The journalism trade in the U.S. since the beginning of the 20th century has focused on an objectivity model that also helps constrain the types of reporting done by journalists to safe topics in media content, including crime, education, etc. In addition, the journalists also adapt to the standards of the newsroom, which applies its own level of socialization that can influence media content.

While this ever-expanding relationship between the production of news and the importance of news content in an entertainment influenced media content world, the news “beat” of the journalist remains of high importance. Sources often times have the power in this dynamic between themselves and the journalist because the information they provide can help dictate the type of media coverage a story receives. However, this puts the journalist in a precarious position. The journalist must trust the source is not lying or only promoting their own interests in sharing information with the journalist,
while the journalists have to assess the context of the situation and determine the legitimacy of the information from that source (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). The influences in these examples show not only the actors involved in the media industry but also those who are part of other industries and their connections to valuable information that help alter the product the public has access to in their media consumption. Based on all of these factors, media coverage is shaped and influenced at an individual, social, structural and cultural level.

While the idea of the professionalization of journalists may prove to be a difficult cultural standard for American journalists to define clearly, another important factor impacts many of the standards that U.S. media reporters aspire to uphold. Media freedom remains an important topic even during the tumultuous times of 2013, with journalists facing jail time for reporting on information from governmental sources (Greenwald, 2013). However the conception of the freedom the media holds in such high regard actually means access to power and the ability to follow a story across international borders (Reese, 2001). This connection to freedom often obscures organization pressure, which may influence the type of stories that journalists report on and about, limiting the actual freedom a reporter has in his or her reporting. The interests served on an organization level, whether through the media structure itself, the influence from universities on the correct type of job a journalist should attempt to obtain, and the interest of the public in understanding the news content as a product all influence the freedom most reporters and journalists aspire to have.

Fahmy and Johnson (2012) examined the hierarchy of influences and applied the theory to the media coverage of the Iraq War. The authors not only discovered that the
hierarchy of influence not only impacted different reporters source content when it came to reporting on the war but also what sources mainstream media sources left out or failed to examine. By looking exclusively at embedded reporters, the types of coverage not only reflected a positive depiction of the troops but a larger impact on the policies that the troops committed themselves to fight for during the war. For these reasons, the embedded reporters not only focused on the individual levels of the troops but the ideological factors from the politicians, including President Bush’s declaration of Mission Accomplished in 2003 (Fahmy & Johnson, 2012). While the American public grappled with its position about the war, that discussion did not filter down to the embedded reporters. This example illustrated that the information that journalists receive from different sources about a story not only influences media content about that story but also impacts the relationships the journalists have with those sources. These embedded reporters provided different media content based on the sources they used to produce that content.

All of these examples conceptualize the inherent contradictory factors that help shape the hierarchy of influence on U.S. media coverage. A larger issue remains from an academic perspective: what role does the academy have in perpetuating these influences? More research and professional development needs to be done about how educational institutions have done and continue to do in their preparation of young journalists who aspire to work in the media industry.

*Indexing Theory*

With the continued professionalization of journalists, the journalist who reports in mainstream media outlets attempts to provide a standard not only of objectivity but also
of fairness to a number of different perspectives on a complex issue. By obtaining
information from a number of different sources, the reporter attempts to provide a
number of different viewpoints on the subject. Bennett (1990) suggested that this
relationship of offering different viewpoints often times promotes the interests of some
sources of information more so than others. Based on information from the propaganda
model, the elites from the U.S. government become the priority in any coverage of a
national or international issue.

This focus on the elites of government as the ultimate sources for media content
serves a number of different purposes. First, the “official” account of information comes
specifically from a governmental source, which adds credibility to any news story.
Second, the parameters of the story not only become defined by the governmental sources
but also the business climate and context of when the story is reported to the public
(Bennett, 1990). The reporter could also state by focusing on the governmental officials
about a top story that they actually are engaging in a top down form of democracy. Since,
the population votes for the elected officials, the journalist is actually serving the public
interest by reporting on information from the officials elected by the populace. Finally,
the lack of freedom available to the reporters also plays a significant role in this process.
The reporters belongs to a newsroom and are impacted by the role that editors, colleagues
and other reporters play in establishing the significance of specific source information
over other source information. The present day reporter or journalist is in fact engaging
with the practice of reporting and developing media content in much the same way as
previous reporters based on the standardization and socialization of the newsroom. Based
on these factors, the journalist creates an index of which sources are considered the most
relevant to reporting on a particular issue and how they focus on some sources over others under the auspice of objectivity and diverse viewpoints.

Harp, Loke and Bachmann (2010) apply this theory of media indexing to the role of dissenting voices against the war in Iraq. While governmental voices that challenged the Bush administration’s role in Iraq took precedence, other voices from the peace community and outside the government structure did exist from the reporting about the negative impact of the Iraq War. In addition, the voices that existed from outside the official sources helped to shape the public discussion about the Iraq War. For example, the critique offered by the media coverage, in this case Time Magazine, offered a shift from the Iraqi governmental officials to the Bush governmental officials. This shift indicated not only the importance of sources from outside the governmental structure but also how that shift can change how the public talks about a foreign policy issue.

While this contemporary example of indexing theory and its relationship with media coverage of the Iraq War focused on more current political issues, the concept of indexing theory has existed before these modern engagements between the media and government. Lippman’s original work in the 1920s illustrated the stunting relationship the media corps can expect when dealing with governmental sources as the standard for information. By extolling liberty as the main weapon against tyranny, Lippmann (1922) asked the populace to move beyond simple answers transmitted by government and instead take a critical stance to any information that develops from either the media or the government. The news produced by the media acts as an apparatus of control, in much the same way the Catholic Church acted as a vehicle of control as outlined by both Gramsci and Althusser. This disconnect between the people and their liberty should
motivate the media to act as a purveyor of truth for the greater good instead of producing news product that exists as an amalgam of stories, propaganda, eye witness accounts etc. While decrying the intricate nature of the media to the government and failures of how that relationship had developed, Lippmann still understood the importance of the media, comparing it to the bible. The limitations of the media to underscore government opinion instead of the people’s opinion should not limit the opportunity for journalism to report critical media content that grapples with every word disseminated from the political elites. The human error of management instead stifles the profession of journalism with editors, many not more credible than the average person, given the enormous power of producing the news product that the public consumes. This power, along with the connection to government interests, limits the overall scope and impacted the media throughout 20th century American history.

The media has functioned in a number of ways that either reflect the dominant government position or reinforced that position with favorable coverage. This lack of critique emanating from the media sources created a lack not only of accountability from public officials but a lost opportunity for the development of democracy through the lens of media questioning (Lasswell, 1971; Lasswell, 1941; Ellul, 1976). While many examples can be examined throughout U.S. history, Lasswell (1971) illustrated that even during WWI, the government used propaganda to help establish its position and used the media to help blast that message to the public. The government realized that information resource mobilization would only take them so far in their efforts at creating war-like state; public opinion would also need to be galvanized together to help facilitate a government agenda of war making. At the beginning of the war, only one public official
worked directly with the press on war efforts; the U.S. war effort in relation to propaganda through the media evolved to an organization that edited the field press and controlled home papers that the Army received (Lasswell, 1971). This example articulated that control of the media happens in variety of ways depending on the war, technology and how the government uses its resources to illustrate its position using propaganda.

This example of how government crafts a message of propaganda from the government to the people using media outlets or even creating media outlets to share its message directly with the populace has been an important point of discussion in the work of Jacques Ellul. Ellul illustrated that this complex process of propaganda that comes forth from the government breaks down basic conceptions of how to understand the difference between information and propaganda. While scholars have long considered information important facts and propaganda, Ellul does away with this distinction and instead synthesizes information and propaganda into a jumbled mess of stories and information weaved together (Ellul, 1976). This evolved form of propaganda helps establish structures for public opinion and how these talking points limit the democratic process by limiting the potential for topics to those established by government dissemination. Since the government impacts the news environment of information linked with propaganda, the media acts as the intermediary that links the populace to these issues. The media then connects this new mishmash of facts, stories, events and analogies to create a product that helps to facilitate not only how the public interacts with issues but also what issues the public considers. This example of propaganda and its relationship with facts indicates that the relationship between the government and the
media on any political issue includes a complex dissemination of words and images that help establish conventional narratives that the public can consider in a palatable manner.

With this plethora of information, images, propaganda and discussion points that develop both from the government and the media in relation to political issues, the critical mind becomes an important factor in making sense of this miasma. The important to remember when understanding propaganda, the media and the government in the U.S. involves the relationship between government regulation and capital development. The greatest location of propaganda in the U.S. comes from the commercial industry (Lasswell, 1941). Advertising and the procurement of profit exist as the standard for development in the U.S., which helps shape nearly every aspect of society, including the government and media. This inculcation of the advancement of consumerism into every orifice of media creates a crippling impact on the advancement of public opinion as outlined by Ellul. The democratic citizen, while aware of these areas of propaganda in the media, may instead abandon critical inquiry for the satisfaction in knowing that some of these media message exist strictly for entertainment purposes without a political agenda.

Some media exist to inform about political messages and others exist for purely superficial reasons. This detachment of critical reasoning by the citizen allows for the tactical propaganda that comes both from the media and the government to create clear social locations for democratic engagement or limited intellectual engagement with entertainment products, many times produced from the same media outlets, sanctioned by government ruling bodies. Lasswell (1941) suggested the opposite: every bit of information that comes from the media should be looked at critically and exist as an opportunity for democratic engagement. Through this engagement, the “news” and
“entertainment” functions of media synthesize and create an environment of media content that serves economic and political interests, regardless of partisan affiliation or corporate ownership.

So how does this process continue to be replicated in contemporary society with the amount of literature available on both propaganda and critical media studies? Ellul indicates that propaganda works in a very sophisticated manner that moves away from simple concepts of brainwashing and instead develops in a multifaceted manner that ultimately leads to individuals integrated into the social and structural fabric of society (Ellul, 1981). The media becomes the vehicle for facilitating this process, and with the technological innovation that has accompanied media structures, the pace with this process happens quickly. In modern society, for the individual to become part of the larger media discussion, the individual needs a degree of technical proficiency and propaganda acceptance to discuss not only the Obama administrations role in drone strikes, but also more importantly, the role of Kim Kardashian on images of gender, race and class.

As illustrated above, the media functions to provide a connective node between the propaganda that comes both from corporations and the government to the public. However, how propaganda remains either undetected by the populace or to a certain degree accepted, relies on the ability of specific media sources to use the ability of narrative to normalize this relationship. Lasswell (1941) broke the relationship between the media source and narrative down according to the source: the movie may depict a specific example of propaganda but in the format of a well told story, the narrative, not the propaganda, becomes the product of scrutiny. The same type of argument existed in
both for magazines and radio: the reader and listener understands the business of selling media products to them and can at times identify example of propaganda; however, since people lack the critical democratic engagement with media outlets and the social location to air their concerns, the discussion returns to the ability of the narrative to sell either a governmental position or a cup of coffee. The populace does not lack the ability to understand the presentation of information that includes propaganda but society provides few rewards for such critique. Instead, the narrative in how these messages are delivered by government remains defined by the talking points instead of the instances of propaganda in different media outlets.

The impact of propaganda can reflect the ideological approach put forth by Adorno and Horkheimer about a populace consumed by group buying decisions instead of individually determined engaged citizenry that question intricate governmental policy decisions. Ellul states that the media and propaganda becomes one synthesized unit that becomes undistinguished from the other (Ellul, 1981). In this new world of consumer choices and citizen disengagement, propaganda acts as a clarifying agent for the populace to choose which side of the political aisle. The complex nature of democracy with the number of voices of the people, a deliberative process of thought and a realization of different interpretations of policies based on issues related to identity instead becomes an easy either or choice. The person must either choose complete partisan detachment and accept a warm cocoon of products or accept one of the two partisan choices that ultimately do not completely reflect their best civic interests (Ellul, 1981). Ultimately, this simplified political choice influenced by the many propaganda messages from both
government and corporations become the basis for public opinion, or how the media tells the public how they should think about a particular issue or idea.

While many studies of indexing theory focus on the relationship between elites and other sources in news coverage, the topic of U.S. foreign policy and media coverage has always been a popular topic for critical media studies. Many studies have examined the media covered U.S. foreign conflicts from Vietnam to El Salvador with an emphasis on the business aspects of media (Hallin, 1986; Hallin, 1994; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Hallin (1986) looked at how the historical progression of a political issue affects society. While Hallin’s study focuses on Vietnam, an index of social problems emerged from the 1960s garnered wide scale media attention. As the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement grew during the 1960s, media coverage grew to coincide with that movement (Hallin, 1986). The citizenry developed hostility to the public institutions that controlled society and this reality led to a greater examination to what role the media played in this disillusionment. By using sources not only from inside but outside the governmental structure can provide context and depth to the type of news content produced by journalists and news organizations.

The relationship between American political institutions and the media that covers them brings to mind the argument about the importance of elite governmental sources over outside governmental sources when reporting on a foreign policy issue. Libertarian theory involves the idea that the state only should be prevented from interfering with communication between individuals (Hallin, 1994). For that reason, privately owned newspaper can and should offer a full range of opinions and mobilize public opinion from sources outside the elites in government (Hallin, 1994). After the end
of WWII, the Commission of Freedom of the Media could be construed as the advent of the Social Responsibility theory age of journalism in America (Hallin, 1994). This theory developed from the perspective that the owners of the news media were not representative of the public at large and that reality put the ideals of democracy at large (Hallin, 1994). Owners of these institutions could create situations where personal or class interests undermined democratic ideals (Hallin, 1994).

Based on the historical examples of source information related to indexing theory, the mass media has developed a technical knowledge to reporting news. To illustrate this example in terms of the Vietnam War, in reporting a story based on the complexity of village life in South Vietnam, CBS analyzed the story in terms of the effectiveness of this political strategy (Hallin, 1994). The story focused on narrowly on strategies and how to tactically address the problem and if that problem succeeded or failed (Hallin, 1994). By focusing on these types of means, the news media distances itself from the ends as larger context of the Vietnam War (Hallin, 1994).

During the U.S.’s involvement in El Salvador during the 1980s, the government used similar tactics with the media. While the Reagan administration increased aid to El Salvador, the administration developed a public relations campaign to coincide with that decision (Hallin, 1994). While most journalists favored the Carter administration over the Reagan administration, the discourse of the news coverage on this particular issued tilted toward the rhetoric of the Reagan administrative agenda. Journalists noted the angle of a ‘Communist agenda’ in El Salvador, a classic example of the Cold War idea espoused earlier in this literature. The journalists did not use their own judgments at this time; instead they fell in line with the discourse coming from the dominant political position to
show their respect for that authority and reinforce the process of developing “news
management” of a larger political issue (Hallin, 1994).

The concept of indexing theory illustrates the complexity of media coverage of
continuing U.S. governmental policies. Not only do historical examples attempt to paint a
picture of complex political interests, but also the very information that comes from the
government leaves significant room for closer scrutiny by media outlets. With the
populace using the media as a clear channel to the larger discussion of political power,
the U.S. media has often times ignored this critical function to promote U.S. interests
both in the U.S. and abroad.

Alternative Media

The role of mainstream media in society indicates that a gap exists in the media for
alternative iterations that involve the public, produce alternative content and have a clear
emphasis on creating social change. Alternative media becomes an important part of
understanding the entire media structure and how information that comes from outside
elite sources and produced from other content providers can prove insightful for a
complicated topic such as U.S. drone strikes.

This section will focus on the definitions of alternative media and how alternative
media can be used in society to promote knowledge and social change. The first part of
the section deals with different definitions and interpretations of alternative media.
According to Atkinson, alternative media is, “any media that are produced by non-
commercial sources and attempt to transform existing social roles and routines by
critiquing and challenging power structures,” (Atkinson, 2005, p.78). Alternative media
can also be defined by having one of three characteristics: 1. Alternative content, 2.
Interpretative Strategies of Audience and/or 3. Alternative Production (Atkinson, 2010, p.22). Based on these definitions, alternative media can be used to look at corporate power, how audiences discussed amongst themselves alternative content and what content comes from these other sources of media production (Atkinson, 2005; Atkinson, 2010). Alternative media functions as a milieu to study the practices of those who engage in the information produced from alternative media and how that engagement might change a part of the public’s perspective on dominant cultural and political issues.

Atton (2002) breaks down alternative media by different standards. First, the content has to have a radical aspect. In other words, alternative media content should focus on some aspect of social change. Second, the form uses innovative concepts of aesthetics. For this reason, alternative media need not be a traditionally produced media source, but instead a unique collaboration of audio, video, poems and prose. Third, alternative media is seeking out advancements in technology and media innovations. Social media may act as the new platform for alternative media content and production. The ability of a social media to provide an existing audience who might share common perspectives allows alternative media new opportunities for sharing information. Fourth, alternative media needs to embrace an imaginative distribution angle. For some types of alternative media, this could mean flyers handed out at a popular social landmark, for others a twitter blast to your followers. Fifth, alternative media wants to establish a less rigid hierarchy in the transmission of its media product. The media based social roles that differentiate editors and writers needs to be broken down. Sixth, and finally, alternative media involves transforming the communicative process by establishing a less traditional
power structure and emphasizing networks that work on the advancement of a people
based society.

Atton (1999; 2002; 2003) has done a number of studies on alternative media that
have produced a number of different insights into how alternative media functions in
society. In terms of how to define alternative media, Atton focused less on the content
and more on how that content is produced to provide a clear definition. The impetus of
producing some type of social change when producing alternative media is part of the
definition, along with providing a space for voices normally not considered by
mainstream sources, such as protesters, dissenters and everyday people. Alternative
media should allow people to feel empowered by their participation in the production not
just the content. The types of social change that alternative media producers focus on
need not be international but local, challenging hegemony in both locations. Alternative
media moves away from a hierarchy based on a few decision makers and instead works
to gain insight from a populace committed to decentralize authority and decision making,
while also providing an opportunity for social education. Alternative media should also
act as a channel for uniting people of diverse social change interests who traditionally did
not have a great deal in common, including communists, anarchists, labor rights groups,
environmental groups, who use alternative media as a means to get out their message.
Alternative media functions as a way for like-minded individuals and groups to develop a
cohesive plan to address social problems.

Crucial to Atton’s model is the idea that none of these roles or methods are fixed
or connected to a specific established standard (Coleman & Ross, 2010). In other words,
any alternative media source can adapt to any of the above stated principles for the
purposes of their programming. This freedom of imagination allows for some alternative media to embrace and give voice to mainstream reporters seeking a location concerning a story otherwise obscured by the mainstream media. Another iteration allows for an innovative method for distributing media content in ways mainstream media will not engage with based on market concerns and revenue losses. Alternative media provides not only a loose framework for developing another tactic on how to develop and distribute media content but also a chance to redefine the common norms of how media content should be ingested by the public.

Alternative media does not have a specific jumping off point in history to help craft a linear narrative regarding its development. In fact, alternative media performs as an agile vehicle that identifies and reports on the important issues of that particular time period. While alternative media has at different times provided a location for neglected voices on a multitude of issues, a more obscured development of alternative media involves the ability of the medium to not only use the technology of that time period to distribute a message but also provide a critique of that same technological device. In the 19th century, with the explosion of production of different corporate dominated newspapers, a radical press emerged concurrently, using some of the same technological advances to promote the dangers of the mainstream press, including reporting on issues the mainstream press considered taboo or unimportant (Coleman & Ross, 2010). This type of approach can be seen today with the explosion of websites and blogs that promote information not found on mainstream media outlets.

An important concept in understanding how to define the reach and scope of alternative media involves the continued focus on any type of media, whether alternative
or mainstream, and how that media is influenced and impacted by the society at large. The dominant social, political and cultural norms establish the ability to construct power relations for how alternative and mainstream operate within a given society. Alternative media, to separate it from the mainstream media, focuses on a diversity of opinions and what contingencies impact its specific content or production (Bailey, Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2008). Alternative media, therefore, exists within the larger structure of society but attempts to subvert the positions of power that do not reflect the number of voices who may be impacted or silences by the larger society and mainstream media

Downing takes a slightly different approach to defining alternative media and mainstream media. While Atton eschews the term radical when defining alternative media, Downing (2003) instead embraces it. Contemporary society provides the perfect milieu for the development of alternative media because media consolidation through corporate synergy continues to grow. The audience also provides another insight into the production of alternative media because of the social distance that some alternative media outlets have created with the public. While the production of media content has a place, it remains important to listen to the public and move away from alternative media as a narcissistic pursuit of the producer. Alternative media has an opportunity to engage with the public in ways that mainstream media do not because of the mainstream media’s focus on ratings and the economic profile of the individual audience member. Alternative media producers understand that the audience is very complex and represents a variety of different identity groups, each producing some form of alternative content.

Alternative media exist within the larger structure of society and have the opportunity to critique now only the power relations of that society but also how the
mainstream media reinforces that emphasis. While these counter representations can provide a greater understanding into the significance of any social problem, the alternative media needs to be cognizant about the relationship between the tangible and the social. In other words, the neglected groups that alternative media should focus on in coverage also deal with the immediate needs of surviving in capitalistic society. For that reason, the marriage of alternative media between the construction of reality and information of that reality should never be ignored (Bailey, Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2008).

Lievrouw (2011) provides another perspective into the mainstream and alternative media discussion. Lievrouw includes a historic characterization of the development of alternative media and some cultural factors that impacted its content. While Atton and Downing looked inside alternative media for definitions, Lievrouw moves the discussion away from those arguments by addressing external factors and their relationship with alternative media. Lievrouw uses one aspect of alternative media, participatory journalism, as a way to help establish how alternative can function outside the constraints of mainstream media. Participatory journalism through the apparatus of the Independent Media Centre wants activists to change their relationship with the media from a receiver of information to a producer of information. This particular approach to journalism coincides with a time when traditional news media channels, such as newspapers, have labored against a litany of factors contributing to its demise. Taking these two divergent points together, along with the continued technological development of the Internet, allows for the opportunity of nontraditional media production to engage the public. This new take on journalism involves the public in new ways to help craft information and a
closer interaction among the actors involved. The development of participatory journalism allows for a greater critique of the mainstream media by “ordinary” people and allow for a new and diverse set of voices to develop how the public defines news.

Alternative media can also focus on how the user engages with the content or the approach the producers of that content take in disseminating information to the public. Atkinson & Cooley (2010) focused on the ways in which the use of alternative media impacts relationships within an activist network. The networks that develop in this study of alternative media emphasized a central group and how that group spun the information to other activist groups in that community. This type of information sharing established a connection between groups and a vehicle that created common bonds and solidified or estranged relationships. Alternative media can act a bridge that unites people while also creating schisms among activist groups depending upon the relationships people have in those groups.

Pickard’s (2006) research concerning alternative media and activist networks involves the idea of radical democracy through the examination of a deep structural engagement with an Indy Media center. Pickard examines this group through committed involvement, long form interviews and textual analysis to find how Indy Media remains committed to its anarchist ideals and narrative structures that may limit its growth and impact throughout society. This lack of hierarchy forces the group to include divergent viewpoints but also leaves Indy Media without a specific leader or politically partisan direction. At the same time, this inclusive approach allows members of the community to contribute content and voice their concerns at open meetings organized by Indy Media.
Alternative media provides another option for people seeking information about events happening both locally and globally. Alternative media can target an audience who does not embrace corporate or mainstream media while at the same time being more cost efficient, using more Internet friendly options to spread its message. Alternative media need not depend on the amount of viewership and listenership that defines the ratings obsessed corporate model of media. Alternative media also promotes a different agenda from mainstream media because of its focus on education and awareness of social issues or the promotion of social change (Blakeman, 2011). This opportunity allows for more creative opportunities to spread a particular message. Based on this example, alternative media has not only an audience but also an agenda that separates their media source from the mainstream and provides a space and a place for social discussion outside of the capital concerns of ratings and market shares.

Alternative media also provides a closer interpersonal relationship with its viewers and listeners that corporate media structures often times ignore for longitudinal gains in disparate markets. “Alternative media describes a vehicle that cannot be labeled as traditional,” (Blakeman, 2011, p.4). When looking at alternative media, the receiver of the information can feel a greater one-on-one connection with the media source than a corporate channel. At the same time, because of the lack of corporate accountability and capital involvement, alternative media also has the freedom to explore a more creative relationship with its audience which may explain the closer interpersonal reciprocity with the sender and receiver of alternative media content. This relationship also encourages a greater interactivity between audience and producer (Blakeman, 2011). For example, an alternative media source may respond to direct feedback from a listener or a viewer, a
process that mainstream media provided for in its letter to the editor section. However, instead of printing a view from the community, the alternative media producer may actually change its content based on the views of the audience, a concept the mainstream media does not embrace in the same way. The lack of capital associated with alternative media along with this very intimate reach shows the opportunity to really investigate a social or political issue, such as media coverage of drone strikes, and perhaps foster a media discussion outside of the corporate concerns of the mainstream media.

The idea of a public and their relationship with alternative media does not provide simple answers or simple definitions. First, with our increasingly globalized and heterogeneous make up of cultures that are involved in society, the idea of a mass public has melted away with the modern migrations of people, commerce and perspectives. For these and many other reasons, the idea of alternative media reaching a mass audience or speaking to the public as a whole does not happen in modern society. At the same time, groups who traditionally have been considered outside the mainstream public have used alternative media to put forth their own agenda for social change. The modern iteration of alternative media may provide the best example yet to help these counter publics change the prevailing discourse and/or impact significant social policy. The mainstream media has traditionally marginalized these groups to the point where alternative media may not only be the best option but the only option for groups hoping to set forth their message in a free and open forum (Coleman & Ross, 2010).

*Alternative Media and Drone Strikes*

In this section, I will examine the relationship between alternative media and drone strikes. Based on the conceptual understanding of alternative media, the
opportunities exist for addressing concerns from outside the elite structure by using source information from the everyday person. In addition, alternative media could provide different insights that challenge cultural militarism based on its lack of connection to governmental sources and market-based concerns. These ideas will be examined in this section.

Alternative media should allow source information from people outside the elites when addressing the issue of drone strikes. For example, the mainstream media reports on drone strikes primarily from informational sources that either currently or previously worked for the Obama administration. An alternative media source, such as Democracy Now, might use a source from outside the Obama administration, such as Jeremy Scahill, who actually traveled to Yemen, Pakistan etc. and interviewed the people impacted specifically by the drone strikes. This type of source information may provide alternative perspective about a specific political policy and broaden the discourse to include the true impact of a U.S. political decision made in Washington and performed in the Middle East.

Conversely, when considering the media coverage of the drone strikes, alternative media sources need to remain engaged with the dominant governmental voices and information that comes from the political establishment. While these alternative media sources may provide commentary and insight not available in the mainstream press, without an understanding of the information being transmitted to the populace by both governmental press releases and mainstream media outlets, alternative media outlets may lose their credibility when discussing this issue. For these and a number of other reasons, this study will use alternative media sources that primarily focus on issues of war, peace,
foreign policy etc. as their main focus of reporting. This decision allows the most engaged alternative media sources to address this issue with the most insight and depth.

This iteration of the relevance of alternative media as a rich source of information becomes important for this study on drone strikes. The reporting of a strike from a mainstream media source provides some quantitative information that relates to factual content: the number of death, the “supposed” affiliation of the dead, the place where the strike took place etc. However, alternative media may be able move beyond this factual information to provide some specific context that comes from the social reality of people involved in the drone strikes. For example, while the mainstream media may provide the number of people killed, the larger question remains are the identities of those that died. Does the mere affiliation with the term “militant” provide the necessity of death through remote control bombing?

The other prominent insight alternative media could provide in relation to the social reality would involve not just the location of the drone strike but what that location reflects in regards to larger issues of geopolitical power. What is the social implication of conducting drone strikes in Yemen instead of France? What reflection of values do the mainstream media tap into when reporting on these different location? Alternative media, because of its focus and ability to provide different source information, may allow for a broader discussion not only of a specific foreign policy choice but also the larger relevance of what places in the world these choices impact. While Yemen, Pakistan and Somalia exist as physical locations, these social locations of emphasis by the Obama administration to conduct drone strikes also provides discussion points about their
political importance in the world. Alternative media could provide that type of social information.

*Alternative Media and Mainstream Media Intersections*

Linda Jena Kenix wrote a seminal book titled *Alternative and Mainstream Media: The Converging Spectrum*. In that book, Kenix (2011) detailed the relationship between alternative and mainstream media and how that information could impact society. In this section, Kenix’s work will be connected to the previous sections on alternative media, how her insights compare to other authors who have written about alternative media, along with critiques into the relationship between alternative and mainstream media.

The view of alternative media argued by Kenix (2011) provides substantial impact and insight into previous alternative media scholarship developed by Atton (2002), Downing (2003), Lievrouw (2011) and Atkinson (2006). With the growth of alternative media, many more opportunities exist to contribute to the overall discourse about a social or political issue. This growth of alternative media can provide divergent voices about a particular subject. The professionalization of alternative media, borrowed in many ways from mainstream media, has improved the reporting of alternative media while opening up the number of resources that alternative media content producers focus on when they make their own content.

Kenix (2011) while not specifically disagreeing with Atton’s (2002) take on alternative media does focus on the fact that alternative media has always used mainstream media as means of difference when concerned with ideological approaches to information. Their resources in reporting information and specific connection to social movements have also limited alternative media. Mainstream media conversely reports
from official sources through a professionalization of its reporters and influences a wider spectrum of society. The technological advances made in recent years have allowed mainstream and alternative media to overlap, creating less division between alternative and mainstream media.

While Kenix (2011) would not argue with Atton (2002) about the focus of alternative media, she would suggest that all media products exist in the capitalist market and share the most mundane economic challenges of survival. With these challenges facing both mainstream and alternative media, the audience becomes an essential factor in any media production. Kenix would argue with Atton regarding the idea that alternative media lacks hierarchies of access. With the advent of the Internet, some alternative media sources access mainstream media content and then provide commentary on that content, abandoning the principles of production espoused by Atton.

I see this change as an enhancement to the alternative media tradition as defined by Atton. Kenix argues that more media groups have access to information. This type of access allows traditionally marginalized voices, coming from alternative media, the chance to comment on information previously unavailable to them. The discourse that develops from this media “discussion” can only add to the complexity of discourse around any number of social issues. Any exploration into the strength of a democracy hinges on the fact of a diverse number of ideas coming from all points on the political spectrum. Kenix would argue, at least with some alternative media sources, that not just alternative but mainstream media now provide some of these opportunities for critical thought.
Kenix (2011) details the relationship with the audience that alternative media needs for its own survival. Alternative media does not share the same ownership concerns and individual motivations that Downing (2003) details in his definition. Kenix sees the convergence of mainstream and alternative media through how information is gathered and how that professionalization of all media content has produced a homogenization of results. Mainstream media has a larger number of resources available to them in gathering information, and with the increased media convergence, these expanded resources have allowed investigative journalism to provide the type of content that Downing desires from alternative media content by challenging systems of power and political elites. Another example to help illustrate Kenix’s point develops out of the number of radical theatrical productions coming from mainstream movie studios. These films have provided insight into government malfeasance and even the sacred cow of capitalism.

At first glance, Downing (2003) and Kenix (2011) seem to view alternative and mainstream media through very different theoretical and ideological lens. However, under closer examination, both authors want the media to function in the same way: a channel for people to have their voice heard about social issues affecting their community and as a check on systems of governmental and political power. Downing and Kenix want to accomplish that goal through very different means. Downing wants alternative media to go back to its roots of engaging the public and continuing to establish relationships with groups that challenge power on a grass roots level. Kenix argues that the same type of content can emerge from mainstream media channels and the resources available to mainstream media may actually allow that process to happen in a much
quicker time period. I would argue that Kenix does not negate or enhance Downing’s approach to alternative media but instead a different path to the same critical content objective.

Kenix (2011) agrees with the need to involve ordinary people in the process of newsgathering and the importance of finding new ways to organize information for the public to consume. She disagrees with Lievrouw (2011) by challenging her assertion that mainstream media does not provide the same type of service to the news consumer. While historically reader input has been relegated to the editorial pages, mainstream media now produces content that coincides with many readers interest and encourages readers input on what mainstream media should focus on in the future. Early newspaper produced this type of public connection but that policy has largely been ignored over the last 100 years. This new commitment to a public connection to the media being produced by mainstream news sources could in fact produce a higher degree of democracy and informed citizenry in contemporary U.S society. The fusion of mainstream media news coverage with opinion-laced critiques allows media content the chance to act as a fourth estate of factual information and a location that presents a reader’s insight into the social world.

In many of the same ways that Downing (2003) and Kenix (2011) arrive at the same ends from divergent means, Lievrouw (2011) and Kenix take a similar journey, with the focus being an engaged public that can produce media content and human insight into the best way to connect media and people together. Lievrouw wants the public to take ownership of this process and become the media by creating a substantial relationship with the public and using those sources of information to produce insights
often marginalized by the mainstream media. Kenix has the same ultimate goal as Lievrouw but sees this type of citizen-engaged journalism as already happening at the mainstream level. At one point in history, mainstream media provided a voice to outside populations on a number of social issues and Kenix sees that process happening again, albeit perhaps from more of an individual than a group level. I could argue that Lievrouw provides more of an opportunity for the average citizen but in reality the aims of both Kenix and Lievrouw meet at the same location through alternative or mainstream media.

Kenix (2011) has both a fundamentally different approach to her studies on mainstream media than Atkinson (2010) does with alternative media while at the same time hitting on some of the same issues raised by Atkinson’s definition. Kenix sees how different alternative and mainstream are but raises important points as to how any media agency accesses information. Alternative media relies on the same type of pack journalism that dominates mainstream media while at the same time acknowledging that mainstream media can provide social commentary insights in many of the same issues that alternative media does through its publication. The overlap between mainstream and alternative media is clear in this example: both mainstream and alternative media perform functions that a number of scholars have reserved for other. In other words, alternative media can produce high quality reporting while mainstream media can produce unique insights into social issues and problems.

Kenix uses Atkinson’s definition for a way to judge a study on political blogs.

While Kenix acknowledges that her study does not strictly fall under Atkinson’s definition because the information came from non-commercial sources (Kenix, 2011). However, the critiques provided by the blogs did not advocate for a change in the power
structure, just a change in the actors who run the power structure from Republican to Democratic. These bloggers did not offer a resistance narrative but instead reinforce dominant ideologies of power. These blogs also offer a larger platform for “alternative content” than had previously been available to alternative media publications, suggesting that a larger swath of the population can receive its message. These examples illustrate how mainstream media works in many of the same ways as alternative media. First, one can produce alternative content and still use a mainstream channel on their platform. Second, interpretative strategies of audience have blurred, especially when a researcher considers that mainstream media outlets continue to use analysts from outside traditional media sources. Third, alternative production will always distance alternative media from mainstream media. While the production technology available to alternative media has changed and allowed for growth, the platform provided by mainstream media will always reach larger audiences. Conversely, people who produce alternative media for their own platform will connect to the text in ways not possible through mainstream media channels. Atkinson provides perhaps the best theoretical example about the negation and enhancement of Kenix’s argument involving the overlap between alternative and mainstream media.

Overall, Kenix provides several challenging arguments to the distinction between mainstream media and alternative media. Atton and Atkinson’s argument about the importance of media production in the final product of alternative media still creates a distance between mainstream and alternative media while the overall aims espoused by Downing and Lievrouw echo the aims by Kenix, albeit from distinctively different channels. Alternative media and mainstream can both exist and even borrow from each
other to create a media landscape that provides a conduit of information for an informed public.

While Kenix (2011) sees the intersection of mainstream and alternative media, she also examined the relationship between mainstream media and its capitalistic interests. Kenix argues that the frame used by the mainstream media in relation to visual identity has continued to be refined while reproducing the intended desires of commercialism and corporate interest. An alternative media example of this reality comes from an anarchist group that advocates for social change but does so through a website that does not deviate from the norm and provides the viewer images without confrontation. Based on this example, while the anarchist group may diverge from societal norms in terms of philosophy and action, their website reinforces public expectations of website content through non-dramatic means. This example illustrates another way that groups who use alternative media can engage the public.

The Internet has established more of a horizontal pattern of hierarchy in terms of both media access and traditional flows of information. This information, however, would most likely come from an alternative source and not the mainstream media (Kenix, 2011). While Kenix has established the overlap between mainstream media and alternative media, alternative media through the technological advances of the Internet, may in fact allow for groups to change dominant meanings through new communication channels and outreach.

Kenix (2011) sees an opportunity for democracy on a mainstream level in some of the ways articulated by Pickard (2006) and develops that point very clearly through how
sources that make up mainstream media have changed during the last generation. The Internet has provided an opportunity for alternative media in new and exciting ways, yet that opportunity has largely resulted in personal fulfillment and not the continued evolution of social change. In fact, some alternative media sources have now viewed the Internet as a commercial source for revenue for items and information they once determined to be free (Kenix, 2011). Alternative media sites have even taken the drastic steps of selling lists of information to commercial entities, which often use the information for marketing purposes. This example illustrates the other end to the anarchist collective illustrated by Pickard.

Pickard (2006) outlines through very specific examples how the anarchist structure of Indy Media hinders its expansion and growth with the mainstream public. The directionless group often times struggles with finding its place as a social movement group. Kenix (2011) would argue that moving beyond the limitations of an anarchist collective and embracing the new technology and commercial opportunities that come with that may not in fact benefit an alternative media production. Both Pickard and Kenix depict in very obvious ways how the anarchist model for alternative media may be flawed and embracing the new technological advances that change the communication channels may also be flawed. The inability of the anarchist groups to connect to the public are only detrimental when compared with its alternative media brethren selling out their own members for commercial gain because a new revenue stream emerges in the Internet. Perhaps alternative media groups could reach a happy medium between hardcore anarchist principles that limit hierarchy and alternative media groups that use their own members as capital, echoing the commercial sentiments of mainstream media.
Kenix sees the inherent worth in the democratic tradition and the potential for that growth to explode with the overlapping of mainstream and alternative media. Kenix sees this process of understanding democracy through alternative media content as developing from the continued practices of citizen journalism, as outlined earlier in the alternative media format by Lievrouw (2011). The citizen can now move past the traditional sources of media content and find information from everyday people in new and exciting ways that the technological advances of the Internet has provided. The synthesis between mainstream and alternative media is very apparent in this type of citizen journalism as well. Both alternative media sources and mainstream media sources offer similar opportunities for people to report on information that then transmits through either an alternative media channel or a mainstream media channel. Mainstream media outlets have given average people this opportunity at journalism and seen the results in a high number of submissions involving not only story ideas but also stories themselves (Kenix, 2011).

The overlapping of alternative media and mainstream media has provided the chance for democracy to grow through content made by and for citizens. Some problems with this rosy picture of democracy are that both mainstream and alternative media see the Internet as the location for this process to happen. People view the Internet as a place to send information but without a specific end of interactive communication (Kenix, 2011). People who produce citizen journalism content could put up the most committed text to ask for democratic participation; however, if the audience does not engage in that discussion, the impact on society is minimal. Citizen journalism for reasons including ordinary people initiative and user producer content can act as a channel for democracy in
both alternative and mainstream media. The key for those media outlets remains how do those media outlets connect with the public at large, allowing for a democratic opportunity.

Kenix’s (2011) conceptualizes the overlapping of alternative media and mainstream media and provides a number of interesting and compelling insights. Alternative media groups can struggle with both the non-hierarchical limitations of anarchy and the commercial interests provided by new technological advances in communication systems that the Internet provides. Democracy, a complicated idea for any type of media source to engage with, can be helped by both mainstream and alternative media if the public at large can connect to that media. Alternative and mainstream media will provide new sources of information in the future.

**Conclusion**

In the above chapter, I discussed the topic of ideology and its relationship with cultural militarism, theories related to media and power and the concept of alternative media. While all three sections discuss a variety of different information, important intersections emerge from this discussion. Based on this text, I examined with more depth the relationship between mainstream media and alternative media in relationship to drone strikes. While the opportunities exist in alternative media to challenge the status quo, the access that mainstream media has to the power elites is much greater. The mainstream media, especially *The New York Times*, has discussed drone strikes with reporting from non-executive sources and news stories that show pushback against the confirmation hearings of new CIA director John Brennan, a long time drone advocate and supporter.

With Kenix’s (2011) arguments about the blurring nature of mainstream and alternative
media, the points of emphasis about U.S. exceptionalism and its fallout in relation to drone strikes has reached the heights of mainstream media, instead of only being examined in alternative media sources. A challenge to a specific U.S. policy central to the modern form of cultural militarism stands as an interesting development in mainstream media coverage of drone strikes in relation to the context of political economy and mainstream media content.

Second, the relationship between cultural militarism and mainstream media provides a rich tapestry for discussion. A symbiosis has developed between the two entities that share information and promulgate specific ideas about the importance of U.S. cultural militarism in recent history and contemporary society. With the mainstream media’s focus on elite sources in government and cultural militarism playing a large role in the U.S. government, situations arise where the interests of the government permeate the content of mainstream media text. The adversarial relationship between the mainstream media and the government, especially when concerned with cultural militarism, does not play out in the research. Based on these developments, I put forward the following two questions for this research project:

1. How do alternative media sources that break into the mainstream media in any way alter or challenge narratives about cultural militarism?
2. How do mainstream media sources respond to the alternative media sources?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter will focus on both the methodology I have chosen for this study and the method. The section will be broken up into these two sections. In the methodology section, I will be detailing epistemology and the importance of qualitative research. In the method section, I will be explaining the method I used in this project, qualitative content analysis. I will explain the method provide support for using this method for my study.

Finally, I will explain the text I will critically examine for this study and why I am using that text for this project.

Epistemology

Benton and Craib (2001) examined the term epistemology and the relationship between the rational and the unknown. By looking at Descartes as an example, the person who is questioning is always thinking. Epistemology embraces those doubts as a form of skepticism and how that connects to larger understandings of information. The skeptic does not take any information at face value and instead examines knowledge from a deeper, more systematic intellectual process that helps determine if this information has the best explanation of truth.

Epistemology also forces a researcher to clearly articulate why he or she has chosen this approach to acquiring knowledge. The researcher involved in epistemology explains how to make their reality known (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002; 2007). For that reason, how to conduct a study and using an interpretive approach allows for a litany of different answers to emerge from a close reading of any human phenomena.

Epistemology forces both an inward justification for how to conduct the study and how
that inward reflection manifests in the external process of conducting a researcher study. The self-reflexivity of epistemology not only impacts the researcher but how that researcher interacts with a piece of text or another human interaction that acts as the place for research.

Cultural scholars also believe in the importance of the discursive. While the scientist may focus on the tangible and what can be proven, the cultural scholar understands the numerous iterations of the discursive and how that can both expand the outcomes of any study while complicating the process of moving toward those outcomes. Wittgenstein explained this complexity by managing the pursuit of truth through the vehicle of language games to help explain any idea or phenomena under the research umbrella (Norris, 2005). Language develops and takes hold from cultural standards developed by both dominant and minority groups with the meanings and importance changing based on which group acts as the determiner in the specific context. These different groups establish different cultural standards along with basic ideas of criteria, which could create a different set of results based on the group or the information that is being researched. The epistemologist sees these multiple texts and multiple identities in one cultural location as an opportunity instead of a hindrance. The need to consider numerous factors when coming to any conclusion about the importance of knowledge develops not only from the established sources but the voices often times from outside the traditional power structure.

This Foucauldian understanding of social power and the social locations as helping impact the types of discourses and language used to help accrue knowledge can prove difficult when wanting to determine specific answers to specified research
questions under consideration for a particular study. The relationship between the larger hegemonic discourses and the smaller discourses from disparate sources that challenge the prevailing norms, however, may prove most insightful for the epistemologist who adheres to deep readings and the depth of knowledge that can emerge from qualitative research. The standard notion of research either reinforcing or challenge dominant and colossal time honored truths may now become obsolete with the changing discourses and cultural lens that shape that discourse (Norris, 2005). The results conducted from a study now may not have the same impact or even conclusions when the social environment and the political tone of a particular time period change. The epistemologist considers the importance of the now with any knowledge that develops from new modes of research inquiry.

The difficulty with accepting these multiple truths and different interpretations from a litany of sources are that the results may not be clear or coherent. When only one source of information is presented, the researcher can be confident that the information is true, until presented with other information that challenges the existing informational standard (Olsson, 2008). For these reasons, how a researcher critiques all the information available, applies an insightful and detailed standard while considering numerous outcomes, and establishes a clear set of results that conveys the most complex information in a straightforward matter. The epistemologist has to consider and accept that the manner in how something is stated matters to the same degree as what is said.

The epistemologist realizes the dual nature of evaluating information in both manner and text. On the one hand, the epistemologist manages the very nature of any type of information with the inherent skepticism that defines the epistemological
traditions. On the other hand, any good scholarship conveys complex texts and human phenomena with the simple language that will allow for that information to be understood by a variety of different audiences. This struggle between skepticism and coherence provides an interesting dilemma for studying any new social object or location. To reach any conclusions, the epistemologist understands that coherence, and skepticism for that matter, are two of many factors that help shape the results of any good qualitative study. No one factor exists that establishes truth in research phenomena or establishes specific and longitudinal beliefs about the intricate nature of reality. The possibility always exists for several disagreements. The epistemologist considers this and continues to present information that offers inclusive source information with specified results that are applicable to the specified object at the present moment.

Qualitative Research

For my particular study on media coverage of the drone strikes, I have chosen to use a qualitative critical approach to my research. The goal of this study is to move beyond the data and statistics and establish narrative patterns in mainstream and alternative media about what type of text the media sources are reporting about in this foreign policy choice of the Obama administration. First, let me begin by delving into the importance of qualitative research. A qualitative approach allows for the author to dig deeper into topics such as meaning, how to apply the context of a situation to a study, the process of how events happen and what events could take place based on the research collected to this point (Ratner, 1997). Qualitative research does not deal with the probability of certain things that will happen but instead tries to associate the phenomenon under study with the circumstances that surrounds this phenomenon
These statements underline the importance of using a qualitative approach to my specific study. Qualitative research also addresses the depth of a given phenomenon. This approach allows for a researcher to gain perspective and move beyond the numbers to address the text with thick detailed description (Berg, 1998). Overall, a qualitative study encourages the researcher to struggle with a deeper connection to the text through the combination of social and political factors, such as the multiple meanings of text, what structural factors help establish what text I read in the media, how to engage with a text and the world around the text. A good researcher moves beyond cursory explanations to explore in detail what texts state and how the authors state that text.

For example in the *New York Times* coverage of drone strikes, the paper considers any military age male in a strike zone to be a “militant”, unless alternative evidence can be established after that person’s death (Hudson, 2013). While President Obama established in the slaying of Trayvon Martin in 2011 the importance of the boy’s life, that same young person in a drone strike is considered a threat worthy of death, even if in hindsight the evidence states that young man’s innocence.

Qualitative research also allows for a variety of interpretations about the text under consideration of particular study. This perspective allows for multiple meanings of text along with the understanding that text has a richness and complexity that purely quantitative data does not explain through its attention to statistical data (Viney & Nagey, 2012). By using a text for any research study in qualitative research, the author attempts to fuse the understanding of various contexts with the meaning attached to the words in the text (Berg, 1998). These two statements help clarify the type of study I intend to do. First, I am studying U.S. mainstream and alternative media examples. The primacy of the
U.S. militarily allows for a dominant meaning to emerge from any media text. For that reason, alternative media may provide insight into the phenomenon of media text that the mainstream, based on economic and political concerns, may not address at all or may provide a surface level discussion without questioning the larger policies of U.S. military exceptionalism and how that relates to media text. By constructing a study that takes into account U.S. primacy and allowing that perspective to be incorporated to a study on media may provide a richness of results that other media sources from other countries may not present.

In using this example, the richness of language and meaning and how to unpack media text in an effort to create meaning allows for a deeper understanding of what these media texts actually mean. Statistical data cannot give the depth and complexity to a particular study that qualitative research methods can give. When incorporating Ratner’s (1997) approach to qualitative methods, the context in addressing the media coverage of the drone strikes is equally important as statistical data. With the events of 9/11 over 10 years in the past and the Obama administration winding down wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the dominant media coverage and understanding of the public could deduce that drone strikes target Al Qaeda “militants”. Without the details of this context to be addressed in a qualitative study, the number of deaths related to drone strikes or the number of strikes themselves would not hold the degree of significance when associated with a qualitative approach to this study.

In applying qualitative methods to specifically a media process, the importance of process as stated by Ratner continues to hold tremendous importance. Media scholars who engage in critical work move beyond the particular medium of a particular study, i.e.
the Internet, websites, TV news, and instead provide critique of the process of gathering the news. This critique of process allows for the scholar to focus on the evolvement of theories, such as media and power, and how those theories fit with a qualitative method choice for a critical study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). While these types of studies continue to change to use technological advances in media usage, the importance of critical work and how that relates to media studies continues. By using qualitative methods that involve critical analysis, the scholar could create connections about the relationship of the process between the information that the government shares with the media and how the media packages that information and relays it to the public. Based on a number of studies, the type of information can become influenced by this process of information, providing a critical qualitative researcher an opportunity for an in-depth examination not only of the production of media content but also the role of the government in that production.

When using a critical approach to any type of research, a specific set of criteria needs to be established to help guide how the researcher should conduct any study related to media in particular and communication in general. Stacks & Hocking (1992) looks at how the critical communication scholar should study the artistic standard, the basis of the ideas and the motives and ethics behind the communication. In addressing artistic standard, the researcher examines the communication and identifies how well the communication that was created accomplished its ultimate goal. This definition leads clearly into the results by establishing what happened in that particular study. The reason for the actors to create and disseminate any information in a communicative process allows for a critic to help address the standards, or ethics, for that communication. To
apply these four criteria for why I am approaching my particular study in a specific method, the importance of how mainstream media and alternative media convey their text to the public is the essence of my study. The mainstream media receives luminous amounts of information from the government and acts, to a certain extent, as a gatekeeper for what type of information reaches the public at large.

The media, as outlined by its historical role as the fourth estate, should critique and prod the government to dig beneath the press releases that it shares with the media about the true nature of its governmental policy. As a critical scholar, when that relationship changes to the modern day example of the mainstream media’s acquiescing to the wishes of the government, an opportunity arises to examine how the historical role of media has changed and how that role impacts the type of content the public receives from mainstream media.

In addition, this relationship also allows alternative media an opportunity to construct a different narrative about the type of coverage that any media outlet reports about a particular political issue. Alternative media does not have the market forces that could impact its coverage of a political issue in the same way a mainstream media source would and could provide an alternative narrative about a particular policy precisely because it does not have the same access to governmental elites and spokespeople in the same way mainstream outlets do. Based on this example, a qualitative critical scholar can use the information from the mainstream media to provide insight into what media sources leave out or establish as important based on the media text. The scholar could then take that text and compare it to the type of coverage that comes from alternative
media sources and figure out how information from both media sources differs based on the content that the media outlets produces.

When a scholar begins a critical qualitative research study, it is very important for that scholar to find out and describe what particularly has happened about an issue or a policy as it applies to that researcher’s study. These factors break down into extrinsic and intrinsic factors. The extrinsic factors relate to context and components surrounding context. The intrinsic factors involve how the researcher engages with an analysis and examines with a critical approach how the text was created. In addition, the critical scholar assesses how the communication was presented to the public (Stacks & Hocking, 1992). These specific statements fit within the structure of political economy and media, while also addressing the dominant talking points at a given time in history. With the continued progression of technology from a militaristic level, i.e. drones, this study can attempt to begin a discussion about the role of media in reporting on military technologies that may move U.S. cultural militarism into a faceless protracted engagement of international conflicts.

The critical approach to any research study could allow for a researcher to present information that leads to social change. The idea of social change need not take place in a specific location or include a specific mass movement. Instead, different research approaches that encourage a critical stance could highlight the impact of specific discourses and how those discourses reinforce microstructures of power and dominance. These Foucauldian deconstructions also allow for a greater examination into the prevalence of specific texts but also why these texts exist as the dominant texts in society. A researcher who acknowledges the relationship between power and critical scholarship
understands that traditionally accepted texts provide no room for contesting perspective or oppositional narratives (McLeod & Thomson, 2009). These modern interpretations and explanations about the importance of critical research show a pathway for my study to explore the gap between what the mainstream media reports on a particular event versus the types of discourses that emerge from alternative media sources about the same political issue. Opportunities exist to allow for research to provide critique not only from the dominant texts but how to create alternative conclusions based on alternative texts.

Method: Qualitative Content Analysis of Narrative Categories

For the purposes of my study, I conducted a qualitative content analysis using narrative categories. In this section, I will examine qualitative content analysis research. I will explain some theoretical background from scholars who have used this research method and how it holds relevance for academic pursuits. Next, I will explain the importance of narrative when examining a text. I will close with an explanation of the textual content I studied for my particular project.

Qualitative content analysis allows the researcher to envelope other methods as a way to enhance the study. The important aspect for the qualitative researcher who engages in those practices involves understanding the meaning of text in addition to the terms being used in that text. Several scholars have written extensively about qualitative content analysis. In this section, I will lay out some of their arguments to justify the importance of this choice in method.

To help solidify my position, I intend to first explain what qualitative content analysis is and how it functions as a method in research. Krippendorff (2004) looked at content analysis from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. From his
perspective, all readings of text are qualitative, even when converting that research into quantitative methods. When performing readings of text, Krippendorff would argue, a qualitative method is the only approach.

Krippendorff (2004) defined content analysis in a manner that allows for interpretive research scholarship to build on the primarily quantitative tradition. Krippendorff defined content analysis as, “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use,” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.18). Previous research has established content analysis in three ways: content inherent in text, as a property of the source, and as analyzing a text relative to a context. All of these methodological choices give interpretive researchers latitude in constructing their own studies. These methodological choices may include discourse analysis, which gives a great deal of importance to the context of any textual information.

Krippendorff (2004) broadened content analysis method to include discourse analysis. Discourse is defined as “text above the sentence,” (Krippendorff, 2004, p.16). Discourse has been used to study diverse topics such as racism and news coverage of peace movements. Discourse analysis focuses on meaning and how those messages are delivered and what kind of impact those messages make on an audience. Discourse analysis discovers the impact of text by examining structural elements, tropes and how people style their argument. Krippendorff argued clearly that discourse analysis builds upon the foundation of content analysis, allowing for different meanings to emerge from the text based on closer readings of that text.

Any method choice that uses text includes reasons for how that researcher reads the text. While acknowledging culturally contingent factors that would influence any
reading of the text, a set of criteria for reading text allows for a systematic understanding of that text. Krippendorff (2004) breaks these criteria into six points: text have no objective, text have no single meaning, these meanings of text need not be shared, meaning speak to something other than the given text, text have meaning relative to context and content analysis draw inferences from text to a give context. All of these criteria allow a researcher room for a multitude of interpretations based on any given text while understanding the relationship between the text and context. This relationship helps define clearly the objective of the study and how that objective fits with a researcher’s view of the world. This set of criteria established by Krippendorff in relation to content analysis puts a great deal of responsibility on the researcher to conduct a study that not only can interpret text from a defined set of parameters but how that study reflects the world view of the researcher. This set of criteria should guide the researcher clearly in any content analysis study without the researcher having to abandon who that person is.

Krippendorff (2004) viewed content analysis through three specific purposes: prescriptive, analytical, and methodological. These purposes need to include a research question, a context, an analytical construct, inferences and validating evidence. These categories allow a research transparency in how he/she will conduct the study and the ability of future researchers to use that study as a way to find their own research approach. The text remains the important artifact in this process. The text allows others a way to understand what you are doing, reinforcing the idea that the text exists in the researcher’s world but comes from the world of others.

Mayring (2000) saw the importance of a systematic study when engaging in qualitative content analysis and uses that approach to help crystallize how to use a
method properly in a research study. A content analysis study puts the text into a model of communication that clarifies the goals of the analysis. Context matters greatly in this process and creates a distance from the clear empirical demarcations of quantitative research. Qualitative content analysis also gives the researcher the room to find what role inferences will play in a research study in addition to cultural background and socio economic status. The categorization of the information found in the text allows for the research process to develop in a clear and cogent manner. Mayring’s criteria for qualitative content analysis builds on Krippendorff (2004), while remaining true to the nature of qualitative research.

Mayring (2000) also adapted this inductive standard when explaining how to conduct qualitative research in a clear and cogent manner. While the research again aims to clarify specific definitions to allow a research study to be conducted in a specific manner, these definitions always emerge from the text. The researcher also has to remember the role of theory in understanding how this process translates to the larger research study. Theory and method work in concordance to help answer the research question in descriptive yet concise terms.

The idea of categorization instead of coding may give the study a greater feel of interpretive work versus positivist work. The categorization process gives the researcher greater room for reimagining information during the process of reading a text than a rigid coding sheet, a common tool in quantitative research. Categories can continue to change, grow or shrink as the researcher discovers additional information through systematic readings of the text. This process also allows for the qualitative intent of finding meaning instead of the quantitative notion of focusing on counting terms (Mayring, 2000).
Mayring's argues that categories utilized in qualitative content analysis are refined through the research process. While some in the qualitative and quantitative research community could argue that coding and categorization could be used interchangeably in the research process, Mayring provides examples that indicate a clear distinction in the application of both research terms.

Qualitative content analysis can also provide a variety of different approaches to data collection that encompasses many different forms of qualitative data. Some qualitative content analysis studies focus on interviews as a way to find information while other studies focus on media texts to provide a means to acquire information. Other studies have used open-ended questionnaires to produce information that would help the researcher learn about different communities (Mayring, 2000). One interesting aspect to all these studies involves the uses of a person and how that person could represent a group. Qualitative content analysis could use both individual interviews along with interviews conducted in groups to ascertain information about a group on both a social and a personal level.

Schreier (2012) builds on the work of Krippendorff (2004) by establishing the goals of qualitative content analysis through a variety of different research categories. Schreier defines qualitative content analysis as, “a systematic method for describing the meaning of qualitative information. This is done by classifying parts of your information as instances of the category of a coding frame. This method is suitable for all information that requires some degree of interpretation” (Schreier, 2012, p. 8). This definition shows how the growth of systematizing research and using the language of quantitative research methods has influenced qualitative content analysis. While acknowledging the
interpretive latitude available to qualitative researcher, Schreier gives a greater degree of structure to qualitative content analysis. This structure could allow the researcher greater insight into the text based on a more defined set of principles to interpret the text while also leaving open the possibility of diminishing the role of the researcher for a greater degree of methodological rigor. Whatever the outcome, the researcher still plays a large role in the interpretation of the text.

The interesting deviation when defining qualitative content analysis from Krippendorff (2004) to Schreier (2012) involves the specific focus on coding. While Krippendorff acknowledges the importance of coding in research study, Schreier takes it a step forward and applies that standard to the original definition of qualitative content analysis. When coding in a qualitative context, a researcher will focus on concepts and not data to help organize the findings for a study. While finding data remains important for qualitative research, an even more important factor is the description and how all the information of a particular text is related.

**Narrative Categories**

The importance of the discursive turn, as illustrated in Chapter 2, illustrated the importance of using narrative as a means to examine text. In this section, I will explain how those categories fit alongside the categorization process used for a qualitative content analysis. Charland (1987) indicated that an understanding about who the researcher is in relation to the text being studied provides an important insight into the continued self-reflexivity a scholar of discourse should continually engage in during research studies. The person conducting the study should see him or herself as part of the audience, not distanced from the audience in an objective manner. While specific
identities that categorize people are not factual information, the consequence of being identified in a specific manner has a historical root that attaches power and privilege to specific identities over others. This process, an idea with information consequences, allows human beings to be viewed as textual information.

Charland (1987) pointed out something very important for qualitative content analysis researchers to acknowledge in their process of conducting their research. While it is important to adhere to the principles and ideals that guide their social perspective, their identity always matters when they conduct a research study. In other words, researchers should acknowledge their own privileges and positions when they begin a research project.

Burke (1984) understood the importance of narrative in the construction of reality. Burke uses the term “dramatism” to help clearly identify how the construction of a story helps to impact the construction of reality. Burke helps to construct that reality by identifying the importance of using any person as a valuable source. In Burke’s mind, any person had the ability to be poetic. Burke extrapolates the unique human experiences to one person and uses those experiences as a common thread to unite us all. The channel with which those experiences are best relayed to the public are stories, or narratives.

In addition, in the construction of a narrative, Burke saw the use of metaphor in establishing a means of creating a human bond to extend a chance not only for a learned experience but a shared learned experience. Those shared learned experiences connect best to humanity through dramatism, which allows for the most expression of any textual construction, through either words or actions. In this expansion, the opportunity for a
building of a civic lesson can also happen though the new construction of information through a critical lens.

One of the best constructions of relating the human experience is using narrative through an acknowledged and accepted language. Through language, Burke (1969) stated that a style of human expression emerges that develops into a narrative. This relationship of a narrative to the overall human experience indicates a shared humanity that continually changes based on the continued evolvement of meaning through the depth of information disclosing. These disclosing impact and alter the overall construction of a narrative when examining its meaning over the course of time.

The Current Project

In my study, I examined mainstream media texts and alternative media texts. The mainstream media texts I used were The New York Times (NYT) and USATODAY. I used the NYT because of its status as an agenda setting newspaper in the U.S. and around the world. The NYT speaks to a particular audience of the educated and economically advanced in terms of class status. I used USATODAY as a mainstream media text that provided insight into a more widespread audience. In 2011, USATODAY had the third largest circulation on any newspaper in the country and provided other previous studies on the importance of media and society (Conway, 2013; The State of the News Media, 2012).

After I finished categorizing each of these texts into five particular narrative categories, setting, character, focus, action and tone, I noted which four alternative media sources provide the most impactful text in both mainstream media outlets and then proceed to code each of these four alternative media sources using the same narrative
categories as the mainstream media text: character, setting, action, focus and tone. By adopting the alternative media texts from the mainstream media texts, I hoped to build on Kenix’s argument of the intersections between mainstream and alternative media texts and how alternative media texts change or alter mainstream media texts during the course of the study. For all textual examples used in this study, I used the search term “drone strikes”.

My study focused on the years January 2009 until December 2013. I chose this beginning date because this date reflects the change in United States executive branch leadership from President Bush to President Obama. I chose this ending date to reflect the scope of the narrative during the entire first term and beginning of the second term of the Obama presidency.

I did a qualitative content analysis using narrative categories for my study for several reasons. First, qualitative content analysis allowed for a systematic approach to the media text I studied. The use of narrative allowed for a greater expansion into the depth of that category, giving me a chance to deeply read the text not just for the importance of terms but how those terms function in developing a clear narrative throughout the course of the study. The topic of drone strikes means very different things to different people and what the media emphasized in their text illustrated the important concepts to each particular group. In addition, the use of narrative revealed a deeper meaning of the text than through a traditional quantitative study. The categories I used for my study are the following: settings, character, action, focus and tone. I used the theoretical work of Fisher (1995) and Charland (1999) to guide this section.
The settings category included subcategories information related to countries where drone strikes happened and construction of the narrative about that country through the textual examples of the term drone strikes. Many sources from the Obama administration talked off the record and rarely used their names for the media stories. This situation happens primarily in the mainstream media coverage, where *The New York Times* and *USATODAY* often times used anonymous sources from the Obama administration and other governmental elites. Alternative media sources interviewed and quoted sources from outside the governmental structure, i.e. people from Yemen, Pakistan etc. and the impact drone strikes had on their everyday lives. Other important source information came from non-governmental experts, such as UN representatives and western development workers who live and work in the regions where drone strikes happen.

Another important category included what kind of characters emerged from the text. Many times, news reports do not offer the nuance and insight that come from columns or specific editorials from the press. With their larger access to information and official sources, mainstream media may provide more news coverage while alternative may provide more columns and sharper criticism.

Another main category included the focus of the media text. When I examined the mainstream media text, drone strike coverage changed over the five year period of the study and shaped the overall focus of the narrative. The coverage began with very benign news reports and grows more critical over the course of the period I am examining, the focus of the media text should change to reveal this evolvement of the narrative. Focus also gave a broad parameter to study what subtopics emerged from the text and the
freedom to delve deeply into sub narrative in both the mainstream and alternative media text.

The next category for my study was action. The action category in the qualitative content analysis using narrative categories examined in great detail how not only the topic of drone strikes was covered in the media texts but what particular events, especially in terms of the U.S. military, changed not only a particular drone strike but the continued repetition of the drone strike. While this study focused on particular drone strikes, especially when they resonate clearly in the media texts, the larger goal of the study included how the repeated action of drone strikes impacted the construction of the overall narrative about drone strikes in this study. Finally, the type of combat used by the U.S. military was important for this study because drone strikes build on the proud U.S. military tradition of speed and efficiency. The actions in the media texts should reflect those important traditions.

Finally, the tone category reflected the widest discrepancy in the narratives between the mainstream media texts and the alternative media texts. In addition, tone acted as the biggest narrative catalyst for creating a clear change in the media text, from either mainstream or alternative media texts. Tone represented the entire scope of the study and reveals not only what the narrative about drone strikes said but how the media texts said it. The type of story, especially from the mainstream media text was important in this study. For example, a clear narrative emerged much more clearly from an opinion editorial than a news story. For that reason, tone was an important category to note any shifts in the narrative construction of drone strikes.
Previous research from Cavallaro, Sonnenberg & Knuckey (2012) stated the extent and impact drone strikes continued to have on the Pakistani populace. The other main location of drone strikes was Yemen as outlined by Savage (2013). The recent Senate subcommittee hearings on the impact of drones in Yemen reinforced the importance of studying media texts from these two countries. The spike in drone strikes happened after the election of President Obama in 2009. In addition, the work done by Savage (2013), Shane (2013) and Jacobson (2013) established a clear rise in media accounts of the impact of drone strikes on political discourses by mainstream media reporting.

As stated in the beginning of this section, I examined mainstream media sources based on their coverage of drone strikes. The news website I have chosen for this study is the New York Times. Mazzetti & Shane (2010) have written extensively about the drone strike story, which show a clear indication that The New York Times website has covered the issue of drone strikes. In addition, The New York Times status as a paper of record establishes media norms for their specific geographic areas, as well as the U.S. at large. In my focus on The New York Times, I examined articles that focus on drone strikes.

I also used USA Today as another media text. The importance of using a newspaper like this is the reach of the audience. While The New York Times focuses on a more erudite and affluent audience. USA Today reaches an audience of more mass appeal and allows for the discussion to broaden beyond one media audience to include a broader section of U.S. media consumers and distributors. The tone changed with each newspaper but the attention to the categories listed above remained the same for each newspaper.
I examined alternative media sources over that same period from January 2009 to December 2013 for any article that focused on drone strikes. The alternative media sources were identified through the qualitative content analysis of the mainstream sources were CODEPINK, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). As Kenix (2009) outlines in her work, the continually blurring of the lines between alternative and mainstream provided insight into how mainstream media may shape the type of issues reported on from alternative media sources. In addition, mainstream media sources continued to use alternative media sources in their own reporting which allows for a larger discussion on the role alternative media plays in shaping mainstream media content.

For the purposes of my study, I used four different alternative media organizations. The organizations I used differed from one another but they all shared a clear purpose to examine the issue of drone strikes. First, the ACLU acted as an organization that not only produced media that challenged drone strikes from a legal perspective but kept up that legal battle throughout the five years I researched the topic. For that reason, the ACLU remained committed to exploring the drone strike topic both from a legal reasoning behind why drone strikes happened but also based on the public secrecy that came from the Obama administration through almost the entire course of this study. Second and equally important, the ACLU has traditionally been the guardian of liberty in the U.S. and worked to protect the liberty of those people who have been traditionally denied rights in the U.S. (www.aclu.org). This definitive statement indicated to me that this organization showed a rhetorical commitment to the truth that reflected a clear narrative coherence, defined by Fisher (1984). The type of alternative media
produced by the ACLU in this study included press releases, interviews and legal cases on the issue of drone strikes.

Amnesty International (AI) exists as a human rights organization that remains committed to human rights regardless of nation, wealth, and race or gender background. Amnesty has over 7 million people throughout the world committed to its ideals of human rights for all and does not endorse a political ideology or religion (www.amnesty.org). Amnesty also contributed many types of information through its website on the issue of drone strikes. Amnesty conducted their own studies about the impact of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen, independent from the U.S. government, studies that lasted over 60 pages. This type of in-depth, independent information did not exist in the mainstream media organizations I used in this study. In addition, Amnesty remained focused on the issue of human rights and drone strikes throughout the course of my study, without a clear partisan concern of U.S. leadership.

Human Rights Watch defends the rights of people worldwide (www.hrw.org). HRW produced the most similar news content to the mainstream media in the course of this study. By this I mean, that HRW sent reporters to impacted settings and interviewed local citizens and wrote those reports up and displayed those reports on its website much in the same manner a mainstream media outlets would a traditional news story. However, HRW, much like AI, focused their attention on local sources that did not have traditional affiliations or connections to people in power. While mainstream media outlets used many governmental sources, HRW did not. HRW also produced traditional editorial type content that reflected their clear position on drone strikes without a clear partisan angle. The media organization also saw the opportunity for change in the Obama administration
about the issue of drone strikes, especially in the earlier years of the text produced about drone strikes.

CODEPINK is the most traditionally radical organization of the four alternative media organizations in this study. CODEPINK began as an organization after 9/11 that resisted the terror alert colors that the Bush administration used to reflect the possibility of terror to the U.S. CODEPINK also acknowledged an explicit support of women and the issues that impact the lives of women throughout the world. CODEPINK also produced media texts that showed them not as reporters on the issue of drone strikes but as participants in protests, vigils and fasts. CODEPINK also has a clear emphasis on joy and humor, two qualities needed for any type of serious political work (www.codepink.org)

As Mayring (2000) stated, qualitative content analysis allowed for a clear synthesis to develop between theory, method and research questions. For the purposes of my study, that synthesis examined the text of the sentence. I wanted to examine whose interests are served from these media text depictions. As illustrated in Chapter 1, a cacophony of voices emerged that question the parameters or outright use of the drone strikes. These voices permeated political circles, media, human rights, law and the everyday person. I categorized each of the articles according to the five narrative components in an EXCEL file according to when the information was released on the media websites I used for this study. I recorded the date, the title of the article, the author, if the article had alternative media as a source and any content that related to drone strikes. I also referenced what type of article it was, such as press release, news article, editorial etc.
The agency of the qualitative content analysis method helped me in my study. Krippendorff (2004) saw content analysis as deciphering text but also how that text interacts with context. With the increasing use of drone strikes since the election of President Obama in 2008, media studies scholars are at the embryonic level of drone strike research. Without a litany of previous research on the drone strike topic in media studies, I made certain choices according to not only what is in the context but also the world around the text. Without that volume of research, the researcher needs the freedom to make certain choices when it comes to textual information. Qualitative content analysis allowed for those choices from me.

The importance of worldview with any scholarship remains an important factor as well with any larger research project. Qualitative content analysis showed me the importance of engaging in the scholarship instead of a detached relationship that a researcher has with data. This study reflected potentially controversial decisions made by political actors through media text representations. While a specific political slant emerged, the importance of the text encapsulated this study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter, I analyzed the mainstream media texts of USA TODAY and The New York Times (NYT). After examining those texts, I analyzed the four most impactful alternative media sources from those media texts. The findings from this section include a clear support from the mainstream media texts for the continuation of drone strikes, although a larger critique of drone strikes emerged from the NYT during the course of the study. The alternative media organizations provided a much harsher critique of drone strikes based on a lack of transparency and accountability from the Obama administration. This critique grew much more vitriolic over the course of the study based on U.S. violation of human rights law from the alternative media organizations. The intersections section illustrated the relationship between mainstream media and alternative media in this study, although not in the way I originally anticipated. While the mainstream media texts in this study did use the alternative media sources in this study, key intersections between the two media texts emerged in similar content across both types of media along with a growing frustration with the Obama administration over the lack of public acknowledgment of the details of the drone strike program, along with the specific number of civilian casualties killed during the scope of this study. This critique happened with less of a narrative tone of venom in the mainstream media text than in the mainstream media.

I analyzed in great detail these findings throughout the chapter. I maintained the consistency and uniformity of the narrative component order for each section of analysis. The five narrative components, setting, character, action, focus and tone remained in the same order in each section, even though the impact of those components changed
depending on the media source. This uniformity produced a clear means of comparison across all three media platforms.

*USA TODAY*

The USA TODAY section of the analysis produced 88 newspaper articles that include the search term drone strikes and the caveats illustrated in the previous paragraph. The number of articles increased to 38 just in 2013, a sharp increase from the 50 articles produced from 2009-2012. In the USA TODAY section of the analysis, the content focused on a pro American perspective in relation to the drone strikes. The majority of the source content came from governmental officials, as illustrated in propaganda model illustrated by Herman and Chomsky, and from think tanks that develop from elite DC interests. The alternative media sources only began to appear in the 2013 content and came from the major international human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW). The only national human rights groups acknowledged in the content was the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which questioned the legality of the drone strikes according to U.S. constitutional law. In the next section, I analyzed some of the key narrative concepts that developed from each subheading, including focus, tone, characters, action and settings. In each section, I analyzed examples from the news content that illustrated how each narrative developed throughout the news coverage.

*Setting*

The major settings of the narrative from this content focused on Afghanistan/Pakistan, Pakistan as its own entity, Washington D.C. /USA, and Yemen. Overall, when the setting moved to the USA and away from the actual places where
drone strikes happened, the type of news coverage changed. When the setting changed to the U.S., the number of governmental officials who spoke on the record about the idea of drone strikes helped to define the news content. In addition, in this setting, the alternative media actors were cited. However, only the ACLU established a pattern in the news content coverage from 2009-2013. The other alternative media actors, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, only began to appear in 2013, following the CIA confirmation hearings of John Brennan, Rand Paul’s “drone strike” filibuster and Obama’s May 2013 speech on the legality of extrajudicial killing by drones of American citizens. The importance of the setting was important for this type of study about drone strikes. With the numbers changing depending on the news content, the only coherent and consistent element to this news content is the settings that developed during the USA TODAY coverage.

When the setting changed from the U.S, the content in the narrative setting changed substantially. In this news content, the idea of drone strikes as a component of U.S. foreign policy changed and instead became a daily news event where occasional high-level Al-Qaeda members died at the hands of a U.S. drone strike. The other people who died during the drone strikes, the ones not identified either from the Taliban or Al Qaeda, remained nameless throughout the media coverage. In addition, the setting changed significantly from 2009 to 2013. In 2009, the major setting of actual drone strikes took place in Pakistan or the hybrid setting moniker of Afghanistan/Pakistan, shortened to Af/Pak. By 2013, the USA TODAY setting changed to Yemen, as the focus of U.S. operations moved to Yemen in congress with the Yemeni government. The one consistent practice in each setting, however, included the use of unofficial sources, which
spoke on condition of anonymity and came from the setting where the drone strike happened. When a specific strike happened in either location, the source content from governmental officials disappeared under the banner of “no comment” and from spokespeople who could neither confirm nor deny that a drone strike even happened. The one objection to that narrative pattern emerged when the U.S. government performed a “successful” mission. When the target that the U.S. government intended to hit is taken out, military and governmental spokespeople then spoke on the record about a specific incident. When these operations “failed”, the amount of information that came from the government sources resorts back to the standard principle of “no comment”. The following section will address each narrative subsection of Af/Pak, Pakistan itself, Washington D.C. /USA and Yemen. Each section will contain examples from the media coverage.

*Af/Pak*

In this section, I analyzed on the setting that USA TODAY refers to as “Af/Pak”. USA TODAY used this term to describe primarily military operations that transcended the traditional border between the two countries. The interdependence of both countries is key in the media content, when it is concerned with a terrorism threat from Al Qaeda or the Taliban. The unique cultural markers that define the setting, the political distance from populace to national leaders and the enormous economic challenges facing the setting was mostly ignored in the USA TODAY content. Instead, the terrorist leaders, such as Bin Laden defined this section more so than the setting establishes any narrative impact.
The coverage of the attack on leadership allows the AF/Pak setting narrative to facilitate the continued U.S. governmental support for the war in Afghanistan, even if the public does not share that same feeling.

Recent polls such as The USATODAY-ABC News one done this week shows that support for the war is waning. "For these security gains to be sustained over time, there's an urgent need for political and economic progress in Afghanistan," Obama said. The assessment also concludes that the U.S. has made progress in battering al-Qaeda leadership holed up in remote parts of Pakistan. The U.S. has used drone strikes to target al-Qaeda leaders. "Today al-Qaeda's senior leadership in the border setting of Afghanistan and Pakistan is under more pressure than at any point since they fled Afghanistan nine years ago," the president said. The broader goal of denying safe havens to militants in Pakistan remains elusive. (Michaels, 2010).

This example illustrated the importance of the relationship between the use of drone strikes and the goals of sustaining success in the war in Afghanistan. The focus again on leadership in this section illustrated the USA TODAY tendency to frame the content in terms of leaders in terror organizations. In addition, the impact made by governmental policy to not allow “safe havens” and put terrorists “on the run” allowed for the governmental elites to elicit support from the U.S. populace by showing how impactful the drone strikes were in fighting the depth and leadership of terror networks.

A clear, coherent narrative eluded the AF/Pak setting. While USA TODAY content reinforces the tactical mission of U.S. forces to end the Taliban and Al Qaeda presence in the setting, the content also makes clear the limitations with using only drone
strikes to end the presence of these loosely connected terrorist organizations. Drone strikes acted as a component, not the dominant factor, in this setting and provided another tool for USA TODAY to report on from the war in Afghanistan.

*Pakistan*

The Pakistan setting resembled Yemen more than Afghanistan. Pakistan provided the main setting for drone strikes from 2009-2011. Yemen was the dominant setting for drone strikes in 2012-2013. As a narrative component, Pakistan was mostly a place where the Obama administration refuses to send troops or even acknowledge drone strikes for the majority of the time period from 2009-2011. With a few exceptions, the setting was characterized as a lawless place filled with terrorists who pose a threat to the U.S. For that reason, when a drone strike killed one of the high ranking terrorists, a sense of accomplishment of ending terrorism defines the setting in Pakistan. For that reason, both characters, high ranking terrorists, and the action, ending terrorism through drone strikes, played a larger narrative role than Pakistan as a narrative setting.

One of the larger questions, however, plaguing the Pakistani people was not just terrorist network but economic development that allowed for a greater access to stability provided by material needs. This struggle was articulated in the example below.

"Who cares who comes and who goes," Arif says as sellers haggle over yards of colorful embroidered cloth. "As long as they're good for the country."

The U.S.' focus in Pakistan since 9/11 has been on combating radicalism, the latest example of which was the suicide bombing Monday of a U.S. government vehicle. The explosion killed two Pakistanis and wounded two Americans. For Pakistanis, the declining standard of living -- and not the war against Islamists
here or in Afghanistan -- is what many say concerns them most. The government has failed to turn around high unemployment, soaring inflation and stagnant wages, (Yousouf & Masood, 2012).

While terrorism remained the primary concern of the Obama administration in their foreign policy relationship with Pakistan, the greater needs of the people included how to address social and economic problems that dominated conversations in every country throughout the world. The narrow narrative of terrorism and Pakistan only examined one aspect that impacts that setting.

The Obama administration acknowledged those economic realities in Pakistan; however, their primary concern began and ended with terrorism and drone strikes provided a tactic in addressing that concern. This military imperial mentality even changed domestic policy in Pakistan.

U.S. pressure on Pakistan to crack down on Taliban extremists within its borders is paying off, American officials and independent analysts say, paving the way for progress in the war in neighboring Afghanistan. Pakistan's cooperation marks a shift after years of tolerating homegrown extremists operating openly in the country. The government recently has pressed an offensive in tribal areas home to al-Qaeda, has arrested major Taliban figures and has signed off on airstrikes by pilotless drones that have killed important suspected terrorists. After downplaying for years the presence of extremist leaders in Pakistani cities, the government last month arrested a number of key Taliban figures, including Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, the Afghan Taliban's second-in-command. Drone strikes have increased to 53 in Pakistan in 2009 from 36 in 2008 and five in 2007, according to statistics
compiled by the Long War Journal website. An August strike killed Baitullah Mehsud, a major Taliban leader. (Dilanian, 2012).

The U.S. has been “successful” in pushing the Pakistani government to address their long history of terrorism which led to the capture and killing of significant “leaders” in the Taliban and Al Qaeda network. The drone strikes helped in this change of domestic policy and provided statistics that prove their “effectiveness”. What remains absent from this content included the other people who have died in drone strikes besides just Pakistani militants.

What remained real and beyond the statistical illusion was the impact the drone strikes had on the Pakistani people, who believed that drone strikes not only end terror threats but indicated symbols of surveillance. While the killing of Al Qaeda leaders continued to happen, the tactic used to kill those leaders reflected a setting of constant and impactful fear.

Al-Qaeda confirmed that its No. 3 leader, Mustafa al-Yazid (also known as Sheik Saeed al-Masri), was killed in an unmanned drone strike last month. The 10th third-ranking al-Qaeda leader killed in the past six years, while Osama bin Laden (No. 1) and Ayman al-Zawahri (No. 2) remain at large. But the serious point is that, with little fanfare, U.S. forces have been increasingly successful in targeting leaders of the terror group that carried out 9/11 and remains dedicated to murdering Americans and their allies. The program does not come without cost.

 Strikes from 3 miles to 5 miles up often produce "collateral damage," the sanitized phrase for the killing or maiming of innocent bystanders. The strike on al-Yazid, for example, is reported to have killed his wife and at least one of his
three children. The drone strikes enrage many ordinary Pakistanis, both there and in the U.S. (Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomb suspect, is reported to have said that he was radicalized after witnessing numerous drone attacks during a stay in his native Pakistan.) United Nations critics attack the drone program as extrajudicial assassination. And, as President Obama's new national security strategy acknowledges, the U.S. cannot achieve its aims by military means alone (Drones take toll on al-Qaeda leaders, 2010).

This media content from USA TODAY provided the best exemplar of the complexity of the Pakistani setting in a number of particular ways. First, the editorial content from the paper provided a much different narrative of the setting than the news reported from the setting. The impact on a terror network caused trepidation of a people about the imperial force that dominates the sky. Second, the frame from USA TODAY, even when the newspaper acknowledges the limitations of the drone strikes, framed the section as an overall “success” because of the continued apparent diminishment of the Al Qaeda threat. The frame reinforced a U.S. first lens to view the drone strikes as a foreign policy decision. Finally, the content provided a pathway to address the concerns of the Pakistani people without only military solutions, yet provides no tangible or specific policies that will help end the terror threat in the country. The drone strikes provided a real impact on the county while the non-military solutions remain in the abstract and beyond engagement from USA TODAY. The primacy of drone strikes remained the dominant talking point in the Pakistani setting.

The Pakistani setting showed a bit of a departure from the Af/Pak setting in the focus on drone strikes as an isolated military practice away from the War in Afghanistan.
While economic concerns do have a place in the Pakistani setting, the Al Qaeda presence provided the most significant way to examine this narrative setting. In addition, drone strikes have created a military “victory” with the extinguishment of several Al Qaeda “leaders”. Overall, the setting provided the complexity of the political and human impact of drone strikes.

_U.S. /D.C._

As a setting, the U.S. /D.C. section dealt mostly with the idea of drone strikes and less with the cold reality of the assassination of human life. The U.S. /D.C. section allowed for more critical discourse especially from lawmakers who challenged the presumptions of the reasoning behind the use of drone strikes. The U.S. /D.C. setting had the greatest impact of any setting because of its importance as the home for the decision making behind when drone strikes are used and where those strikes happen. The ramifications of what happens after the drone strikes, however, did not disturb or infiltrate the setting in the same way as the other settings, providing a halcyon example of peace versus the dominant example in the Af/Pak, Pakistan and Yemen settings of war.

When the setting changes from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the U.S., the discussion of drone strikes changed as well. The drone strikes fell under the umbrella of foreign policy choices that exist almost solely in the philosophical and had less to do with the actual impact of the strikes as they do in other parts of the world. A dramatic change in the narrative occurred in 2013 with the nomination of John Brennan as head of the CIA and the filibuster of Rand Paul in reference to that nomination.
An example of the philosophical discussion in the USA/ Washington setting emerged when Eric Holder, the Attorney General of the U.S., discusses drone strikes at Northwestern University.

"Given the nature of how terrorists act and where they tend to hide, it may not always be feasible to capture a U.S. citizen terrorist who presents an imminent threat of violent attack," Holder said, according to a text of his speech. "In that case, our government has the clear authority to defend the U.S. with lethal force. Holder said opponents of the government's position cling to legal interpretations that are "simply not accurate. ‘The Constitution's guarantee of due process is ironclad, and it is essential, but it does not require judicial approval before the president may use force abroad against a senior operational leader of a foreign terrorist organization with which the U.S. is at war, even if that individual happens to be a U.S. citizen," he said (Johnson, 2012).

Holder’s depiction of drone strikes fit a number of criteria for the narrative setting of the U.S. and D.C. First, the discussion was always in the abstract. No specific terrorist was named in this discussion and these terrorists are living in places far away from conventional locations of war, which require these policy decisions to be made. Second, the idea of “imminent threat” was not defined clearly at any point in the discussion, leaving open for interpretation who can be targeted for drone strikes and who lives outside that rhetorical space. Third, Holder again referred back to the terror groups as having a “senior operational leader”, without defining who those targets were and what constituted that term in relation to just “ordinary “Al Qaeda members. Within the “safety” of the U.S. setting, drone strikes, even from a “senior operational leader” of the
Obama administration becomes an abstract concept that implies substantial government jurisdiction without explaining how those same governmental leaders came to those decisions.

While the ACLU had spoken about the legality of drone strikes as early as 2009, international organizations committed to human rights such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International made their voice heard in the USA TODAY discourse. When Attorney General Holder released the names of 4 American citizens killed by drone strikes, the advocacy groups wanted transparency from the Obama administration about the details of the citizens’ deaths.

Human rights advocates were not satisfied with Holder's explanation. “The Obama administration continues to claim authority to kill virtually anyone anywhere in the world under the 'global battlefield' legal theory and a radical redefinition of the concept of imminence," said Zeke Johnson, Amnesty International USA's director of Security with Human Rights. Dixon Osburn, director of Human Rights First's Law and Security Program, said the group was "deeply concerned that the administration appears to be institutionalizing a problematic targeted killing policy without public debate. “The American public deserves to know whether the administration is complying with the law," he said. (Johnson, 2013).

This example provided an interesting detour from the standard narrative from the US/D.C. setting. First, the idea of accountability was examined by this discourse. Up to this point, the media content instead focused on the tactical victories that drone strikes lead to for U.S. foreign policy. Now, this discourse dug deeper and found out other
components to the drone strikes policy besides the assassination of targets. Second, the idea of “targeted killing” entered the lexicon of the narrative. Up to this point, the governmental narrative had been examining this narrative in terms of military “successes” and not the killing behind those actions. Finally, the alternative media sources did not come out and denounce completely the idea of drone strikes but instead encouraged acts of openness in a democratic society. Without passing specific judgment, the alternative media sources instead want to broaden the discussion to include actors and information outside the control of the U.S. government as a means of accountability. The idea of drone strikes were not directly challenged but instead the justification for those drone strikes based on the public information available was critiqued in this example.

The alternative media sources did not provide the only counter narrative within the U.S. setting; in 2013, the nomination of John Brennan to head the CIA provided a departure from the bipartisan support for drone strikes up to this point in the narrative. First, Brennan’s nomination was interrupted and questioned by actors from inside the government structure.

Senators from both parties had held up the nomination of Brennan, President Obama's counterterrorism adviser and a former longtime CIA official, so they could get more information about the administration's use of lethal drone attacks on terrorism suspects, including U.S. citizens. Dianne Feinstein, a California Democrat and the panel's chairwoman, said she scheduled the closed-session vote on Brennan after the White House agreed to supply the committee with classified Justice Department memos outlining the legal rationale for the drone strikes (Davis and Madhani, 2013).
This deliberative act from a bipartisan set of lawmakers showed the new engagement through the use of drone strikes as a policy choice by the Obama administration. As indicated earlier from the alternative media sources, the concept of drone strike was not completely abandoned by the lawmakers; instead, these legislators wanted to know more information from the Obama administration about how, when, and why the drone strikes are justified as a foreign policy decision. The veil of silence was lifted not only from the human rights community that worked outside the governmental structure but also from the elected representatives of the U.S. government.

The U.S./D.C. setting provided a rich tapestry of content about the philosophical sanctuary of U.S. soil and the foreign policy decisions made by lawmakers and officials on people in distance settings. In addition, governmental officials and alternative media sources did not immediately dismiss the use of drone strikes. They instead asked for more information from governmental officials about drone strikes in an attempt to foster democratic engagement and ending the silence in the justification of these “targeted killings”. With a hope of finding out more reasons for the use of drone strikes both in the U.S. and abroad. The first cracks in the dominant narrative about the use of drone strikes as a “success” emerges from this setting.

Yemen

In ways similar to Pakistan, Yemen remained a setting where terrorism took place and had very few other narrative characteristics. The notorious off shoot of Al Qaeda in Pakistan, Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula, dominated the majority of USA Today coverage of the setting, especially in 2012-2013, when the majority of drone strike coverage moves to Yemen from Pakistan. In addition, the tumultuous leadership of
Yemen, publicized highly in the WikiLeaks disclosure, illustrated a complicated relationship between the national power structure in Yemen and the Obama administration. This construction of narrative elements again denied the setting of Yemen a complex location that involved a deeper economic understanding of its policies or dominant cultural practices that help define the setting.

The Yemen section of the setting provided an interesting examination of drone strikes as military policy and the continued questioning of the feasibility of eradicating terrorists worldwide with that same policy. When Yemen was discussed in the setting section, it is typically talked about in examples like this.

Al-Mushari, 31, got caught in an airstrike in Yemen's U.S.-backed war against al-Qaeda, which has created what the Pentagon considers one of the most threatening terrorist bases in the Middle East in the country's south. The bombing that Samir experienced in the city of Jaar may have been from a U.S. drone, several of which are being used to fire missiles at al-Qaeda locales in a joint operation with Yemen's military -- but he does not lash out at the U.S. We have to get rid of al-Qaeda, and yes, we need help from anyone, from outside, including America," he says. His friend, Ali Asrali, 20, who fled Jaar six months ago, nods in agreement. “They gave us electricity, free water and food," he says of al-Qaeda, "but they have brought the army. They have brought war. Civilians are dying now because of them." (Craig, 2012).

What this text indicated was the discourse about Yemen as a setting overall. Yemen, especially, in 2012 and 2013, became the new setting for drone strikes, away from the war setting of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The focus of drone activity has been Yemen
ever since. The complexity of the Al Qaeda threat in Yemen was also personified in this example. Al Qaeda acted, in many ways, much differently than in other parts of the world. Al Qaeda became part of the people’s lives and then demanded action from the people they initially helped.

With the continued threat from Al Qaeda and a continued U.S. presence of drone strikes, especially reinforced and targeted at ending the terror network threat, one conclusion to be raised about Yemen was the extermination of Al Qaeda as a threat to the Yemeni people and the security of the U.S. Instead, a new reality emerged in Yemen.

After more than a decade of U.S. counterterrorism efforts and drone strikes in Yemen, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula remains a potent and growing force. Some say it is time for a change in strategy. Al-Qaeda in the Arabia Peninsula (AQAP) as the Yemen branch calls itself has not been wiped out. In fact, it has been described by the Obama administration as the most lethal wing of the core group that attacked the U.S. on Sept. 11, 2001. Southern Hadhramaut's security director, Fahami Mahroos, agrees that the response to terrorism can't depend on military or law enforcement, a sentiment also expressed by President Obama. Mahroos said the strategy against al-Qaeda needs to be a dual offensive: first tackling their ideology via religious scholars and then with military action. He conceded that there is a huge lack of cooperation between the central government and local community leaders in confronting the extremist ideology. (Craig, 2013)

The multifaceted approach to drone strikes, the U.S. war against Al Qaeda and the dangers of ideology all emerged from this example. While discourse in other settings detailed with great specificity the “success” in drone strikes, the Yemen setting provided
a counter narrative. In many ways, the threat of Al Qaeda remains as strong as anywhere in the world and harkened back to a dark moment in American history: 9/11. With all the advancement in technology, with the monetary commitment of the U.S. to end terrorism throughout the world and with drone strikes at the cutting edge of military tactical strategy, a giant Al Qaeda threat still existed in Yemen. Second, the continued acknowledgement of fighting terrorism with only military means was again reinforced without any particulars about what that entails materially. Finally, the dangers of ideology presented the most important take away from the Yemen setting. Ideology acted as a galvanizing force in the setting that even drone strikes did not obliterate. The ideological presence of Al Qaeda in the setting proved much harder to destroy than any of the top leaders in the organization. While top leaders and targets may come and go, the ideology of terrorism in the setting remained.

The Yemen setting exemplified the difficulty in defining clearly a common narrative among the different settings for drone strike discussion throughout the world. From the philosophical reasoning, to the military tactical accomplishments to the stubbornness of terrorist ideology, the narrative setting captured the depth and difficulty of assessing the worth of drone strikes throughout the world. While the discourse changed from setting to setting, the impact of drone strikes through foreign policy and military action kept a consistent pattern.

Characters

Much like the setting section, a variety of characters emerged from the USA TODAY media content on drone strikes. From lawmakers to clerics, movie directors to TV personalities, the character section showed the number of ways media related to
political phenomena. I examined a number of different characters and determined that 2 main characters emerged from the text. These characters were terrorists, specifically Osama Bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki, and President Obama. Each character provided different insights into how the narrative is constructed about the impact of drone strikes both in the discourse and on humanity. Each of the characters played a fundamental role in how media discourse changed during the course of the study.

_Terrorists_

The majority of the terrorist section focused generally on Al Qaeda and the Taliban and more specifically on Bin Laden and al-Awlaki. Terrorists provided the largest threat of any character and any victory against them was trumpeted with praise.

The hostage takers have not made any ransom demands for the three foreigners.
The last attempt by Yemeni security forces to rescue foreign hostages was in 1998 to free 16 hostages -- including two U.S. citizens. The operation left three Britons and an Australian dead. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is still holding a Saudi diplomat and a Swiss woman, kidnapped in March. Two apparent U.S. drone strikes killed two suspected al-Qaeda militants and a civilian when one missile missed its target and hit a residential home in al-Bayda province last week (Craig, 2013).

The terrorists kidnapped westerners in this example and provided a point of emphasis for western forces to eradicate. Drone strikes acted as a tool to fight this force of evil in an effort to restore some kind of order to the world. No backstory was given about the terrorist group.
Terrorists also remained Orientalized by the USA TODAY content on drone strikes. They were not like “us”; they were different.

Is it al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the religious fundamentalists seeking to return to power in Afghanistan and seize control in Pakistan? More pointedly, what is the Taliban? It doesn't entirely fit its dominant image as AL Qaeda’s former host and current ally. The so-called Haqqani network, the one that poses the greatest danger, has close ties to al-Qaeda. The Hizb-e-Islami is less religiously rigid, sometimes allowing music and parties. Then there's an assortment of tribal-based thugs and criminals who call themselves Taliban to improve their standing.

Although U.S. drone strikes have killed militant leaders and need to continue, doing more to avoid civilian casualties and mistreatment of prisoners will deprive the enemy of propaganda bonanzas. (“Afghan success depends on understanding the enemy”, 2009).

The complexity of the terrorist as character revealed itself in this section. First, terrorists in different settings of the world provided the same threat. The extermination of the threat will never go away. Second, there was significant mystification after 8 years of war in Afghanistan and throughout the Muslim world, who the people are that become terrorists. They have religion but sometimes they party so the identification by a western media source indicated trepidation of finding commonalities with a group that is despised. Finally, the acknowledgment that drones strikes alone cannot stop terrorists. The drone strikes can end terrorists but not the threat of terror. For these reasons, the terrorist as character remained a central figure.
Two specific terrorists emerged in the media discourse. First, Osama Bin Laden became the focus of media content first for this external threat and then as a point of victorious celebration upon his death. In the years leading up to his death, the confounding notion of where he lived continued to dominate the press coverage and how the U.S. could find him.

Having Muslim Pakistan completely on the U.S. side might not be possible. It charges -- credibly -- that the U.S. turned its back on Pakistan in the 1990s and is a fickle ally. It also has vast settings that have never been under government control. Even so, each notch of improvement pays dividends. If Pakistani forces move more aggressively, for example, U.S. drone strikes might provoke less resentment. If Pakistanis see the direct benefits of the U.S. aid, that could ease anti-Americanism. The bottom line is that the Pakistan part of what the administration calls "Af-Pak" could not be more key to defeating al-Qaeda. And to what would be the most satisfying dividend: ending Osama bin Laden's eight years on the run. ("U.S. aid to Pakistan can't flow without accountability," 2009)

Even though the U.S. does not have the best relationship with Pakistan historically and could even take some responsibility for the historical antecedents that led to the formation of modern day Al Qaeda, Bin Laden remained the contemporary target. The onus also moved from the U.S. to Pakistan to find Bin Laden in this example. After 2 wars in the Muslim world worth an incalculable human price, the aid sent by the U.S. should come with strings and the drone strikes that pound the country could prove effective if Pakistan would just do its job. In the pursuit of Bin laden, the discourse seemed to suggest by any means necessary to end his life.
So what happens when his life finally ends? A litany of voices that praised the military tactics of U.S. military might? The Pakistani Prime Minister had other ideas.

Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, in his first address to Parliament since the covert U.S. raid that killed the al-Qaeda chief a week ago, lashed out at allegations Pakistan knew where bin Laden was hiding. He offered no details on what the country did know about his location. "It is disingenuous for anyone to blame Pakistan or state institutions of Pakistan, including the (Inter-Services Intelligence) and the armed forces, for being in cahoots with al-Qaeda," Gilani said. "Elimination of Osama bin Laden, who launched wave after wave of terrorist attacks against innocent Pakistanis, is indeed justice done." U.S. officials have said they see no evidence that anyone in the upper echelons of Pakistan's military and intelligence establishment was complicit in hiding bin Laden. President Obama said the U.S. believes bin Laden must have had a support network inside Pakistan. Gilani warned the U.S., which has carried out numerous drone strikes on militant targets along Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, not to try a similar covert raid in the future, saying "unilateralism runs the inherent risk of serious consequences." ("Pakistan's PM defends military, intelligence,” 2011)

The contentiousness of Bin Laden as a character revealed not the fact that the Pakistani government supported his terror network but instead the implication that the Pakistani government did nothing to find his location. While the PM provided zero details about why it took so long to find Bin Laden after the 9/11 attacks, he used this opportunity to support the idea of justice while reinforcing the legitimacy of the Pakistani government and military. Bin laden acted as a character of symbolic importance about not only the
military majesty of U.S. military power but also its limitations in controlling other countries actions. While mentioning drone strikes in passing, the Prime Minister was denouncing the continued actions of U.S. imperialism without support from the host country.

While the death of Bin Laden provided a point of justice as stated by the Pakistani prime minister, it did not end the threat of terrorism around the world.

As U.S. forces have largely left Iraq and plan a withdrawal from Afghanistan, intelligence experts see a global threat emerging on a continent that has frustrated foreign forces for much of the past century and provided the world's bad actors a refuge from international justice. Indeed, less than two years after the death of Osama bin Laden, recent events have shown that global terrorism is alive and well. As the fractured terrorist networks with shifting alliances adapt to this new world, counterterrorism experts say the U.S. and its allies need to craft a strategy to counter this ever-changing enemy. (Dorell, 2013).

The character of terrorism outlasted Bin Laden and reimagined itself in a different setting. While Bin Laden’s death will always be acknowledged as a seminal moment, the larger character of terrorism continued to morph and change and provide a consistent threat to U.S. security, according to the media content. While military raids can end a terrorist’s life, it cannot end the character of terrorism.

While Bin Laden’s death was understood as a location of importance in the fight against terrorism, the death Anwar al-Awlaki proved much more complicated. While al-Awlaki existed primarily as a rhetorical force, the implied information stated by the government indicated that he intended to act on his vitriolic hatred of the U.S. al-Awlaki
respected the action of Bin laden while providing no material examples that he would follow in his terrorist footsteps. To complicate matters further, al-Awlaki was a U.S. citizen.

Al-Awlaki provides one of the first examples of a character so important that the Obama administration has to finally acknowledge the presence of drone strikes throughout the world. The U.S. has been working with Yemen's government to target al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which has expanded into one of the most menacing terror franchises in the Middle East, according to the Pentagon. American-born cleric Anwar al-Awlaki was killed in a drone strike in southern Yemen in September. The fatal military drone strike in September against Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born leader of al-Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen. U.S. government officials have asserted that al-Awlaki helped direct the failed Christmas Day bombing of a commercial airliner over Detroit in 2009 and the failed effort to blow up U.S. cargo planes with explosives planted in printer cartridges in 2010. (Dorell, 2012; Johnson, 2012).

As a character, al-Awlaki was pure evil on the level of Bin laden, with less of a direct role in the larger character of terrorism. His mere presence as a director had led to specific terrorist incidents that have caused significant problems for the U.S. security state. For that reason, the U.S. government was more than willing to develop a strong relationship with the Yemeni government to end his life. Drone strikes became the vehicle for destroying a character that directed from a distance without actually explaining what specific crimes he actually engaged in during these terrorist incidents.
His death can even be used as an example of the influence he has on people living in the U.S. The U.S. has achieved significant successes since the raid, notably the drone strike that killed American jihadist Anwar al-Awlaki in September in Yemen. AL-Awlaki produced a stream of propaganda aimed at promoting al-Qaeda globally. He had exchanged e-mails with U.S. Army Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, a psychiatrist charged with killing 13 people at Fort Hood in Texas. (Michaels, 2012).

When a massacre like this happens, people want answers and a convenient character to target for justice; al-Awlaki became that character in the narrative function. His still unexplained role in a U.S. massacre only adds to the legitimacy of his death. The drone strikes acted as a tool of humanity to rid the world of this character spewing propaganda that may have led to horrific events on American soil.

For this and many other reasons, al-Awlaki existed as the most important character in the media content about drone strike strikes. While Bin Laden died at the hands of U.S. and coalition soldiers, al Awlaki died from the power of a drone strike.

Results are already measurable, headlined by bin Laden's demise. Since then, drone strikes have killed about half of al-Qaeda's top 20 leaders and reduced the strength of "al-Qaeda Central" to perhaps no more than 100. Documents found in bin Laden's compound show the organization to be under so much pressure that it can't mount the international threat it still aspires to achieve. In Yemen, home to al-Qaeda's most dangerous franchise, the headliner, Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, is also dead, killed by drone strike five months after the bin
laden raid. Strikes on the organization are being ramped up. (“A year after bin Laden's death, al-Qaeda is down but not out, “2012).

Without drone strikes, the U.S. would be not be as far along in ending the terrorist threat throughout the world and would have not accomplished as many goals as it wants in that process. In one action, the ending of a character’s life produced a litany of support for the continuation of drone strike policy.

Terrorism as a character existed as a continuing threat to U.S. security. While the occasional success was mixed in with the larger continuation of military vigilance, the threat continues with varying degrees of hope and despair. The difference between who the terrorists were and who the Americans were was also important as a character device. The terrorist character functioned as a device to fuel the continuation of drone strike policy. While specific figures like Bin Laden and al Awlaki may die, the fight to end their character representation carried on into an unknown future.

Obama

President Barack Obama is the 44th president of the U.S. Previous to his presidency, he served as a Senator from Illinois and a state senator in the Illinois legislature. After he graduated from Columbia University, he spent time as a community organizer in Chicago. The character of Obama was not the same as President Obama. In relation to the drone strike media content, the character of Obama acted as both a triumphant victor and an iconoclastic dictator in reference to the USATODAY drone strike content. Obama acted as a leader when the message of success behind a drone strike was articulated clearly to the public and as a dictator when the reasons for using drone strikes was articulated clearly to the public. The idea of the policy being good or
bad does not fit under the character of Obama; only the reasons behind why it exists and how did Obama come up with the reasoning for targeting the terrorist characters he did.

USA TODAY depicted Obama as triumphant victor in a variety of different ways. One of which came from John Brennan, an advisor to Obama on terrorism policy before becoming the nominee to head the CIA in 2013.

Brennan also detailed the Obama administration's rationale for using drone strikes against al-Qaeda targets, the first time the Obama administration has publicly laid out its defense of targeted killings outside of "hot" battlefields such as Afghanistan. “In full accordance with the law -- and in order to prevent terrorist attacks on the U.S. and to save American lives -- the U.S. government conducts targeted strikes against specific al-Qaeda terrorists, sometimes using remotely piloted aircraft, often referred to publicly as drones," Brennan said. "And I'm here today because President Obama has instructed us to be more open with the American people about these efforts." (Madhani, 2012).

Brennan’s articulation of the rationale for using drone strikes hit a number of triumphant victor notes. First, the Obama administration is doing the U.S. public a favor by being more open about the reasoning behind the drone strikes in an effort to bridge the information gap. Second, the drone strikes only target bad people. Al Qaeda terrorists who pose a threat to U.S. security. These drone strikes provide a strong example not only of American force but a symbol of humanity that only obliterates the bad. Finally, Brennan gave the reasoning for the drone strikes on his timetable. Even though drone strikes have been documented since Obama came into office in 2009, he gives an acknowledgement of transparency in 2012, not at all in coincidence with upcoming 2012
election. Therefore, while the act of transparency may be a legitimate one for the character of Obama, it also acts as a strategic political one as well.

A triumphant victor always has a trump card and Obama has one in the death of Bin Laden in 2011. The lasting impact of his death still resonates in the media a year after the event.

The slaying of bin Laden was, instead, a strategic triumph and a marker of the way the war on terrorism is changing: a departure from large-scale ground wars with fuzzy objectives, tragic costs, unintended consequences and inconclusive endings, and toward a razor-sharp focus on decimating his al-Qaeda organization. Results are already measurable, headlined by bin Laden's demise. Since then, drone strikes have killed about half of al-Qaeda's top 20 leaders and reduced the strength of "al-Qaeda Central" to perhaps no more than 100. Documents found in bin Laden's compound show the organization to be under so much pressure that it can't mount the international threat it still aspires to achieve. (“A year after Bin Laden’s death Al Qaeda down but not out,” 2012).

In this character pronouncement, the victor has several reasons to account for his success. The drone strikes that Obama uses are only seen in this narrative structure as a measure of success in line with other successes, such as killing Bin Laden and continuing to fight the al Qaeda presence. Therefore, drone strikes function as another part of a larger character narrative; Obama gets things done by continuing to dominate the Al Qaeda leadership network.
In the lead up to the 2012 election, the character of Obama became a complex politician who does not really want to use drone strikes but wants to keep Americans “safe”.

It's not a pure hawk-and-dove kind of distinction. By launching the high-risk raid to kill Osama bin Laden, aggressively prosecuting the war on terror with drone strikes, pressing the war in Afghanistan, backing Libyans who overthrew Moammar Gadhafi, and unequivocally asserting that he won't let Iran develop nuclear weapons, Obama doesn't qualify as passive. Meanwhile, despite Romney's tough stance, he went out of his way Monday to say he wouldn't use U.S. military force in Syria and would do so only as a last resort in Iran. (“Spirited debate yields few foreign policy differences,” 2012).

Obama, and even Romney in this example, cannot be judged by conventional terms of warmonger or peacemaker. Instead new terms need to be applied to their foreign policy decisions. However, as indicated in the article, Obama acted as the President who showed he was “tough” enough by engaging in drone strikes that kill terrorist leaders. He has challenged the idea he was “tough” by engaging in drone strikes in silence, while still promulgating those strikes if successful.

Overall, the character of Obama, when he is a triumphant victor, saw these successes and attempted to lessen the doubts.

Drone attacks convey unmistakable messages: U.S. forces are always watching, and someone close to the leaders might be betraying them. With luck, this distracts and destabilizes al-Qaeda. The program does not come without cost. Strikes from 3 miles to 5 miles up often produce "collateral damage," the
sanitized phrase for the killing or maiming of innocent bystanders. The strike on al-Yazid, for example, is reported to have killed his wife and at least one of his three children. (“Drones take toll on al-Qaeda leaders,” 2010).

Obama knew the risks that his policy entails, yet for the good of the U.S., he continued to practice them. While the occasional incident may happen that challenges that narrative, like a terrorist incident in the U.S. that happened at least in part because of the existence of a drone program, it was worth it to keep the U.S. safe. While women and children may die, the character of Obama continued his commitment to winning a war against al Qaeda.

In contrast, the iconoclastic dictator took several forms. The critique of the character of Obama came from the right and the left, the activists and the legislators. Drone strikes provided one of the few things that politically oppositional groups could agree on. The iconoclastic dictator section took many shapes.

John Bolton, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under President George W. Bush, said the Obama administration is not taking such action because it doesn't believe in the existence of a global threat from Islamic terrorism. "This is a symptom of policy being driven by ideology rather than facts on the ground," Bolton said. (Durrell, 2012).

In this example the character of Obama was seen as too weak and could use some toughening up to uphold the legacy of the Bush administration. From the left, the legality of drone strikes was questioned.

The Fifth Amendment guarantees that "no person" can be "deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." It is the bedrock protection Americans
have always had against a rogue government. It's one of the rights that set the
U.S. apart from countries where the dictator decides what the law is. Why should
it be so casually discarded? Lawmakers who allow fear of terrorism to overcome
respect for more than two centuries of American legal tradition wrote this
indefinite-detention measure into last year's defense authorization bill. President
Obama promised not to use the authority against American citizens, but that
doesn't undo the law, or bind him or any successor. A federal district court ruled
the law unconstitutional last month, but higher courts have yet to weigh in. The
House effectively renewed the authority last month. The Senate could take it up
soon. (“Defense measure lets president lock citizens up, indefinitely,” 2012).

Drone strikes became another refuge for the civil libertarian who fights against other
human rights issues, such as indefinite detention and the legality behind that detention.
Without the legal rationale explained in a democratic manner, the iconoclastic dictator
became a distant figure, executing orders, in this case of drone strikes, from a faraway
place that threatens the very document that the country based it foundational legal
existence.

In this battle of political argumentation, what role do people have in the mind of
an iconoclastic dictator? In this discussion, the topic became less about the drone strikes
and more about the future if a drone strike was not used.

Civilian casualties. Strikes that are aimed at terrorists but also kill non-combatants, including children, are enormously damaging to the U.S. They turn
local populations against the U.S. and put enormous pressure on governments
such as Pakistan's and Yemen's to stop cooperating with U.S. forces. Accurate
counts of civilian casualties are virtually impossible to get, but the U.S. appears to be making progress toward reducing what's euphemistically called "collateral damage." The New America Foundation estimates that civilian deaths have fallen from half of all drone deaths in 2008 to fewer than 10% last year, a total of somewhere between 16 and 36 people. The anti-American backlash stoked by these deaths argues strongly for concentrating attacks on dangerous and high-ranking leaders who can't realistically be captured or killed any other way. Rules of engagement. President Obama and administration officials have begun speaking openly about the once supposedly secret drone attacks, claiming authority for them under the same post-9/11 law that the Bush administration frequently invoked to justify its actions against suspected terrorists. The number of drone strikes rose from 52 during the Bush presidency to 278 under Obama, peaking in 2010, according to a Bureau of Investigative Journalism analysis (“Drone kills stir controversy, but what's the alternative?,” 2012)

People die in drone strikes, sometimes the wrong people. This statement differed from the governmental discussion of triumphant victory and the abstract notion of the philosophy behind using drone strikes. When these people die, there was a negative reaction of anti-America sentiment. Even though every precaution has ostensibly taken place, “collateral damage” still happened. However, for the people impacted, it meant losing the life of a loved one. With the increase in frequency of the drone strikes during the Obama administration, the likelihood increased of a generation of people who support the ending of terrorism but feel the loss of a person of value to them. Only an iconoclastic dictator would continue this tactic as a policy.
Obama remained not only the most complex character in the media content but also on the impact of drone strikes moving forward. His character represented the majesty of American military might but also the human dangers of that might. While continuing to end terrorism through drone strikes, sometimes civilian people died, which provided two divergent images of Obama as a character: triumphant victor and iconoclastic dictator.

The two main characters from the USATODAY content on drone strikes were terrorists and Obama. Each one of these character provided great insight into the USA TODAY media content. The terrorists' character provided a great reason for U.S. intervention with drone strikes. The character of Obama provided the binary hero and villain that showed both the greatness and tragedy of drone strike foreign policy. Without lively characters, the media content would not have provided distinct channels to examine the depth of drone strikes as a continuing media phenomena. The main focus of the media content remained these two characters that provided the insight and perspective as to how USATODAY handled their coverage of drone strikes.

Action

In the action section of the USATODAY analysis, the actions in this section were only depicted in speeches, etc. covered by USATODAY. In addition, the USATODAY section identified key specific narrative components throughout the media text. However, the use of action helped configure the news stories into a common refrain that organizes clearly a specific goal from reading the text deeply with a clear critical perspective. The dominant action that articulated clearly how USA TODAY reports on drone strikes was the articulation of drone strikes as a foreign policy choice. Drone strikes acted an
important factor in defining foreign policy for a number of the countries for this study, including Pakistan, Yemen and Afghanistan. This action impacted the other narrative components including setting, characters and tone.

Drone Strikes as Foreign Policy Choice

Drone strikes continued to be a growing part of the Obama administration’s foreign policy objective. While the use of drone strikes can differ wildly in duration and location, the importance of them as tool for military objectives remained a key action in the USA TODAY coverage. The USA TODAY coverage focused on the war in Afghanistan, with the drone strikes as another tactical measure used to help coalition forces against mostly Taliban and on occasion, Al Qaeda forces. One example that illustrated that military tactical action in the media coverage included:

Stepped up drone strikes in Pakistan and military raids in Afghanistan have weakened one of the three main insurgent groups battling U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan. The so-called Haqqani network is "on its heels" in eastern Afghanistan, said Army Col. Viet Luong, who commands a brigade along the Pakistan border. The Haqqani network's fighters move between sanctuaries in Pakistan and eastern Afghanistan “and the group often cooperates with the Taliban. “We have captured and killed many, many of their fighters and midlevel leaders," Luong said at a Pentagon press briefing. "The senior leadership routinely hides ... in the tribal areas in Pakistan now for the fear of being captured or killed” (Vanden Brook, 2010).

This example defined the action of drone strikes in relation to a tactical “success” on the battlefield. The focus on leaders in the above section is a key thing to note, not only from
this example but future examples provided by different narrative components. The USA TODAY coverage rarely acknowledged the death of low-level Taliban members or Al Qaeda affiliates yet provided numerous examples of “leaders” in these terror networks, indicating that action evolves from the characters in the media content.

While some USA TODAY content focused on economic development, the majority of the content explores the “success” or “failure” of the action of drone strikes in ending the Al Qaeda or Taliban terrorist threat. An example of that action was:

A U.S. drone strike in northern Pakistan killed al-Qaeda's second-in-command, U.S. officials said Tuesday. Abu Yahya al-Libi, a terrorist who escaped from an American military prison in Afghanistan seven years ago, was killed when a drone missile struck a house in the jihadist haven of North Waziristan. White House spokesman Jay Carney called al-Libi's death a "major blow" to the terror network and said he had a range of experience that will be hard to replicate. “His death is part of the degradation that has been taking place to core al-Qaeda during the past several years, and that degradation has depleted the ranks to such an extent that there's no clear successor," Carney said. (“Drone missile strikes al-Qaeda's No. 2 man; U.S. cheers 'degradation' of terror group, “ 2012).

This excerpt indicated a “successful” drone strike that took out a specific target in the Al Qaeda network. As indicated earlier, the attacks that were deemed “successful” as this one was by the Obama administration, elicited an on the record statement from a government official. By giving a statement that was attached to a governmental official, the drone strike program gained legitimacy from USA TODAY about its “success”, reflecting a successful action.
Drone strikes, as much as any other foreign policy choice, allowed the U.S. military and the Obama administration to maintain their work against terrorism, while leaving a “smaller” military footprint.

President Obama has dramatically expanded the use of drones, ordering more than 360 strikes, up from roughly 50 during the Bush administration. These strikes have significantly weakened al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The administration is following a similar model by intensifying drone attacks against al-Qaeda offshoots in Yemen and Somalia. Although drones kill civilians, the "collateral damage" rate has dropped from more than 50% during the Bush administration to about 10% now, according to the New America Foundation.

Because of their successes, drone strikes have proved popular here at home and won bipartisan political support. (“To target terrorists, drones beat the alternatives”, 2013).

As an action of foreign policy choice, drone strikes could not provide much better results with fewer points of resistance than other choices available to the Obama administration. With fewer terrorist around, the likelihood of having to move U.S. forces into sovereign nations lessened for future military interventions. Drone strikes indicated that large-scale wars of national building could become a thing of the past. A few haunting sticking points remained, however, with these foreign policy choices. The article provided no explanation about how the media outlet calculated the drop in “collateral damage” rate or how it defines whom or what collateral damage is and what is not. Second, the building of relationship with the nations who struggle most with these terrorist threats was ignored for the principle action to remain on the choices of U.S. foreign policy above all other
things. This dangerous precedent allowed for jingoistic thinking to emerge with the lack of critical examination of really who or what was “collateral damage”.

The complexity of the action of drone strikes moved beyond the good and evil distinction when President Obama spoke about them on the record for the first time. Perhaps, the impact of the action of drone strikes depended on a case-by-case use.

Under a new set of rules, Obama said drone attacks will be confined to suspects "who pose a continuing and imminent threat to the American people" and can't be captured. "There must be near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured."
The speech came a day after the Obama administration revealed that drone strikes have killed four Americans, all terrorism suspects, since 2009. He defended the strike that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, calling him a terrorist leader who "was continually trying to kill people. “He also defended drone strikes in general, saying they "have saved lives" and are a legal part of a "just war" against terrorist organizations. (Jackson, 2013).

Perhaps no other example articulated the reasoning behind why drone strikes are used as tool of foreign policy. A logical and rational argument was made about the need to use drone strikes based on words such as “imminent threat” and “can’t be captured”. As detailed earlier, the definition of what constitutes an imminent threat and what does not was not probed for any specific detail. In addition, a significant boost to Obama’s profile came in the raid and death of Osama Bin Laden in 2011 by trained U.S. soldiers. Bin Laden, at that time, lived outside of capture for almost 10 years, yet the Obama administration gave the go ahead for the raid. If the Obama administration had the confidence to capture and kill one of the most wanted people in the history of the world,
who lived beyond their means of capture and fit under the heading of justification for a drone strike? The Pakistani government, while acknowledging the justice in Bin Laden’s death, yet reacted negatively to the Obama administration neglecting their sovereignty. With the Obama administration having moved beyond sovereignty and trusting the training of their elite killing force in the U.S. military, what targets are considered beyond capture? Drone strikes hit those targets when needed but a greater understanding of how the administration came to those decisions is not explained by the action of drone strikes.

Overall, the action in the USA TODAY content showed the importance of drone strikes as a foreign policy choice. The U.S. had a superior technological advantage with drone strikes but that technology may not have provided the best choice in ending a terrorist threat. In addition, drone strikes could not only threaten the mundane existence of suburban workday tranquility of stateside U.S. soldiers but they also gave the Democrats toughness when ending terrorist threats. This action showed how the U.S. Empire acted both as a force of unity and unilateralism throughout the world.

**Focus**

The two main foci coming from the USA TODAY media content included the relationship that the U.S. has with other countries and how the U.S. can end terrorism. The two foci had a clear relationship but were detailed very differently in the media content. The use of drone strikes was more significant to the discourse than any other foreign policy matter with any country used by the U.S. as a drone strike location, yet that does not mean that improved foreign relations with those countries was not an important foreign policy objective. With improved relations, the Obama administration felt comfortable about committing drone strikes in those countries and eventually moving
the majority of military action to those countries militaries that deal with terrorism most directly.

*U.S. Relationship with Other Countries*

President Obama made a decision that the U.S. cannot end terrorism through military means alone. In Pakistan, that relationship had a multitude of factors influencing it.

The al-Qaeda leaders who masterminded the 9/11 attacks actually fled Afghanistan eight years ago. They are almost certainly in neighboring Pakistan. For that reason, figuring out how to defeat extremists in nuclear-armed Pakistan is as important -- in fact, more so -- than anything NATO and the U.S. do in Afghanistan. Yet the U.S. has been spending $30 in Afghanistan for every dollar it spends in Pakistan, and the Pakistani government has diverted much of that aid to other purposes. (“U.S. aid to Pakistan can't flow without accountability”, 2009).

One thing that impacted the relationship with Pakistan was the fact that they have nuclear weapons. The relationship between a country having both terrorist extremists and nuclear weapons proved a difficult task for the Obama administration to negotiate. In addition, while fighting a war in Afghanistan, the U.S. failed to provide as much attention as it should to Pakistan. Therefore, the relationship with Pakistan suffered. The U.S. needed to put a priority on Pakistan as an effort to not only shrink the number of drone strikes in the setting but also establish a country that can fight terrorism on its own. The article contained no media content on other factors such as trade, the environment or race.
relations between the countries. The U.S. focused their relationship through the lens of terrorism.

The same cannot be said about Yemen, especially when they had a change in leadership in 2012. The U.S. seemed invested in a new type of relationship with Yemen and provided economic support, as long as the new government focused their time and energy on eradicating terrorism.

Experts say the U.S. and Saudi Arabia need to persuade the new government to forge a cease-fire with the south and address its complaints about unfair political representation and economic rights to help isolate al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda, "wants the chaos to continue, so it can continue to grow," Riedel says. "It's going to require a lot of coaxing effort, an enormous amount of Saudi money to grease the skids and American support to help make it happen. “That is the first thing the new government will have to deal with, the southern question, whether to keep them as part of the country, let them go on their own or have some sort of a federal system between the south and the north," Sharpie says. Julie Taylor, a Middle East expert at the RAND Corp. think tank, says the Obama administration realizes that defeating al-Qaeda in Yemen will require more than killing its leaders. "That's why they increased USAID funding in Yemen," Taylor says. (Durrell, 2012).

For one of the first times in the media content, the actual discussion of economic aid became part of the discourse. While in the abstract this has been detailed to a large degree, the impact of discussing it concretely with drone strikes was key. The concept of the U.S. using regional alliances to better develop its relationship to the Muslim World also developed from this content. The U.S. maintained a strategic alliance with Saudi
Arabia for a number of years and now that relationship could be used as a way to impact the U.S. relationship with Yemen. Not every Muslim Majority country was the same and the U.S. could find that this relationship may not prove as fruitful as they intended. At the same time, the building on an existing relationship to end a terrorist threat, and by proxy reduce drone strikes, was a key finding from this example.

The impact of Al Qaeda grew throughout the world as cells have emerged on the continent of Africa, an area long neglected by U.S. politicians. This change in terrorism location caused the Obama administration to find new ways to work with African countries that dealt with different terror networks.

The pattern is seen not just in Nigeria, but also in Somalia and Mali, where al-Qaeda is prompting independence movements to broaden and heighten attacks, analysts said. Unilateral military operations, such as drone strikes, may have a role, but the focus should be on bolstering U.S. allies throughout North Africa and training their security forces to combat this growing extremism, Boot said Al-Qaeda's influence on al-Shabaab has been profound, said Katherine Zimmerman of the American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project. Al-Shabaab has forged ties with al-Qaeda in Yemen and elsewhere to obtain foreign fighters, expertise and cash, Zimmerman said. The group then shifted from an exclusive local fight and launched attacks in Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, and trained Boko Haram militants, she said. “That’s one of the dangers of al-Shabaab having a safe haven in Somalia, that it can train other like-minded radicals in its tactics,” Zimmerman said. (Durrell, 2012).
The threat of terrorism extended to a different location but both military and civilian experts saw change as an opportunity and not a point of lament. While al Qaeda influenced another movement of terror, the agreement from officials about the need to focus on developing allies as they fight that terrorist threat becomes an important concept. While the U.S. impacted the world uniquely through military means, the end of the terrorist threat did not come only from those means. The localization of a terror threat was also important here. With the influence of these terror groups extending to a number of countries, the U.S. needed not only to improve its relationship with a few predominantly Muslim countries but also with several countries in Africa, who may not share a strategic alliance. If the U.S. truly wanted to end the terror threat to their own country, the relationships they build with a number of countries in Africa needed to improve beyond just the military commitment associated with ending terrorism.

The U.S. relationship with the other countries that dealt with drone strikes continued to feature a number of complex factors. With the U.S. wanting to end terror threats throughout the world, this national imperative put them in a shaky relationship with those countries that have a high number of terror threats. The U.S. remained the dominant country in foreign policy affairs and that standing has left some countries questioning their humane commitment to those countries when non-terror threats devastate local areas. Drone strikes were only 1 facet of foreign policy that provided numerous questions with fewer tangible answers.

How U.S. Can End Terrorism

Throughout the media content, the message of the U.S. ending terrorism dominated the coverage. How soon might this unimaginable task end? It could happen
during the Obama Administration’s time in office, if drone strikes were used properly, according to Obama administration officials.

Brennan said Sunday on ABC's This Week that bin Laden's death "made a tremendous difference. It's taken away the founding leader of that organization who was a symbol of al-Qaeda's sort of murderous agenda worldwide. U.S drone strikes in Yemen and Pakistan have eliminated many militant leaders, experts said. Riedel said the strikes are putting al-Qaeda "under enormous pressure." (Michaels, 2012).

If the media content fit the narrower frame of Al Qaeda and the narrower location of “terrorist havens” such as Pakistan and Yemen, terrorism could end soon, at least when it came to U.S. interests. The best tactic that can end that threat: drone strikes. While Brennan provided few details about how terrorist organizations conform to conventional hierarchies that allow for interpretations of “difference”, the language suggests that, at least from a narrative perspective, the Obama administration was attaining goals of ending terrorism in the world. Two specific constructs indicated the problem could actually exist without the sense of accomplishment articulated by Brennan. First, the concept that Bin Laden’s death was a “symbol” that al Qaeda understood in its terror network on a worldwide basis. This statement reflected that military actions not only obliterated material terrorist targets but also reflected a larger symbolic war of ideology that promoted U.S. ideological criteria against the morally corrupt and overtly violent terrorist organization that is al Qaeda. In this narrative concept, drone strikes, along with condensed military raids by highly trained soldiers, allowed the U.S. to end terrorism not
only on the ground but also in the minds of the world’s people. USA TODAY gave that ideological perspective a platform for the public to engage with on a daily basis.

The effort to end terrorism throughout the world also was helped by moving beyond simple constructs of human rights and instead a much more pragmatic approach that wanted to end terrorism throughout the world. In that effort, traditional concepts of partisanship began to erode and the fight to end terrorism united all U.S lawmakers. Vietnam War rhetoric of hawks and doves melted away to modern day agreements that allowed assassinations from the sky.

A recent survey by the political scientists Josh Busby, Will Inboden and Jon Monten found that Democratic foreign policy specialists were less likely to identify human rights as a "very important" policy priority (about 50%, compared with nearly 85% of such Republican specialists). Indeed, on this issue the Democratic Party has shifted to the center. He (OBAMA) punked on his campaign promise to shutter the Guantanamo Bay prison. And his administration has tried to block a measure that would freeze assets and deny visas to Russian officials guilty of human rights abuses. Perhaps most controversially, Obama has stepped up the use of drone strikes abroad, killing undisclosed numbers of civilians. While accepting his Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, Obama preached the importance of "just" interventions. "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism," he said, "It is a recognition of history, the imperfections of man and the limits of reason. (Beethner, 2012).

Simple characterizations of political leaders on issues of terrorism were not representative of current U.S. lawmakers. At the same time, the senator who spoke so
openly against the war in Iraq, now saw the world through a very different lens: the effort to end terrorism throughout the world. In this effort, the numbers of “civilians” who die did not merit a public discourse of democratic engagement of terrorism choices made by the Obama administration. The “intervention” of terrorism allowed for those points to move into the background in the pursuit of recognizing “history”. This “history” saw the U.S. as the dominant military power and therefore the arbiter of military intervention.

Tone

When I first began detailing the media content from USA TODAY, a clear picture emerged from the text. USA TODAY had a clear pro American, almost jingoistic tone to its coverage of drone strikes. However, once I began to dig deeper and explore what it means to cover the growing complexity of the drone strikes and the resistance from both alternative media actors and U.S. lawmakers, the tone changed significantly. Overall, USA TODAY provided media content that was clinical and humane, pro-American and critical of the Obama administration, joyous and sad. For these reasons, the dominant tone from the media content was an ambivalent one.

Ambivalence

When understanding the ambivalence of the USA TODAY media content about drone strikes, several important points defined this subcategory of the tone of the content. The U.S. interacted with other countries in regards to the threat of terrorism in ways that both promoted military violence and the threat of military violence, while attempting to “save” the preferred lives of U.S. soldiers. One example that illustrated this concept comes from this editorial analysis of Obama’s foreign policy decisions.
The war in Libya means he's a liberal if reluctant interventionist, a humanitarian at heart. But wait, he's stepped up drone strikes! He's killed Osama bin Laden! A more liberal president might have captured and tried him in The Hague, while paying deference to Pakistani sovereignty. So which is he? Obama is quick to throw smaller states (e.g., the Republic of Georgia) under the bus to make peace with more important states (e.g., Russia). That suggests that at heart he is a hardheaded realist. Obama's foreign policy is definitely muscular. He is still fighting two wars (excluding Libya). He has doubled the number of drone attacks in Pakistan, flirted with taking a tougher line with longtime allies such as Israel and inked an impressive arms deal with Russia. (Beehner, 2011).

What this example illustrated was the ambivalence even an opponent of the war in Iraq, which President Obama was, took when drone strikes are involved. While President Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize during his presidency, he also has already “won” a war (Libya), ended another in (Iraq), (and began a new war) and “works” to end another (Afghanistan). Drone strikes allowed President Obama to show he was tough on terrorism while showing his compassion for the lives of U.S. troops. This ambivalence of foreign policy intervention helped to define the Obama Doctrine of foreign policy, illustrated in the USA TODAY content on drone strikes.

The USA TODAY content about drone strikes supported the idea that U.S. leaders needed to both reify the power of empire through war while also striving to be examples of peace. That ambivalence created media content where the U.S. understood that some countries and people have more value than others.
The setting of the drone strikes changed from Pakistan to Yemen. The next location for U.S. drone strikes was Africa. However, the ambivalence of accomplishing those goals in Africa showed the complicated policy that reflects the use of those drone strikes.

The efforts include support for the African Union Mission in Somalia, a multinational force that pushed the al-Shabab movement from the capital of Mogadishu in 2011. U.S. Africa Command, established in 2007, works with military units of African countries such as Kenya and Uganda to help them fend off threats. The Obama administration supports a similar force in West Africa to take back northern Mali from Islamist extremists who overran the area last year. Drone strikes have hit targets in East Africa. The nominee to head the CIA, notes that al-Qaeda is weaker than ever, analysts watching the global terrorism picture say the recent attack in Algeria and the drumbeat of incidents elsewhere illustrate the need for a new kind of "global war on terror" that focuses not on all-out invasions but on superior intelligence-gathering followed by military strikes. “The key is to keep improving our analysis and intelligence capability,” says J. Peter Pham, director of the Africa Center at the Atlantic Council. "Things are shifting, and we need to be agile, able to shift personnel, expertise and resources to where the hot spots are." (Dorell, 2013).

The ambivalence in this excerpt showed not only how the U.S. saw the threat of terrorism but also how to address that concern moving forward. First, the effort to fight terrorism cannot succeed without support for military operations throughout the world that address terrorist concerns in those settings. Second, the idea of intelligence to end this threat was
clear and important for preventing future incidents from happening. Finally, the shifting location of terrorism moved from the Bush era locations of the Middle East to Africa showed how drone strikes as an apparatus of military precision will be used in multiple locations because of their perceived effectiveness.

The tone of ambivalence showed the complicated nature not only of drone strikes throughout the world but also how complicated the issue of fighting terrorism is no matter the setting throughout the globe. While the USA TODAY content on drone strikes provided a degree of duality in its coverage of this complicated topic, the brevity of discussion was not sufficient for addressing why the need for drone strikes exist and how best to address foreign policy issues moving forward with future U.S. military interventions.

The main narrative results from the USA TODAY section on drone strikes was the importance of characters in defining the media content, along with the complicated components of different settings where the U.S. conducted drone strikes. The characters allowed the U.S. to pursue terrorist targets without much public disclosure and also both promoted the value of Obama as a character in this content while also revealing some of his flawed public policy choices. While the setting for the drone strikes changed, the U.S. did not adopt country specific policies for drone strikes. Instead, the USA TODAY content illustrated a drone strike doctrine, which killed people first and provided reasoning for those killings almost never in their coverage of drone strikes.

The New York Times (NYT)

The New York Times (NYT) section of the analysis produced 435 articles on drone strikes. The number of articles can be broken down, not so much as by year as the
USA Today section but by event. Three key events produced the preponderance of drone strike coverage: 1: the death of Osama Bin Laden, 2. The death of Anwar al-Awlaki, the first U.S citizen targeted for a drone strike and 3. President Obama’s speech in 2013 at the National Defense University where he, for the first time, laid out the policy on drone strikes. The NYT content had a much more nuanced view of drone strikes in comparison to the USA Today Section. I am defining nuance in this study in the NYT content as a continuum of coverage on the issue of drone strikes. While the majority of USATODAY content on drone strikes illustrated an either or concept of success of failure of both the act of drone strikes and policy behind those strikes, the NYT illustrated an elongated continuum of media content that showed some of the reasoning behind the drone strikes, some of the fallout of that policy on local citizenry and the complicated public policy choice by the Obama administration of using military force under the guise of secrecy for almost the entire duration of this study. For that reason, while the tone of the USA TODAY content showed binary ambivalence, the NYT coverage provided a continuum of nuance that provided a depth to the media content not shown in the USA TODAY content. The NYT used more alternative media voices, along with a depth of coverage about the complexity of the narrative components that the succinct content provided by USA TODAY did not.

The NYT (NYT) included many of the same alternative media sources as the USA TODAY content, but also provided additional, more journalistic alternative media sources including the Bureau of Investigative Journalism and the Long War Journal. Several of the same narrative components mirrored the USA TODAY section as well, although the NYT provided much more context to drone strikes than USA TODAY did.
In addition, in contrast to the USATODAY section, the NYT text produced an actual discussion about cultural/historical matters which created less reliance on characters/actions for the construction of the setting. In the following section, I analyzed some of the key narrative concepts that developed from each subheading, including setting, character, focus, action and tone. In each section, I analyzed examples from the news content that illustrated how each narrative developed throughout the news coverage.

Setting

As indicated above, the setting for the drone strike content remained similar to the USA TODAY coverage but not exactly the same. The main settings included Afghanistan, Pakistan, Yemen, and the USA.

Afghanistan

In relation to the drone strike coverage, the settings followed almost a perfect chronological order. Afghanistan, even with the loss of power of the Taliban in the early 2000s, was where the story of the drone strikes began. The setting then moved to Pakistan, then Yemen. The future of drone strike settings resides in Africa, while the U.S. attempts to end the threat of terrorism to its homeland. For this reason, drone strikes in Afghanistan had an almost past tense feel because they coincide with drawing down of troops in Afghanistan, after a brief troop surge in 2009. For this reason, Afghanistan stood distinctively different from Pakistan and other drone settings because of the coordination of the drone strikes in an actual war zone with actual U.S. and NATO troops.

When referring to the Afghanistan setting, the tradition of using a swell of ground troops to fight a war was dissolving against the technological advances and supposed
success of drone strikes. This new way of war allowed for the U.S. to fight against terrorists in a new way.

Even the option advocated by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. for a scaled-back approach would not reduce the current force of 68,000 troops, officials said. Instead, it would keep troop levels roughly where they are now but shift emphasis to the sort of Predator drone strikes and Special Forces operations that have been used more aggressively over the last year. Of the 20 Qaeda or allied leaders most wanted by the U.S. in the Pakistani tribal areas, 11 have been killed or captured since July 2008, according to senior administration officials who provided a briefing on the operations on condition of anonymity. Another four added to the top-20 list have also been killed or captured, they said. How much this all adds up to is hard to say. The Bush administration regularly cited its successes in eliminating high-level Qaeda figures, too, and yet the organization seemed to replenish itself (Baker, 2009).

The technological progress of the drone strikes allowed for a new, more liberal way of war to emerge in the Afghanistan setting. First, while troops were still needed to secure the setting, the larger number of U.S. troops seen in previous wars may be diminished by the supposed surgical success of drone strikes. Second, much like the USA TODAY coverage, it was difficult for the NYT to discuss the Afghanistan setting without establishing the relationship with Pakistan and the “success” of the drone strikes in that setting. While the Pakistan setting was distinct because no troops are involved, the elimination of terrorists in that setting established security in both settings.
Ending the terrorist threat from the Pakistan setting is not easy. Concurrently, the
U.S. wanted to establish security in the Afghanistan setting primarily based on troop
build, not for a Bush era occupation, but in an attempt to train Afghani security forces.
Based on this depiction, the Afghan setting needed a more direct involvement from the
U.S. to provide that security.

Should Mr. Obama send 20,000 troops, military analysts say, there would
probably be no fourth brigade to use around the country, and parts of Helmand
and the east would receive few if any additional troops. With this number, Mr.
Obama would expect a greater contribution of troops from NATO allies (about
35,000 troops from other NATO countries are currently in Afghanistan). Much of
the U.S. Mission would focus on training. Administration officials estimate the
cost of sending 30,000 more troops at $25 billion to $30 billion a year and the
cost of sending 20,000 troops at $21 billion a year. Under this approach,
advocated by Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr., the U.S. would accelerate the
training of the Afghan security forces and focus on eliminating the Qaeda
leadership in Pakistan through drone strike (Bumiller, 2009).

This excerpt again established the complex relationship between the Afghanistan and
Pakistan setting but also the distinctiveness of the Afghanistan setting. First, the
Afghanistan setting needed troops to establish its security. The Pakistan setting only
needed “surgical” drone strikes to accomplish the goal there. Second, the drone strikes
increased with the troop buildup in a multifaceted effort to secure both the Afghanistan
and the Pakistan setting. Finally, the Vietnam era text of advisory roles for the U.S. and
training of local troops crept into the Afghanistan setting. The Obama administration
does not consider the military investment in the Afghanistan setting from a long-term perspective and saw the U.S. training role as a way to establish lasting security. Drone strikes helped facilitate and expedite that process.

The Afghanistan setting showed an almost past tense relationship with U.S. militarism, even with the newly introduced technology of drone strikes. Even with the expansion of U.S. troops in 2009, the military political elite in the U.S. has been devising an exit strategy for a number of years. While the Afghanistan setting had a number of links to Pakistan, the extended U.S. investment provided a distinct picture from its neighbor. First, the Afghanistan setting was the only setting with troops on the ground. Second, the U.S. played an integral role in not only engaging in drone strikes but also establishing some sense of political stability. Finally, as the setting for the longest war in U.S. history, the U.S. military establishment pointed to wins and losses as an introduction to a new war device: drone strike. However, long after U.S. troops have left, the Afghanistan setting will deal with the impact of the remnants left behind by the U.S. military.

Pakistan

The NYT focused much more heavily on Pakistan than USA TODAY and provided much more insight into the country’s political problems than all other setting combined. While the Yemen section also included discussions on other political issues, the Pakistan section illustrated the complexity of the political problems in Pakistan. The leadership in Pakistan, throughout the NYT coverage, supported the drone strikes of the Taliban leadership, the same group the CIA targeted in private. In public, any member of Pakistani civilian leadership spoke out angrily against the drone strikes. This dichotomy
provided a number of contradictory examples. In addition, the Pakistani leadership remained mum about specific drone strikes, a position also established by the Obama administration in the NY NYT content. An example of this protocol was:

A senior government official and a local resident spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter. "The U.S. are not interested in our bad guys," the official said. Pakistani government officials said the attack destroyed the house of a man identified as Khalil Dawar and killed eight people. A senior Pakistani security official said four of those killed were Arabs. (Khan, 2008: Oppel Jar, 2009).

In this example, the Pakistani officials commented off the record about a drone strike leading to militant death. In addition, the use of local residents for any source information differed greatly from USA Today coverage. While USA Today focused on the anonymity of government officials, primarily from the USA, the NYT used the anonymity of local people on the ground to confirm the drone strikes as well.

Local resident provided the only confirmation of specific drone strikes in Pakistan. While their motivation was similar to Pakistani officials, fear, the fear comes not from the U.S. cutting off military and civilian aid but instead violent reprisals from the Taliban, the group targeted by CIA drone strikes. This example detailed the Haqqani network, the mafia-like group, which rules the tribal area where most of the drone strikes happen.

The Haqqani family, which runs the network like a mafia, maintains several town houses, including in Islamabad and elsewhere, and they have been known to visit military facilities in Rawalpindi, attend tribal gatherings and even travel abroad...
on pilgrimages, say military and political analysts who follow militant activity in Pakistan. (Shall & Gall, 2011).

This example reflected the complexity of the Pakistan setting. First, the CIA was targeting the areas for militants who could include Al Qaeda, Taliban or Haqqani members. However, while Al Qaeda members and to a lesser extent Taliban members remained outside the power leadership in Pakistan, the Haqqani’s are part of the community. For this and many other reasons, Pakistani civilians not aligned with Al Qaeda, the Taliban or the Haqqani network were in the crosshairs of the larger drone strike policy in the setting of Pakistan. After the drone strikes stop in Pakistan, the reality of living with a powerful group like the Haqqani will become an everyday reality for those people. The silence on drone strikes not only came from the top leadership but the people who lived in fear in their own land.

The Pakistan setting, while complicated by colonial and neocolonial factors and a complicated indigenous problem of terrorism and number of economic and political factors, suffered from a reductive narrative that focused too heavily on U.S. drone strikes and the lack of the Pakistani government ability to control terrorism. The amount of bloodshed in the setting did not change this pattern of coverage and allowed for several complicated problems to revert back to easy military analysis of failed state policy to halt U.S. threats to security. While including more depth and discourse, the essential depiction of the narrative setting of Pakistan did not differ greatly from USA Today to the NYT.

Yemen

As the dominant setting for drone strikes changed from Pakistan to Yemen, so did the NYT coverage. However, as illustrated at the beginning of the section, an event and
not a calendar date changed not only the amount of coverage about Yemen but also the
detail given to that coverage. That event was the drone strike that killed Muslim cleric
Anwar al-Awlaki. The drone strike that killed al-Awlaki changed not only the depth of
coverage but also the critique provided by the NYT because of al-Awlaki’s U.S.
citizenship. While the Yemen setting included parallels of Pakistan including political
instability and economic uncertainty, the Yemeni government acted in congress with the
U.S. military and policy makers, allowing for less public critique about the Yemen setting
from top U.S. officials.

However, this synthesis with political leaders did not obscure the reality that the
Yemen setting did include a number of terrorists considered threats to U.S. security.

A missile believed to have been fired from an U.S. Drone struck a car in southern
Yemen on Thursday, killing two brothers thought to be Qaeda militants, security
and tribal officials said. The Defense Ministry confirmed the deaths of the
brothers in Shabwa Province, but it would not provide further details. In
September, Yemen said it was banning U.S. drone strikes, but they were believed
to have resumed after Al Qaeda smuggled explosives on cargo planes bound for
the U.S. in October (“Yemen: 2 Killed in Missile Strike”, 2011).

This excerpt revealed how the Yemen setting remained a place where Al-Qaeda operated
and provided a threat to the U.S. Even when the Yemeni government wanted to move
away from the drone strikes coming from the U.S., it realized the importance of ending a
terrorist threat from Al Qaeda, which allowed for U.S. drone strikes to restart in this
setting.
This particular drone strike developed from the threat posed by al-Awlaki. Even before his death, the U.S. struck the Yemen setting with drone bombings in an attempt to end his life. This change in policy not only showed the power of drone strikes but the attention that the U.S. gave to the Yemen setting.

It was the first U.S. Strike in Yemen using a remotely piloted drone since 2002, when the C.I.A. struck a car carrying a group of suspected militants, including an U.S. citizen, who were believed to have Qaeda ties. And the attack came just three days after U.S. Commandos invaded a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and killed Osama bin Laden, the founder of Al Qaeda. The attack on Thursday was part of a clandestine Pentagon program to hunt members of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the group believed responsible for a number of failed attempts to strike the U.S., including the thwarted plot to blow up a trans-Atlantic jet on Dec. 25, 2009, as it was preparing to land in Detroit. Although Mr. Awlaki is not thought to be one of the group's senior leaders, he has been made a target by U.S. Military and intelligence operatives because he has recruited English-speaking Islamist militants to Yemen to carry out attacks overseas. His radical sermons, broadcast on the Internet, have a large global following (Mazzetti, 2011).

While the U.S. did concern itself with the ideological factions that brought disparate groups together in the Pakistan setting, the Yemen setting provided a clear break from the Pakistan setting as the main justification for increasing drone strikes in the Yemen setting. In Pakistan, at least as far as NYT discourse was concerned, the U.S. conducted drone strikes to end potential material and legitimate terrorist threats from terrorist groups. In Yemen, the U.S. used drone strikes to end the potential for terrorist threats.
even before they happen. In addition, a high level cleric, even without specific material ties to specific threats to the U.S., was considered such a high level risk that the U.S. wanted to end his life before he potentially could cause a terrorist attack against the U.S. In this example, the U.S. wanted to learn from the mistakes conducted in the Pakistan setting and end those same threats in the Yemen setting before they impact U.S. security. For this reason, the Yemen setting existed more as an ideological haven for terrorism more so than the more material terrorist setting of Pakistan.

Overall, the setting of Yemen shared many of the same components that dominate the Pakistan setting. The focus on military objectives remained the same over the importance of social and economic issues and the menacing threat from terrorist justified a military focus from the U.S. that included drone strikes. However, a few important distinctions emerged from the NYT discourse. First, while Pakistan was the setting that is becoming the past, the Yemen setting is the current and near future setting of terrorist threats to U.S. security. Second, the terrorist groups including Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula existed as a separate but equally important organization of terrorists. Finally, the unpredictable political environment left the Yemen setting rife for influence from state actors seen as a threat to U.S. imperialism. With these points in mind, the setting of Yemen provided a rich mosaic of contradictory NYT discourse.

The U.S.

Much like the USA TODAY section, the NYT section focused more on the theoretical and legal justification of drone strikes and less on the actual strikes that kill people. As the discussion changed based on a few specific events, the U.S. setting had a number of voices added to the discussion that will be explained in the other sections. As a
setting, however, the U.S. remained free from the fallout of drone strikes, with little public acknowledgement of when and where they happen.

As illustrated in the other setting section, the U.S. setting involved an elite discussion primarily by Obama administration political and military officials who saw the potential for a new technology to help sanitize a worldwide war against terrorist. Drone strikes were a part of that new direction in military policy.

Leon E. Panetta, the new director of the Central Intelligence Agency, said Wednesday that the agency's campaign against militants in Pakistan's tribal areas was the "most effective weapon" the Obama administration had to combat Al Qaeda's top leadership. Mr. Panetta stopped short of directly acknowledging the missile strikes, but he said that "operational efforts" focusing on Qaeda leaders had been successful. "It is for that reason that the president and the vice president and everyone else supports continuing that effort," he said. Privately, U.S. officials have said that the C.I.A. missile strikes have killed a large cadre of Qaeda leaders since last summer, although Pakistani intelligence officials say they fear the drone strikes are further destabilizing their already fragile country (Mazzetti & Cooper, 2009).

Through this textual illustration, the effectiveness of drone strikes were reinforced, without even using the language of drone strikes. When a drone strike hit a target and obliterated that target and the small area around it, no respondents from other areas called this event an “operational effort”. However, in the killing in silence code of the Obama administration, military tactics proved effective, even if those tactics were not acknowledged through language in mainstream media discourse. In addition, a hint of the
trepidation felt by people impacted in the Pakistani setting involved the actual versus the theoretical, the human cost versus the military cost, and the colonial power versus the colonized people. While U.S. officials had a clear discourse of success from drone strikes, the people who live in Pakistani saw the complexity of a military technology that killed Al Qaeda fighters but also caused tumult to a nation’s people. This quandary did not appear in the U.S. setting discourse.

However, when the discussion moved away from the elite sources in government, even in the early stages of drone strikes, other sources showed the moral complexity of this new weapon of war.

The drone strike came after months of improved cooperation between U.S. and Pakistani intelligence officials. Mr. Mehsud and his network have orchestrated a bloody reign of terror across Pakistan and are blamed for the 2007 assassination of Benazir Bhutto, the former prime minister, and last year's bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, which left more than 50 people dead. Permanently removing him from the picture would be an obvious victory. Mr. Obama pledged to support legislation -- which was initially sponsored by then-Senator Joseph Biden and Senator Richard Lugar -- that would provide Pakistan with $7.5 billion in development assistance over five years. The aid -- and particularly its pledge of five years of uninterrupted help -- is intended to demonstrate that this time Washington is in for the long haul. Many Pakistanis still accuse the U.S. of using and then abandoning them after the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. We fear that any more delay on the promised assistance would only reinforce that suspicion and bitterness. The House added a variety of other provisions,
including earmarks for military projects that favored U.S. contractors and bullying language on Pakistan's nuclear program that would inevitably increase tensions with Islamabad and alienate the Pakistani public. We, too, are very concerned about Pakistan's history of nuclear proliferation. But this aid bill is clearly not the vehicle. Inexplicably, the White House, which insists that bringing stability to Afghanistan and Pakistan is a top national security priority, did not press the leadership to finish the legislation. By the time negotiators managed to find a compromise, it was too late for a vote (“More than Missiles,” 2009).

Even with the Obama administration acknowledging the power and success of drone strikes, the same people realized that drone strikes alone cannot end the root cause of terrorist leaders influence. Instead, a multifaceted approach of aid and military strikes needed to be included. When Congress became involved, the plan backfired because of too many attachments to this developmental aid.

This text example established a clear focus for the U.S. setting. First, drone strikes work. They killed a top Al Qaeda leader. He was a bad guy. The world is better without him. After this goal was accomplished, then the discussion allowed for complements to drone strikes, including civilian aid. The discussion prioritized the drone strikes before the civilian aid. Finally, the evil partisanship impacted a clearly noble goal by the Obama administration to help the Pakistani people. For some reason, this section was not framed as “nation building” from the Bush administration discourse but instead a “new” path for U.S. engagement with the Pakistan setting. While the prioritization of drone strikes existed beyond the partisan lens, the civilian aid fell into the bickering talking points of politics endemic to the U.S. setting.
This lack of transparency and commitment to keeping silent about the growing drone war in Pakistan was supported by other examples from the NYT. Based on this excerpt, it seemed more important to the NYT to keep the government bombings a secret to protect the Obama administration, more so than to inform the public about the transgressions of the government.

Mr. Obama could not be very specific about his Pakistan strategy, his advisers conceded on Monday evening. U.S. operations there are classified, most run by the Central Intelligence Agency. Any overt U.S. presence would only fuel anti-U.S. ism in a country that reacts sharply to every missile strike against extremists that kills civilians as well, and that fears the U.S. is plotting to run its government and seize its nuclear weapons. Yet quietly, Mr. Obama has authorized an expansion of the war in Pakistan as well -- if only he can get a weak, divided, suspicious Pakistani government to agree to the terms. In recent months, in addition to providing White House officials with classified assessments about Afghanistan, the C.I.A. delivered a plan for widening the campaign of strikes against militants by drone aircraft in Pakistan, sending additional spies there and securing a White House commitment to bulk up the C.I.A.'s budget for operations inside the country. The expanded operations could include drone strikes in the southern province of Baluchistan, where senior Afghan Taliban leaders are believed to be hiding, officials said. It is from there that they direct many of the attacks on U.S. troops, attacks that are likely to increase as more U.S. s pour into Afghanistan (Sanger & Schmitt, 2009).
First, the great U.S. fear of nuclear weapons in a “terrorist” country revealed itself as a convenient device of fear and the continuation of a clandestine U.S. policy. Second, the understanding that a growing U.S. war in Pakistan was considered classified revealed the lengths the NYT will go to protect the government in its reporting. The flow of public information from the press to the public was interrupted because the Obama administration has decided a war is classified. However, when you call that war “operations”, the discussion was limited. Finally, the idea of a presumption in the story of possible Al Qaeda affiliates in supposed locations in the Pakistan setting was enough for the expansion of a program, which the Obama administration will not comment on publicly. The main thread determined from this textual example about the U.S. setting revealed an agenda setting media organization agreeing with the Obama administration to keep silent on an expanding war in the Pakistan setting and used a fear appeal of nuclear weapons and a potentially upset public in Pakistan to justify its decision.

Distinctively different from all other settings combined, the U.S. setting showed first, the hubris of U.S. exceptionalism, the theoretical force that a policy like drone strikes can have on another area of the world without completely understanding what impact that same drone strike would have on the U.S. setting. Second, the U.S. setting showed how the U.S. maintained its position as paternalistic neocolonialist with new military weapons at its disposal. As the other settings dealt with the nuanced problem of terrorism through the devastation of drone strikes, the U.S. setting saw this advancement as a chance to end the problem of terrorism with new modern precision.

Characters
While the USA TODAY setting dealt much more with composites of people and specific populations, the NYT focused much more primarily not on forces of good and evil but actual people and how those people become characters in the drone strike narrative. Three particular characters stood out in the NYT discourse and dominated the narrative for a variety of different reasons. The three characters were Osama Bin Laden, Anwar, al-Awlaki and President Obama. All of these depictions fit a different characterization than an actual in-depth depiction of a world citizen; however, based on their depictions through these textual examples, the policy of drone strikes and how characters emerged in that policy becomes clearer. This section will explore those three characters.

*Osama Bin Laden*

The death of Osama Bin Laden provided a brief victory for the Obama administration in particular and the U.S. population in general. While Bin Laden did not die from a drone strike, the raid that led to his death showed the best example of a policy of military clandestine operations that included both smaller raids by U.S. soldiers and specific drone strikes against targeted populations. In many ways the death of Bin Laden added to the legitimacy of drone strike more than any specific drone strike itself up to the death of al-Awlaki.

Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the most devastating attack on U.S. Soil in modern NYT and the most hunted man in the world, was killed in a firefight with U.S. forces in Pakistan on Sunday, President Obama announced. The news touched off an extraordinary outpouring of emotion as crowds gathered outside the White House, in NYT Square and at the Ground Zero site, waving U.S. flags,
cheering, shouting, laughing and chanting, "USA, USA!" In New York City, crowds sang the Star-Spangled Banner. Throughout downtown Washington, drivers honked horns deep into the night. U.S. leaders have said he was more symbolically important than operationally significant because he was on the run and hindered in any meaningful leadership role. And yet, he remained the most potent face of terrorism around the world and some of those who downplayed his role in recent years nonetheless celebrated his death. The strike could exacerbate deep tensions with Pakistan, which has periodically bristled at U.S. efforts even as Bin Laden evidently found safe refuge on its territory for nearly a decade. Since taking office, Mr. Obama has ordered significantly more unmanned drone strikes on suspected terrorist targets in Pakistan, stirring public anger and prompting the Pakistani government to protest (Baker, Cooper & Mazzetti, 2011).

What this excerpt explained about Bin Laden the character was the dominant thread of the textual examples that involved his character. First, the sense of accomplishment and joy in his death. The celebratory nature of this death revealed an example that hundreds of billions of dollars spent on militarism in the U.S. was worth something and those policies end the lives of terrorist abroad. Second, the symbolic nature of his death showed that the U.S. wants to end terrorism as a threat to its national security but was equally invested in establishing a narrative that helps support large military expenditures to help establish that narrative as legitimate to the U.S. public. Finally, the Bin laden raid became part of the successful clandestine narrative of military operations that masked the true nature of a global war aimed at terrorist without traditional regard for national borders or specific sovereignty of particular countries. The success of this mission showed the
excellence of the U.S. military and established a protocol for the expansion of military policies that happened without media scrutiny of a public dialogue as to why they happen. The end result justified drone strikes in silent, secret raids and continuing military spending on a war that goes by another name. The death of Bin Laden as a character allowed for the continued military policy of drone strikes even without a specific strike tied to his death.

From a media perspective, in the immediacy after the death of Bin Laden, “new details” began to emerge that showed the complicated nature of reporting on national security issues. The Bin Laden raid and death revealed plenty about how the media depicted not only Bin Laden as character but how the military framed the discussion through the media.

The raid carried extraordinary risks -- and not just from Bin Laden and those with him in the compound. As the sound of battle shook the night, Pakistan scrambled jets to respond to a military operation that its military had not been informed was taking place. “They had no idea about who might have been on there, whether it be U.S. or somebody else,” John O. Brennan, President Obama's counterterrorism adviser, said in a briefing on Monday. "So we were watching and making sure that our people and our aircraft were able to get out of the Pakistani airspace, and thankfully there was no engagement with Pakistani forces." President Obama considered other options that would have been less risky, like an airstrike, but ultimately opted to send in commandos because, Mr. Brennan said, "it gave us the ability to minimize collateral damage" and "to ensure that we knew who it was that was on that compound” (Myers & Bumiller, 2011).
Based on this text from the NYT, the death of the character of Bin Laden said much more about U.S military policy than the actual life and death of one of the most dangerous terrorist threats in the world. First, the U.S. did not relate to Pakistan that they would kill the number one terrorist threat in the world on their soil. This type of U.S. exceptionalism in relation to militarism showed both what the U.S. thinks of the Pakistani government in particular and what they think of national sovereignty in general. The U.S. military, even with the number of drone strikes dotting the Pakistan setting over the last number of years, have not developed a relationship enough or even trust to commit a military raid that would capture or kill the world’s most wanted terrorist. Second, this type of military thinking put a number of troops at risk not only from forces sympathetic to Bin Laden but also from the Pakistan military, a group the U.S., at least in theory, needed to help alleviate terrorist threats and move beyond the targeted killings that dominate the relationship in the present. Finally, the limits of drone strikes were made very clear.

While drone strikes can work for lower level Al Qaeda operatives, the death of Bin Laden provided a different character for this U.S. to target. Even with the advances of military technology, drone strikes still have a limited role when the target that the U.S. wanted, in this case Bin Laden, was the focus of a military operation. The character of Bin Laden, even in his death, revealed the still human aspect of war even with the sanitation of modern militarism.

The NYT coverage of the death of Osama Bin Laden provided one of the dominant characters in the text about drone strikes. However, as a character, Bin Laden provided more respect to the Obama administration’s war in silence and a chance to celebrate death and destruction as the culmination of a decade of U.S. war with the
Muslim World. The character of Bin Laden endured as an example for the U.S. military, and the extended narrative of the importance of drone strikes, to keep vigilant in the fight against Al Qaeda, even if in death Bin Laden existed as a figure of only symbolic power. This symbol showed the U.S. the best way to attack the next target of Muslim propaganda that threatened U.S. security.

Anwar al-Awlaki

Based on its success in the targeted killing of Bin Laden, the U.S. military turned the focus of its attention to al-Awlaki. He provided a much different case for the U.S. to tackle for a number of reasons. First, while Bin Laden had a clear relationship to the tragedy of 9/11, al-Awlaki had a much more complicated relationship with Al Qaeda, as less of a top planner and more of a mouthpiece for text that denigrated U.S. influence in the Muslim World and used his internet bully pulpit to call for a jihad against the U.S. Second, al-Awlaki was a U.S. citizen. A U.S. citizen had not been targeted for death since the Civil War (Mazzetti, Savage & Shane, 2013). Finally, al-Awlaki lived in Yemen, a setting much more isolated and less accessible for U.S. troops to attack. For these and many other reasons, the character of al-Awlaki became an almost Bin Laden like figure whose symbolic death would reverberate throughout Muslim Majority countries and show the power and potential of U.S. drone strikes.

Al-Awlaki had once lived in the U.S. and led a fairly normal life, at one time calling for a dialogue between the Muslim World and the U.S. However, the character of al-Awlaki began to develop when he moved away from the U.S. and became an internet sensation in Yemen and throughout the Middle East for his outspoken critiques of U.S. foreign policy.
The attack on Thursday was part of a clandestine Pentagon program to hunt members of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the group believed responsible for a number of failed attempts to strike the U.S., including the thwarted plot to blow up a trans-Atlantic jet on Dec. 25, 2009, as it was preparing to land in Detroit. Although Mr. Awlaki is not thought to be one of the group's senior leaders, he has been made a target by American military and intelligence operatives because he has recruited English-speaking Islamist militants to Yemen to carry out attacks overseas. His radical sermons, broadcast on the Internet, have a large global following (Mazzetti, 2011).

At this point in the narrative, the character of al-Awlaki was minor to the larger issue of terrorism. However, his growing importance showed how the Obama administration used drone strikes to stem ideology as much as material threats to U.S. security. The work that al-Awlaki did was important because he was on the Internet and had attracted followers. He was an important target for drone strikes not only because of his organizational skill but his oratory skill.

The target, however, did not die in the initial drone strike, showing not only the limitations of destroying an ideology but also the limits of the precise and strategic drone strikes. This lack of success caused great discomfort not only for the U.S. but also potentially “led” to unrest in Yemen.

The unrest in Taiz, home to Yemen's largest demonstrations, is emblematic of a larger breakdown in the country as stability decreases the longer the political crisis drags on. The lack of control of the central state before the political crisis was a major reason that Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the Yemeni affiliate
of the international terrorist network, was able to set up a base in the unruly
countryside. The current chaos is therefore of particular concern to the U.S..
American officials said last week that an American drone strike in Yemen last
Thursday had failed to kill its target, Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born
Yemeni cleric who is a popular propagandist for jihadists around the world. Mr.
Awlaki is believed to be hiding out in the area of the strike, in the restive Shabwa
Province in Yemen's southeast. Sidelined by the political maneuvering between
Mr. Saleh and the organized political opposition, young protesters in the capital,
Sana, bolstered by thousands of tribesmen, have vowed to start an "escalation of
activity," according to a statement released online by one of the prominent
student-led organizations. The young protesters "invite everyone to participate
tomorrow in a march of millions through the streets of the capital," the statement
read (Kainof, 2011).

The character of al-Awlaki moved beyond the human to the mythical in this excerpt.
First, the impact of al-Awlaki cannot be underscored, at least from a NYT perspective.
While his reach may only be through "propaganda", that reach has extended far beyond
the setting of Yemen, which suffers great unrest but mostly because the U.S. drone strike
did not kill him. Second, the symbolic nature of al-Awlaki’s life seemed to coincide with
a larger narrative of unrest among young people who want social change from an
authoritarian government in Yemen. These young people may not agree with al-Awlaki’s
ideology but instead saw the limits of power from their own governmental leaders.
Finally, the uncertainty of what may become of both al-Awlaki and Yemen joined forces
in this example. The life of al-Awlaki might lead to some larger unrest in Yemen, even
without his text. The conflation of a student movement and a Muslim internet cleric showed the importance of the character of al-Awlaki as a drone strike target.

With the character of Anwar al-Awlaki rising in the minds of U.S. military officials, the next connection was all but inevitable. With the death of Bin Laden, the U.S. figured that al-Awlaki would be the next leader of Al Qaeda.

Some American officials also believe that Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born cleric now hiding with the Qaeda branch in Yemen, could fill some of the void left by Bin Laden's death. Mr. Awlaki's fluent English, knowledge of the U.S. and Web prominence are in his favor, though some experts on Yemen question his stature within the organization. In Pakistan, American officials believe a younger generation of operatives is emerging to challenge the authority of the group's old guard, including Mr. Zawahari. The officials said that a charismatic pair of Libyan men, Atiya Abd al-Rahman and Abu Yahya al-Libi, who escaped from the prison at Bagram in Afghanistan in 2005, are now believed to be Qaeda's senior operational planners. Their ascendance came after a drone strike in 2010 killed Sheikh Saeed al-Masri, who has been the group's third-ranking operative, a slot associated with a notoriously short lifespan. American officials said, Mr. Rahman notified Bin Laden of a request by the leader of Al Qaeda's affiliate in Yemen to install Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical American-born cleric, as the leader of the group in Yemen. That group, known as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, apparently thought Mr. Awlaki's knowledge of the U.S. and his status as an Internet celebrity might help the group's operations and fund-raising efforts. But,
according to American officials, Bin Laden decided that the group's leadership should remain unchanged (Shane, 2011; Mazzetti, 2011).

The character of al-Awlaki had terrorist power that the person al-Awlaki may not have. First, the traditional hierarchy of leadership and power, while not prescribed under the traditional battlefield argument when using military operations with Al Qaeda, did apply to Al Qaeda in this example. Since Bin Laden is dead and al-Awlaki has some recognition in Al Qaeda, therefore he will assume Bin Laden’s position as “leader” of Al Qaeda. Second, the multicultural linguistic ability of al-Awlaki also made him a threat. The ability to speak English was not seen as a positive thing in this example. His knowledge of language opened him up to an audience that others in the Muslim community may not have access to while also showing his modernity. However, in this example, that skill was a negative. Finally, the impact that al-Awlaki had was not known when referencing new Pakistani potential terrorists but his potential influence was a reason for concern with the next generation of potential combatants. The importance of ending the character of al-Awlaki’s life with a drone strike only grew in importance.

The importance of the death of al-Awlaki’s character was also important not only for the present war against Al Qaeda but also the future of the terrorist groups’ action. Perhaps the symbolism of his death will avert another potential terrorist incident in the U.S.

Born in New Mexico to Yemeni parents, Mr. Awlaki, 40, began preaching in mosques while a college student in the U.S.. During that time, as a preacher in San Diego, he met two of the Sept. 11, 2001, attackers. He returned to Yemen in 2004 and his English-language sermons became ever more stridently anti-
American. American counterterrorism officials said his Internet lectures and sermons inspired would-be militants and led to more than a dozen terrorist investigations in the U.S., Britain and Canada. Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, who is accused of killing 13 people in a shooting rampage at Fort Hood in Texas in 2009, had exchanged e-mails with Mr. Awlaki before the shootings. Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistani-American who tried to set off a car bomb in NYT Square in May 2010, cited Mr. Awlaki as an inspiration. A senior American military official who monitors Yemen closely said Mr. Awlaki's death would send an important message to the surviving leaders and foot soldiers in the Qaeda affiliate. "It's critically important," the senior official said. "It sets a sense of doom for the rest of them. Getting Awlaki, given his tight operational security, increases the sense of fear. It's hard for them to attack when they're trying to protect their own back side" (Mazzetti, Schmitt & Worth, 2011).

The character of al-Awlaki encapsulated the difficulty from a U.S. perspective of ending the threat from Al Qaeda and why drone strikes were used in this new U.S. war. Conversely, his death revealed the extent that the U.S. military and Obama administration will go to end the life of a confirmed ideologue but unconfirmed terrorist. First, the difficulty in assassinating al-Awlaki was his U.S. citizenship status. As a U.S. citizen, his life held a different value, both theoretically and legally, in relation to drone strikes. For that reason, the lengths the Obama administration went to, both legally and metaphorically, established an intellectual and rational rigor not associated with the death of other potential terrorist. Second, the influence al-Awlaki had on other people in the Muslim community was clear. However, the depth and material support for his actual
involvement in terrorist incidents were not explained. A confirmed internet cleric is not the same category as a suicide bomber, yet the Obama administration saw al-Awlaki as a threat equal to the violent jihadist.

Finally, the death of al-Awlaki again reinforced the greatness of U.S. exceptionalism through militarism. When the first drone strike did not kill al-Awlaki, presumably killing another high profile terrorist target maybe, the U.S. military did not give up in its pursuit of its target. Through surveillance, unconfirmed drone strikes and secret dealings with the Yemeni government, the U.S. military killed its target, reinforcing the greatness of the U.S. war machine. The drone strike that killed al-Awlaki followed a long line of continuous U.S. military victories.

While his life and status did not reach the heights of Osama Bin Laden, the death of Anwar al-Awlaki produced a celebratory moment for the Obama administration, if not the entire U.S. public. The potential lack of Al Qaeda leadership after the death of Bin Laden apparently transferred to al-Awlaki and his death dissolved not only a potential terrorist threat but a dangerous purveyor of anti-U.S. text. In addition, with his death attributed to a drone strike, the character of al-Awlaki established drone strikes as the new tool of U.S. military greatness. While his U.S. citizenship status afforded him an internal discussion from the Obama administration not seen in previous drone strike targets, his ultimate death proved that a potential terrorist character and purveyor of angry diatribes against the U.S. in English provided enough of a threat to end in a drone strike.

Barack Obama

Similar to the USA TODAY section on the character of Obama, the NYT turned the life of the president from a person to an important character in the drone strike story.
The NYT produced much more depth to the character of Obama and produced content that both admired his intellect and challenges his continued public silence on drone strikes. When Obama finally spoke on the record in 2013 about the use of drone strikes, the NYT fawned over the character of Obama with similar passion to a fan about his favorite athletic player. However, in the next few months, the coverage became much more critical of the character of Obama when his policy on drone strikes did not reflect his text on the same issue. When the drone strikes first begin, the character of Obama distanced himself from the story by not commenting on the use of drone strikes.

The C.I.A. drone strike that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, the American-born propagandist for Al Qaeda's rising franchise in Yemen, was one more demonstration of what American officials describe as a cheap, safe and precise tool to eliminate enemies. It was also a sign that the decade-old American campaign against terrorism has reached a turning point. Disillusioned by huge costs and uncertain outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Obama administration has decisively embraced the drone, along with small-scale lightning raids like the one that killed Osama bin Laden in May, as the future of the fight against terrorist networks. Mr. Zenko, of the Council on Foreign Relations, worries about the growing perception that drones are the answer to terrorism, just a few years after many officials believed that invading and remaking countries would prove the cure. The recent string of successful strikes has prompted senior Obama administration officials to suggest that the demise of Al Qaeda may be within sight. But the history of terrorist movements shows that they are almost never ended by military force, he said. ‘What gets lost are all the other instruments of
national power," including diplomacy, trade policy and development aid, Mr. Zenko said. "But these days those tools never get adequate consideration, because drones get all the attention.” (Shane, 2011)

At this point in the discourse, drone strikes had been happening off and on since Obama became president. However, only with the death of al-Awlaki, did the drone strikes connect the character of Obama to a much larger change in military policy. In many, similar to how President Bush’s foreign policy will be defined by Iraq, Obama’s foreign policy will be defined by drone strikes. The complicated nature of these strikes showed the promise and hesitance with such a key U.S. point in foreign policy. In addition, all of this discussion about the success of drone strikes or how drone strikes happen to the detriment of foreign aid or international negotiation continued without the character of Obama commenting publically on drone strikes.

While President Bush used deception and us versus them text to justify an illegal war in Iraq, President Obama, in silence found legal justification for drone strikes against al-Awlaki. However, the public had no role in this discussion, as the NYT textual example illustrated. The policy was based on tactical choices of military strikes in countries the U.S. was not specifically at war with while the commander in chief, who gives the go ahead on such policies, remained silent. The complexity of the character of Obama was in part defined by this passage. The character was both intellectually engaged in the policy choices while distant from the NYT about the reasoning behind that policy.

For this reason, when Obama commented on the death of al-Awlaki, his words showed the intricate doublespeak of a governmental leader.
"The death of Awlaki is a major blow to Al Qaeda's most active operational affiliate," President Obama said in remarks at a swearing-in ceremony for the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, outside Washington. Mr. Obama said the cleric had taken ‘the lead role in planning and directing the efforts to murder innocent Americans.’ Mr. Obama also called Mr. Awlaki "the leader of external operations for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula" - - the first time the U.S. has publicly used that description of him. American officials say he inspired militants around the world and helped plan a number of terrorist plots, including the December 2009 attempt to blow up a jetliner bound for Detroit. The drone strike was the first C.I.A. strike in Yemen since 2002 -- there have been others since then by the military's Special Operations forces -- and was part of an effort by the spy agency to duplicate in Yemen the covert war that it has been running in Pakistan (Mazzetti, Schmitt & Worth, 2011).

What this excerpt revealed about the character of Obama was that when a drone strike went well, even when it was a covert operation, the need to publicly comment was clear. In another example, when the drone strike went poorly, the silence from him was deafening. Second, how the character of Obama defined “operational leader” remained unclear as well. Bin Laden could be specifically linked to the events of 9/11, yet the thread connecting al-Awlaki to the other potential terrorist events in the U.S. were not as specific. Finally, the need to eliminate an inspiration for terrorist events showed the lengths the character of Obama will go to nail the source of an ideological war with a drone strike. Obama was as concerned as President Bush with winning hearts and minds; he chooses drone strikes instead of ground wars as tactics.
In May 2013, President Obama made the first public comments about the use of drone strikes by his administration. The New York Times reaction to these comments showed its support for the President for his act of transparency.

In this speech, Obama stresses the lengths he and his administration go to when considering a drone strike. The president suggested that the U.S. had returned to the state of affairs that existed before Al Qaeda toppled the World Trade Center, when terrorism was a persistent but not existential danger. With Al Qaeda's core now "on the path to defeat," he argued, the nation must adapt. "Our systematic effort to dismantle terrorist organizations must continue," Mr. Obama said. "But this war, like all wars, must end. That's what history advises. It's what our democracy demands." The new classified policy guidance imposes tougher standards for when drone strikes can be authorized, limiting them to targets that pose "a continuing, imminent threat to Americans" and cannot feasibly be captured, according to government officials. The guidance also begins a process of phasing the C.I.A. out of the drone war and shifting operations to the Pentagon (Baker, 2013).

While Obama remained vigilant to end the war against Al Qaeda, he recognized the need for this war to end at some point. First, Obama saw the success of the drone strikes and how they have harmed the Al Qaeda network. The long silent policy had worked and now was a time to acknowledge its success. Second, while giving no timetable or acknowledgment about what the end of this war would look like, Obama made a public declaration to end the war and this ending reinforced a commitment to democracy. The lack of transparency up to this point about the “highly successful drone program” had
come to an end and the U.S. could return to its democratic roots now that the country had militarily limited the effectiveness of Al Qaeda. Finally, while the program has been a success in ending the size and impact of Al Qaeda, new guidelines will be implemented to end the lack of accountability behind a successful program. Much like the ending of this war, the specific parameters of this regulation were a bit unclear.

A large test to these new parameters about drone strikes emerged in late 2013. As illustrated earlier, the character of Obama remained silent on drone strikes when the target was not a successful hit. This example illustrated a drone strike from Yemen in 2013. In this passage, note the lack of public statement from President Obama or any of his leading military or civilian officials.

Drone-fired missiles struck a convoy of cars returning from a wedding on Thursday afternoon in a remote area of Yemen, witnesses said, killing at least 11 people in what appeared to be the second American drone strike in the past week. Most of the dead appeared to be people suspected of being militants linked to Al Qaeda, according to tribal leaders in the area, but there were also reports that several civilians had been killed. The violence also sharpens a dilemma for President Obama, who said in May that he had approved new, stricter guidelines for drone strikes, and promised to make the drone campaign more transparent. After the president's speech, the frequency of drone strikes in Yemen briefly dipped (Worth, 2013). As illustrated in this excerpt, President Obama made no public statement about a specific drone strikes, as was the governmental policy. The strike appeared, as first reported, to target Al Qaeda operatives who posed some level of threat to U.S. security. For that
reason, even when Obama pledged earlier in the year to scale back the drone strikes in Yemen, a strike like this served a purpose of eliminating a potential future terrorist.

However, when a closer examination of the event happened in the NYT a week later, the silence from the Obama about who died in this strike was significant.

In some respects, the drone strike in Yemen last week resembled so many others from recent years: A hail of missiles slammed into a convoy of trucks on a remote desert road, killing at least 12 people. But this time the trucks were part of a wedding procession, making the customary journey from the groom's house to the house of the bride. The Dec. 12 strike by the Pentagon, launched from an American base in Djibouti, killed at least a half-dozen innocent people, according to a number of tribal leaders and witnesses, and provoked a storm of outrage in the country. It also illuminated the reality behind the talk surrounding the Obama administration's new drone policy, which was announced with fanfare seven months ago. Although American officials say they are being more careful before launching drone strikes in Yemen, Pakistan and elsewhere -- and more transparent about the clandestine wars that President Obama has embraced -- the strike last week offers a window on the intelligence breakdowns and continuing liability of a targeted killing program that remains almost entirely secret. It remains unclear whom the Americans were trying to kill in the strike, which was carried out in a desolate area southeast of Yemen's capital, Sana. The murky details surrounding the strike raise questions about how rigorously American officials are applying the standards for lethal strikes that Mr. Obama laid out in a speech on May 23 at
the National Defense University -- and whether such standards are even possible in such a remote and opaque environment (Mazzetti & Worth, 2013).

More so than any specific drone strikes, the late 2013 strike in Yemen that killed several members of a wedding party showed the duality of the Obama character in the NYT depiction of drone strikes. First, when new details emerged about the actual people who died in the strike, Obama remained silent. This silence differed greatly from the very public comments he made after al-Awlaki’s death. The second duality of the character of Obama involved the timing of the drone strikes. When Obama spoke publicly about the death of al-Awlaki the drone strike program remained a clandestine operation, at least from the perspective of comment from Obama administration officials. When this specific strike happened in Yemen, Obama had publicly commented on drone strikes and voiced a high level of government scrutiny with each strike. For that reasoning, the silence at this particular time, 2013, about this particular drone strike was deafening.

Finally, the lack of accountability from Obama or anyone in the administration was clear from this excerpt. The target of the strike remained unclear, no public comment was made and a lack of connection about this specific drone strike to the larger policy of drone strikes remained unanswered. The duality of the character of Obama about drone strikes was clear from this example. When a drone strike killed a specific intended target, Obama responded; when the target hits a civilian, the public comments stopped.

From Obama’s first public speech about drone strikes in 2013, the one specific parameter established by the President on the issue of drone strikes was changing the responsibility for the strikes to move from the CIA to the Pentagon. In regards to that
issue, here is an excerpt from December 2013, about the drone strike that killed the wedding party guests.

Moreover, the president said in May, no strike can be authorized without "near certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured" -- a bar he described as "the highest standard we can set. "At the time, administration officials said that authority over the bulk of drone strikes would gradually shift to the Pentagon from the C.I.A., a move officials said was intended partly to lift the shroud of secrecy from the targeted killing program. But nearly seven months later, the C.I.A. still carries out a majority of drone strikes in Yemen, with the remote-controlled aircraft taking off from a base in the southern desert of Saudi Arabia. The Pentagon strikes, usually launched from the Djibouti base, are cloaked in as much secrecy as those carried out by the C.I.A (Mazzetti & Worth, 2013).

Based on this excerpt, the change in policy had not happened and made the words he used in May 2013 seem less truthful. The character of Obama emerged clearly from the ambivalence between well-intentioned text, a realization of the impact of U.S. war and a public follow up that did not reflect the text in relation to Obama’s new policy guidelines about drone strikes. The character of Obama wanted to show that the U.S. fights terrorism successfully and wanted to reflect that success by establishing a new military policy. The policy that followed in relation to those words, based on this example of a specific drone strike in Yemen later that year, showed the character of Obama to have failed in that pursuit.

The linkage between the character of Obama and the other high profile characters, Bin Laden and al-Awlaki, was clear from The NYT coverage of drone strikes. First,
Obama seemed committed to ending the lives of these Al Qaeda leaders and intended to make the U.S. safer by using drone strikes and commando raids in far off settings like Pakistan and Yemen without a clear declaration to the U.S. public. Second, Obama spoke publicly when a drone strike hit an intended target but remained deafeningly silent when the target killed civilians. Finally, Obama had accomplished the goal of limiting the power of Al Qaeda based on a policy he did not comment about until over four years into his presidency. The new parameters he intended to establish to help enhance the success of drone strike policy had not happened, at least in the seven months that immediately followed his first public speech on drone strikes. The character of Obama continued to fight the war on Al Qaeda with drone strikes, without a clear explanation of how that policy works in practice.

*Action*

Unlike the USA TODAY section, the NYT section included a very specific type of action dominating all of its coverage: the drone strike itself. More than politicians’ speeches, more than any professorial diatribe, more than any military analysis, more than any other force, the action of the drone strike established how The NYT covered this story.

Most of the action involved a “normal” drone strike. Local officials on the ground, because of the Obama administration policy on never commenting on a specific drone strike, presented information. Some of the information provided insight, numbers or the name of the specific target if the target reached a high level in Al Qaeda. However, most of the action consisted of stories like this one.
A drone suspected to have been controlled by the U.S. fired two missiles into a
compound in a remote Pakistan tribal area near the Afghan border and killed up to
eight militants on Tuesday, security officials said. 'It was a drone strike on a
compound, where militants used to stay before crossing the border or after
coming back from Afghanistan. Eight militants were killed,'' said one Pakistani
security official on condition of anonymity. A top security official said two
missiles were fired killing seven to eight militants around 25 kilometers (16
miles) from Wana towards the Afghan border (Masood, 2009).

This article provided the essential dominant element of the action component from the
NYT drone strike text. Drone strikes become a regular news event, in much the same way
discussion of the market or weather would accompany a local news report. The events
were stated clearly: Militants trapped, fired upon by a drone strike, militants killed. This
particular drone strike has additional support in its narrative fidelity. The drone strike
supported an actual war the U.S. wants to win in Afghanistan. While the location was
clear from this story, how the story determines how the people are labeled militants
remained unclear. This disregard for specific detail, for example of the “militants” were
never named, supported the normative aspect of drone strike coverage. The information
was presented as a news release, full of “facts”, without any particulars about who these
“militants” actually were.

A similar story emerged in the same setting when the story moved ahead to 2013.
With the continuation of drone strikes, and the public acknowledgment of the program by
President Obama, a continuation of silence would seem to disappear in the NYT text.
However, that assumption was wrong.
An American drone strike killed two people believed to be militants in southern Yemen on Saturday, military officials here said, making it the ninth such strike in two weeks. The strike, in Lahj Province, wounded two other suspected militants, one of them seriously, the officials said. The four had been traveling in a car in the area of Askariya. The officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the news media, said it was the first time an American drone had fired on this area of Lahj. Nine strikes in Yemen in the past two weeks have been attributed to American drones. Those attacks have killed 38 suspected militants, Yemeni officials have said. While the U.S. acknowledges its drone program in Yemen, it does not usually talk about individual strikes (“U.S. Drone Kills 2, Yemen Officials Say,” 2013).

In this example, we see the same policies adapted to the same action despite assurances of transparency and change. First, while the setting changed from a known location in Yemen to a new location in the same setting, the action remained the same. While the story again included the nomenclature of militants, the rest of the details about the story remained murky. The normalization of the action of drone strike again was reinforced in a vague, unclear manner. This strike, from August 2013, showed no discernable change in policy or transparency after Obama’s May 2013 speech acknowledging drone strikes. The article was timeless: it easily could be plucked from the NYT text in 2009 with the language of militants the same, the sources using the same protocol. Yemeni military officials’ continued to comment off the record. The U.S., despite a new age of oversight and transparency, refused to comment on “individual strikes”. Despite the different textual example used from a different period of the NYT drone strike coverage, despite
the killing of Al Qaeda leaders, despite the change in setting, despite all the other factors, the action of drone strikes and the specific information around a particular strike had remained the same.

If the action of a drone strike had worked so well in these present day locations, the moving to a new setting with the same action and the same silence will continue not only now but into the future. The future action of drone strikes will allow not only the military to accomplish complex tasks but the deafening silence from government officials around the world will continue. Another example from Africa reiterated the power of the drone strike action.

U.S. military carried out a missile strike against a top Shabab operative in Somalia on Monday, according to Defense Department officials, three weeks after a Navy SEAL raid in another part of the country failed to capture a senior leader of the Somali Islamic militant group. The American strike is the latest evidence that the Obama administration has decided to escalate operations against the Shabab in the aftermath of the bloody siege at a shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, last month in which more than 60 men, women and children were killed. A White House spokeswoman declined to comment on the strike, referring questions to the Pentagon. Even as President Obama has ordered a punishing campaign of drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen, the administration has been far more reluctant to use similar tactics in Somalia. The reluctance partly centered on questions of whether the Shabab -- which has not tried to carry out an attack on American soil -- could legally be the target of lethal operations by the military or the C.I.A. But Monday's strike is a sign that views about the Shabab inside the administration
may have changed. In May, the White House announced that it would carry out targeted killing operations only against those who posed a "continuing and imminent threat to the American people." The strike on Monday was the first known American operation resulting in a death since that policy was announced (Mazzetti & Schmitt, 2013).

The setting changes, the action remained the same. While a number of other details have changed about the drone strikes over the last 5 years, other aspects have remained the same. First, while a Pentagon officials provided details about the strike, the official did not speak on the record. Even with the public commitment to act with more transparency about drone strikes from President Obama, this particular Obama administration official refused to comment on the record. The strike indicated a policy change by the Obama administration to engage in drone strikes in Somalia along with commando raids. Based on the textual evidence from the NYT on the issue of drone strikes, this policy changed happened without any public acknowledgment from the Obama administration or input, impact or question from the public or media.

The action of drone strikes maintained a consistency despite changes in enemy, location, identification, reasoning, support and many other factors. The strikes remained a constant in an every changing narrative that adapted different justifications for the elimination of human life from a plane above the earth. The action indicated a high modicum of support from the Obama administration, even when the action of a drone strike was not revealed by the administration. Finally, when President Obama decided to talk about the reasoning behind drone strikes in 2013, his officials did not adopt a policy that commented on individual drone strikes, even if few details about a particular strike
were known. As other narrative components change, the action segment of the drone
strike narrative did not change.

Focus

While the setting and characters developed from the NYT coverage of drone
strikes were clear and specific, the focus was less overt and follows a longitudinal pattern
across the entire length of coverage. Two main foci emerged when examining the text in
its totality. First, and most dominant, was the discussion about U.S. and Pakistani
relations. With the U.S. committed to drone strikes in the region and the Pakistani
government and military publicly condemning the strikes while privately acquiescing, the
amount of tension in the NYT coverage between the uneven partners was clear. The
second foci was U.S. discourse about drone strikes. The discourse dealt with the impact
of drone strikes on the world and why the U.S. not only continued that policy but more
importantly why they kept the policy a public secret until May 2013. The discourse
continued after Obama’s first public statement on drone strikes based primarily on the
future of drone strikes, not only by the U.S. government but the world at large.

U.S. and Pakistani Relations

The complicated issue of committing to drone strikes in a nation that the U.S. was
not officially at war with provided a diverse mosaic of hesitations from officials aligned
with both countries. Throughout the discourse, the U.S. government and military officials
questioned Pakistan’s commitment to ending the problem of terrorism and allowing
terrorists to live without threat of military attack. For this reason, the Obama
administration did not notify the Pakistani government during the Bin Laden raid,
cause a number of Pakistani officials to condemn the raid, not for its outcome but its
planning. The Pakistani officials continued a public condemnation of the drone strikes for a few different reasons. First, the drone strikes, for the most part, were unpopular in Pakistan, especially with the population away from the Tribal areas, the main location for most drone strikes. The political leadership in Pakistan hoped to keep its position in power by attempting to placate a concerned citizenry. Second, beside the Bin Laden raid, a U.S. airstrike in Pakistan that killed a number of Pakistani soldiers in later 2011 frosted a relationship that already had a tenuous power dynamic. This event showed little respect for Pakistan because, at least initially, the U.S. refused to publicly comment on the strike or take responsibility for its deadly outcome.

From the beginning of the NYT coverage, the relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan offered two versions a specific event. One example of this different version of the truth involved two drone strikes in 2009.

American officials in Washington said there were no immediate signs that the strikes on Friday had killed any senior Qaeda leaders. A senior Pakistani security official said four of those killed were Arabs. Pakistani intelligence officials often take the presence of foreign fighters as an indication of Qaeda involvement. In the second attack, missiles struck a house near the village of Wana in South Waziristan, killing seven people, according to local accounts and Pakistani news reports. American officials believe that the drone strikes have killed a number of suspected militants along the frontier since last year, including a senior Qaeda operative. A senior Pakistani official estimated that the attacks might have killed as many as 100 civilians; it was not possible to verify the estimate (Oppel, Jr., 2009).
These two different accounts of the drone strikes indicated a clear distinction in perspective between the U.S. and Pakistani government. First, the U.S. indicated that while the attempt did not kill any top Al Qaeda leaders, who it actually killed was not of high relevance. The Pakistani government distanced themselves from the alleged militants based on national affiliation. The Pakistani officials, based on this example, saw terrorism as an immigration problem, not an indigenous problem. The discussion about the larger issue of drone strikes as a whole created a much wider gap between the actual outcomes of those strikes. The U.S. saw the policy as eliminating potential terrorist threats by striking a target with pilotless aircrafts. The Pakistani officials, on the other hand, established a message that emphasized the deaths of civilians from drone strikes. Based on this discourse about drone strikes, U.S. officials saw drone strikes as a positive military operation that killed potential terrorist. The Pakistani officials worried about the impact drone strikes have on a civilian population not engaged in terrorism.

The discussion about who actually died in drone strikes created a fundamental disagreement with public officials. This section of text gave the testimonial from President Asif Ali Zadari about the upcoming visit from top U.S. official Richard Holbrooke.

Mr. Zadari told an audience in Peshawar, in the North-West Frontier Province, that he would argue against the drone attacks during Mr. Holbrooke's visit. According to the Pakistani state press agency, Mr. Zadari said that the drone attacks were "counterproductive" and that the "day was not far away when these attacks will be stopped.' Pakistani officials said they agreed with the American assessment that the airstrikes had killed some of the senior leadership of Al
 Qaeda. But the civilian casualties that have accompanied the attacks have accelerated anti-American feelings and made the Pakistani military appear feeble, they said. "Even when the real militants get killed, there is also a high probability that unarmed civilians get killed," said Farhatullah Babar, the spokesman for Mr. Zardari. "People get galvanized and become sympathetic to the militants’ (Perlez, 2009).

The degree with which Pakistani officials diverged from the U.S. narrative on drone strikes was articulated clearly here. Much like Obama’s speech in May 2013 on drone strikes, Zardari appealed to the audience by specifically condemning the drone strikes to an audience that bears the brunt of those drone strikes. While some segments of the population in the Tribal region of Pakistan have agreed with the drone strikes, the larger audience that would hear this message, which includes citizens not in the Tribal region, agreed with this sentiment that drone strikes cause problems in Pakistan. Zardari, at least publicly, played that angle with passion.

The U.S. Pakistani relationship revealed great insight into neocolonialism, patriarchy, military tactics and humanity through the issue of drone strikes. More so than any other country, Pakistan has been at the epicenter of drone strikes both helping and hindering U.S. efforts. While the dialogue between the two nations included contempt from both sides and horrific events based on a lack of trust created resentment, both countries knew they needed each other for the U.S. to continue drone strikes in the country and for Pakistan to help eradicate their problem of terrorism.

_U.S. Discourse on Drone Strikes_
From early NYT coverage about drone strikes, critical voices have emerged to challenge the dominant government narrative about drone strikes. When President Obama finally spoke on the record in 2013, much of the discourse had not just criticized the use of drone strikes but the silence that emanated from the Obama administration. After the 2013 speech, however, the critical discourse about drone strikes did not disappear and heightened during specific time periods. Without government officials talking on the record for the first four years of Obama’s time in office, non-governmental entities provided this critical discourse.

Military commanders and intelligence officials point out that drone attacks have disrupted terrorist networks in Pakistan, killing key leaders and hampering operations. Drone attacks create a sense of insecurity among militants and constrain their interactions with suspected informers. And, because they kill remotely, drone strikes avoid American casualties the drone war has created a siege mentality among Pakistani civilians. While violent extremists may be unpopular, for a frightened population they seem less ominous than a faceless enemy that wages war from afar and often kills more civilians than militants. Press reports suggest that over the last three years drone strikes have killed about 14 terrorist leaders. But, according to Pakistani sources, they have also killed some 700 civilians. This is 50 civilians for every militant killed, a hit rate of 2 percent -- hardly "precision." (Kilcullen, McDonald Exum, 2009).

This example distanced the discourse about the silence from governmental officials and looked at drone strikes tactically from a military perspective. First, from a U.S military approach, the drone strikes are a huge weapon against terrorists. After the stumbling in
Iraq, the U.S. had found a weapon that eliminates targets and allows for no substantial military force in Pakistan. Second, the fallout from the drone strikes was equally substantial for the people of Pakistan, a separate entity from the government who publicly denounces drone strikes while privately allowing them. This segment of the population felt the impact of drone strikes not just in a physical or a human way but in an ideological way. People who felt targeted and are not terrorists may choose militancy over other options because of a connection at least to an enemy they can see instead of an enemy which attacks in machines from the sky. Finally, while numbers on drone strikes can always be debated depending on the source, the argument against precision is still an important one because of the long-term impacts. One reason for supporting drone strikes involves the removal of a threat but the long-term impact can encourage hatred and anger. For these reasons, the precision of drone strikes could work against the U.S. military.

This critical discourse continued and questioned the assumptions the military officials gave about drone strikes. The example illustrated a wide range of outcomes and impacts that the government may not consider with the same critical reasoning as an actual drone strike.

A U.S. drone strike on a funeral in Pakistan's tribal areas missed the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mehsud, by hours on Tuesday, a Pakistani security official said Wednesday. The drones have seemed to home in on Mr. Mehsud and his groups, which have posed a growing threat to the security of Pakistan through scores of suicide attacks in the country. Estimates of the number of dead varied. One security official said that as many as 80 people had been killed, but a local
resident in a nearby town said the number was closer to 50. Pakistani television
reported that more than 100 had been killed. Though Pakistani television
networks reported widely that top commanders, including Qari Hussein and
Sangeen Zadran, the Afghan commander close to Mr. Mehsud, had been killed,
the resident in the area denied those men had been at the funeral (Shah &
Tavernise, 2009).

What this example exemplified were the different discourse about the outcomes of a
specific drone strike. First, the U.S. had an opportunity to exterminate a terrorist but
missed the target. Second, a clear background was given to support the assertion that the
man was a deadly terrorist. The diverse viewpoints on the event happened when
discussing the number of people actually killed. Whether 50, 80 or 100, the information
provided few details into how little precision actually can happened with a particular
drone strike. If the target did not get the person intended and at least 50 people died, the
lack of precision associated with drone strikes can be supported. In addition, the
information provided about the terrorist being present at the location may or may not
have been true. The outcome of this drone strike led to at least 50 people dead without
clear information if the target had even been at the location. This example of critical
discourse came from Pakistani sources, so the discussion about the impact of drone
strikes was not limited to top U.S. thinkers but also people on the scene in Pakistan.

The outcomes from this discourse about drone strikes differed greatly from the
previous example. First, the unintended consequence of a drone strikes may not actually
impact this specific target but how, if that target missed, the larger war that could be
started from a “small” drone strike. Second, the impact of drones in the U.S. changed the
narrative from one of survival to one of “airspace”. With the implied notion of U.S
exceptionalism, drone strikes in the U.S. construct a very different narrative than the
drone strikes in Pakistan, Yemen etc. In the U.S. the drone strikes need to be legislated
and restricted with some type of government oversight. That oversight happens in silence
when drone strikes happen in other settings. The complexity of the discourse from this
one example showed how even with all the positive entitlements that drone strikes allow
the military to have, the fallout from drone strikes can still create negative discourse.
The human impact was still a very important part of this process, however. The ending of
life still holds a great significance in the drone strike narrative.

When Hellfire missiles were first used in drone strikes to kill outside a combat
zone -- in Yemen, in 2002 -- six men died, including an American. A United
Nations special rapporteur declared the action unlawful, but C.I.A. drone attacks
have increased substantially since then: the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, a
nonprofit news organization in London, estimates the number of persons killed in
drone attacks at 3,000 to 4,500, including well over 200 children. Putting aside
whether the targeted killings are even effective, the law must take precedence.
Outside of armed conflict zones, the killing of innocent bystanders cannot be
tolerated. The Justice Department has concocted an elastic definition of necessity
-- attempting to justify force in the absence of an immediate lethal threat --
without citing any treaty or decision by an international court (O’ Connell, 2013).

When considering the argument about drone strikes from a human perspective, the
narrative often devolves into an emotional one. However, through this example, the
humanity argument involved a relationship with a legal justification of drone strikes,
along with the human impact of those strikes. First, the numbers, when verified from a non-governmental source, contradicts the surgical narrative from U.S. officials about drone strikes. Second, and equally important, involved the legal rationale for the drone strikes. As indicated earlier, the drone strikes, for the most part, do not take place in an active war zone. While the government assumes that conducting drone strikes outside of a war zone is legal for security reasons, the author in the above article challenged that assertions by denouncing its legal merit. The humane aspect of this section of the drone strike narrative came from the legal field to critique a government position that has been assumed as justified in most of the NYT text on drone strikes.

Critical voices also impacted the discourse by attempting to see the problem with drone strikes not only from the material military action but also the lack of available media coverage about the subject.

Last week, the debate over drone strikes broke out into plain view during the confirmation hearings for John O. Brennan, President Obama's choice to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Given that the program has been operating largely under the public radar, a question has been raised whether the news media have done their job in keeping the American public informed about this radically different approach to warfare. Some think not. In a report released last week by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Tara McKelvey, who has done her share of significant reporting on the issue, suggested that during Mr. Obama's first term, "the media fell short in its coverage" of the drone program. She applauded the increased attention to the issue, saying in a
survey that coverage in five major media outlets had almost doubled since the
start of that term, rising to 625 stories in 2012 from 326 in 2009 (Carr, 2013).

This information revealed a few key aspects about the discourse of drone strikes. The
first aspect involved U.S. political partisanship. If this program happened under a
Republican administration, would the coverage remain at the same level? With other
aspects of the political environment in this period highly divided in partisan terms, the
lack of discussion about that topic was curiously absent. Second, the setting of the drone
strikes reveals a certain degree of U.S. exceptionalism. If U.S. soldiers conducting these
operations replaced the drone strikes, the amount of media coverage may change to
reflect the importance of the U.S. soldier over U.S. machinery. Finally, the obscurity of
civilian coverage also does not appear when discussing drone strikes in this example. The
issue was framed in a U.S. focused way to distance the discussion of who was actually
being targeted by the strikes and more importantly who was killed.

The focus section of the NYT discourse about drone strikes revealed a large
amount of information about U.S. Pakistani relations along with critical discourse about
drone strikes. The depth of power, neglect, humanity and militarism dotted the coverage
with key points that both challenge and reinforce the justification for drone strikes. Even
from the beginning of the coverage, drone strikes both complicated relations with
Pakistan and included some level of critique from critical voices. Both of these factors
did not play a significant role in the USA TODAY coverage, establishing the NYT, at
least when compared to USA TODAY, a more skeptical voice on drone strikes.

Tone
While the action component of the drone strike narrative established a constant narrative over the period of this study, the tone of the articles dealing with drone strikes in the NYT included an uncertainty and hesitancy that accompanied government silence and lack of accountability. When a drone strike nailed its target, the tone changed to one of confidence and pride in a job well done. Unfortunately, with so little known on the record about drone strikes based on the NYT coverage, the preponderance of drone strikes fell into an oppositional category of uncertainty and unknown. For these reasons, the tone section will be divided along these oppositional lines: confidence and uncertain.

Confidence

One clear component of the U.S. military commenting about drone strikes involved a policy of using anonymous sources who spoke about the success of the drone strike program. Drone strikes showed the confidence of a military program that saved lives, killed terrorists and helped establish U.S. empire supremacy throughout the world. A litany of examples emerged from the text that help establish this feeling.

Pakistani intelligence and military officials say there is no argument that Qaeda fighters must be hunted down; they provide targeting information to the C.I.A., which remotely pilots the drones. But they complain that the missile strikes because too many civilian casualties and that they hand the militants a propaganda windfall. American officials defended the strikes, although they acknowledge that the attacks alone will not rout Al Qaeda and the Taliban from the safe havens. "Al-Qaeda and its allies are resilient," said a U.S. counterterrorism official. "But there's real value in keeping them off balance in the tribal areas. They come to doubt their security, their hosts, even each other.' (Perlez & Schmitt, 2009).
In this example, the Pakistani military agreed with the U.S. military that the problem of terrorism was severe in Pakistan. However, the drone strikes seemed to be supporting the terrorist because when a strike killed civilians instead of terrorists, the terrorists capitalized on that loss and used propaganda to reach an audience that would otherwise have not supported the terrorists group. The U.S. military remained confident; even though civilian people died, the drone strikes were working to end the power of Al Qaeda. As some civilians died from this policy, the greater good of ending Al Qaeda’s influence was more important. In addition, while not explaining any other factors besides drone strikes to end terrorism, the military acknowledged other possible solutions to fighting Al Qaeda. None of these possible solutions was mentioned specifically in this NYT textual example. The confidence to reiterate the power of drone strikes revealed the philosophical reasoning behind drone strikes from the U.S military.

This confidence extended to not only military officials but governmental officials about drone strikes. The juxtapositions stood out when examining the NYT coverage of drone strikes. A policy that was a governmental secret was the accepted tool of a foreign policy initiative in a large part of the Muslim World.

Senator Carl Levin, a Michigan Democrat who heads the Armed Services Committee, acknowledged last week that "the price is very heavy" when missile strikes mistakenly kill civilians, but he said the strikes were "an extremely effective tool." (Schmitt & Drew, 2009).

When a high ranking civilian official stated the problems that drone strikes may cause and continued with his support of that policy, the military felt confident to continue this secret targeted killing program.
For critics of the policy, another important point that government officials make about drone strikes that gives them confidence is the oversight that CIA officials give every strike. Here is one example of that oversight.

Experts say the drones also carry laser-guided weapons with small warheads that are precise enough to kill a group of people in a street without damaging nearby buildings. While the Air Force operates its drones from military bases in the U.S., the C.I.A. controls its fleet of Predators and Reapers from its headquarters in Langley, Va. The final preparations for strikes in Pakistan take place in a crowded room lined with video screens, where C.I.A. officers work at phone banks and National Security Agency personnel monitor electronic chatter, according to former C.I.A. officials. The intelligence officers watch scratchy video captured by the drones, which always fly in pairs above potential targets. According to the former officials, it is generally the head of the C.I.A.'s clandestine service or his deputy who gives the final approval for a strike. The decision about what type of weapon to use depends on the target, according to one former senior intelligence official. (Schmitt & Drew, 2009).

Any skeptics who questioned the amount of oversight about the drone strikes had some of their questions answered from this particular passage. However, other questions arose that challenged the confidence narrative espoused by the government when concerned with drone strikes. First, who are the small group of people the amazing warhead is targeting? Are all the people terrorists? How much does the CIA actually know about the targets they intend to exterminate? Second, the physical detachment from war was clear in this example. While monitors of targets helped to establish movements by the enemy
and allowed for a pattern to emerge about how that person acted, the fact this event happened thousands of miles away in a country the U.S. did not declare war against left a detachment from the horrors of war that other countries cannot distance themselves from based on a drone strike outcome.

While this excerpt did not detail the Air Force’s role in the drone strike campaign, another textual example indicated that the organization had the same confidence as the CIA. In this example, the Air Force conveyed its confidence based on a study of its drone strike policy.

The future world of drones is here inside the Air Force headquarters at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Va., where hundreds of flat-screen TVs hang from industrial metal skeletons in a cavernous room, a scene vaguely reminiscent of a rave club. In fact, this is one of the most sensitive installations for processing, exploiting and disseminating a tsunami of information from a global network of flying sensors. The numbers are overwhelming: Since the Sept. 11 attacks, the hours the Air Force devotes to flying missions for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance have gone up 3,100 percent, most of that from increased operations of drones. Every day, the Air Force must process almost 1,500 hours of full-motion video and another 1,500 still images, much of it from Predators and Reapers on around-the-clock combat air patrols. The pressures on humans will only increase as the military moves from the limited "soda straw" views of today's sensors to new "Gorgon Stare" technology that can capture live video of an entire city -- but that requires 2,000 analysts to process the data feeds from a single drone, compared with 19 analysts per drone today. At Wright-Patterson, Maj. Michael L.
Anderson, a doctoral student at the base's advanced navigation technology center, is focused on another part of the future: building wings for a drone that might replicate the flight of the hawk moth, known for its hovering skills. "It's impressive what they can do," Major Anderson said, "compared to what our clumsy aircraft can do." (Bumiller & Shankar, 2011).

With the technological advancement with drones, along with the future changes in making aircrafts more insect like and the number of people committed to the project, the Air Force had a great deal of confidence in establishing its reasoning behind committing to drone strikes. However, this textual example also provided insight as to why that confidence may be unfounded. First, the surveillance aspect of drone strike was clear from this example. The Air Forces acts as agent of surveillance before committing to an actual strike. This reality transposed people into commodities of activities, which the Air Force used to detect specific terrorist behaviors. However, that detection came with a cavalcade of information. 1,500 hours’ worth of video along with 1,500 images seemed to be a large amount of information to find the specific exploits of just a few terrorists.

The CIA could step aside from some of these human entanglements by using drone strikes to reduce the impact of potential future violence. From this perspective, the impact on the psyche of a drone pilot potentially shrank.

The C.I.A. declines to publicly discuss the drone program, so it was not possible to talk to an agency drone pilot. But Col. David M. Sullivan, an Air Force pilot with extensive experience with both traditional and drone airstrikes from Kosovo to Afghanistan, said remotely piloted craft offered far greater opportunities to study a target and avoid hitting civilians. An F-117 fighter or a Reaper drone each
carries the same 500-pound bombs, "but the Reaper has been sitting for hours on target," allowing the operator time to study who will be hit by a strike, said Colonel Sullivan, who is on the staff of the secretary of defense. Still, he said, there is still a margin of error in drone strikes, even if it is far smaller than in traditional strikes. ‘Zero innocent civilians having lost their lives does not sound to me like reality," Colonel Sullivan said. "Never in the history of combat operations has every airborne strike been 100 percent successful." (Shane, 2011)

The lack of public comment on the record from the active duty military officials did not deter the confidence established in most of this textual example. First, the drone strikes allowed for a more “humane” idea of war. The surveillance was needed to establish who the target was and who the civilians were. When that point was established, a 500-pound bomb can end the lives of the intended target. However, with any war people die. Drone strike pilots, while acknowledging that drone strikes minimize harm, also understood that war kills people not intended for death. While technological advancements brought confidence to the CIA and Air Force, the loss of civilian human life was inevitable.

The U.S. military and government had a number of reasons for confidence about the drone strike program. Based on technological advancements, new surveillance techniques, a trained military labor force and the expanding reach of U.S. exceptionalism, these officials saw drone strikes as clinical, specific targeted operations that killed the intended terrorist. However, underneath that confidence, existed a complex mosaic of consequences that led to the death and destruction of civilians. Based on these textual examples from the NYT, the government officials had decided that goal was worth the loss of potential civilian lives.
Uncertainty

While most governmental officials and most military personnel verbalize a confidence about the drone strike policy, some governmental officials and human rights activists saw the other side of drone strikes. The lack of accessible information allowed for alternative discourse of uncertainty to dominate the tone of the NYT media coverage. One of these examples from an alternative media actor below detailed the more nuanced component of drone strikes.

About 80 missile attacks from drones in less than two years have killed "more than 400" enemy fighters, the official said, offering a number lower than most estimates but in the same range. His account of collateral damage, however, was strikingly lower than many unofficial counts: "We believe the number of civilian casualties is just over 20, and those were people who were either at the side of major terrorists or were at facilities used by terrorists." That claim, which the official said reflected the Predators' ability to loiter over a target feeding video images for hours before and after a strike, is likely to come under scrutiny from human rights advocates. Tom Parker, policy director for counterterrorism at Amnesty International, said he found the estimate "unlikely," noting that reassessments of strikes in past wars had usually found civilian deaths undercounted. Mr. Parker said his group was uneasy about drone attacks anyway: "Anything that dehumanizes the process makes it easier to pull the trigger."

(Shane, 2009).

Much like the former soldier in the previous example, the skepticism that emanated from the activist community challenged the dominant narrative that came from governmental
officials. In this example, the activist challenged two assumptions from the military. The first assumption was the number of civilian deaths. While the governmental officials gave one number, the activist provided an intellectual critique about the number and attempted to understand how the government came up with this number in relation to civilian casualties. Second, and most important, the alternative media actor challenged the very technology that the government established with so much confidence. The use of drone strike may actually make war more palatable and easier for the governmental officials because it is not the U.S. soldiers who are risking their lives. By taking the U.S. body out of the equation, the dehumanization of war continued without regard to how that impacts U.S. foreign policy. The uncertainty came not from what the technology allowed the military to perform in targeted killings; instead, the alternative media actor asked an important question into how much easier war became when it is someone else’s life at stake.

The life of the civilian was also the impetus for another activist to question the dominant government narrative on drone strike success and lack of civilians’ impact. While the civilians were not portrayed in as much detail as governmental sources, the impact of drone strikes on their homes have impacted the tone in some of the NYT examples. One excerpt that reflected that approach was listed here.

On May 6, a Central Intelligence Agency drone fired a volley of missiles at a pickup truck carrying nine militants and bomb materials through a desolate stretch of Pakistan near the Afghan border. It killed all the militants -- a clean strike with no civilian casualties, extending what is now a yearlong perfect record of avoiding collateral deaths. Or so goes the U.S. government's version of the attack,
from an American official briefed on the classified C.I.A. program. Here is
another version, from a new report compiled by British and Pakistani journalists:
The missiles hit a religious school, an adjoining restaurant and a house, killing 18
people -- 12 militants, but also 6 civilians, known locally as Samad, Jamshed,
Daraz, Iqbal, Noor Nawaz and Yousa. Cutting through the fog of the drone war is
important in part because the drone aircraft deployed in Pakistan are the leading
ing edge of a revolution in robotic warfare that has already expanded to Yemen and
Somalia, and that military experts expect to sweep the world. ‘It’s urgent to
answer this question, because this technology is so attractive to the U.S. and other
governments that it's going to proliferate very rapidly,’ said Sarah Holewinski,
executive director of the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, or Civic, a
Washington nonprofit that tracks civilian deaths. (Shane, 2011)
The dominant narrative of few civilians’ casualties from the drone strikes appeared in this
section. The new component from this activist about the uncertainty of drone strikes
came not from the present strikes that dominated contemporary headlines. The next
horizon provided the real impact of drone strikes and the technology that accompanied
them. At this point, only a few nations have access to the drone strike technology. Those
countries are now establishing the legal and governmental standards that will dominate
drone strike rationale over the future decades. When other governments attain this
technology, the standard practice could be challenged especially when these events
impacted a large number of people. While the act of a drone strikes is a singular event,
the long-term injury that people suffered from and the philosophy behind that act also
should play a role in justifying drone strikes in the present day military operations based on this textual example.

The information presented from a variety of critics’ challenged the very nature of U.S. exceptionalism taken for granted by the military about drone strikes and attempted to open up a discussion about the limits of U.S. power. Another example of this critique was detailed here.

Who can't America kill? The answer, as a matter of law, is simply unknown right now. That is an extraordinary thing, arising out of the new tactics and technology in use in the American offensive against terrorists and their networks. For the news media, it should be intolerable that the question goes unanswered. Yet, by the ground rules of press and government interaction now in place, the government opts not to say and the press, including The NYT, is pushed back on its heels. Yet there remains no clear accounting of the legal principles or the process the executive branch is applying to support secret killings by the C.I.A., which carries out strikes far from the battlefield -- in this case against a native-born American. The C.I.A. will not even acknowledge that the program exists. The administration invokes secrecy to shield the details while simultaneously deploying a campaign of leaks to build public support. For The NYT, and its peers, this dynamic is beyond awkward: it gives the appearance that the government is manipulating them. The This scenario can only get worse as the U.S., moving to pull conventional military forces out of Afghanistan, comes to rely ever more on covert operations like the C.I.A. drone strikes in the region.

(Brisbane, 2011)
The power that the U.S. has throughout the world leaves a critique like this uncertain about how the future will look because of past and current U.S. policies. First, the role of the public and the media was shielded significantly from the problem because of the lack of access to governmental officials. The important part of this argument involved who was shut out of the process. The NYT is one of largest media outlets and most respected media outlets in the world. If that media outlet had problems with information access, it created a standard of little transparency between the Obama administration and the media.

The uncertainty of drone strikes set an important tone in the NYT coverage of drone strikes. Activists critiques conveyed real and in-depth skepticism about the impact drone strikes have on civilians, the lack of public discussion about when and how drone strikes happen and the future of drone strikes when a country decides that the U.S. will be the setting of such strikes. This important discussion acted as an oppositional tool to the dominant government narrative and allowed for a critical perspective to emerge in the NYT coverage.

Overall, the NYT coverage on drone strikes provided much more depth to the narrative components than the USATODAY coverage about drone strikes. The settings section depicted in much greater detail not only the present reality of drone strikes for both policy makers and people but also how the future of foreign policy may be influenced by drone strikes. The characters in this section showed a much more holistic depiction than in the previous section, although the Bin Laden an Al-Alwaki characters reflected many of the binary depictions that dominated the USATODAY section. Finally, the tone provided more questions about drone strike policy than specific answers. The
future of drone strike policy by the Obama administration and future presidential
administrations remained as unknown as at the beginning of the study, a key difference
from the USA TODAY media content about drone strikes.

Alternative Media

A number of alternative media organizations appeared in both USA TODAY and
The New York Times. When detailing these organizations, four alternative media
organizations influenced the mainstream media content in distinct ways that helped both
promote their own agenda and produced the previously mentioned counter narrative. The
four alternative media organizations and organizations of information were: Amnesty
International, Human Rights Watch (HRW), CODEPINK and the ACLU. While USA
TODAY and the New York Times produced news stories about specific drone strikes, the
alternative media organizations produced press releases, Freedom of Information
Requests and Qualitative studies that did not always include government organizations in
their content and are examined specific drone strikes in question. For example, Amnesty
International performed its own study on drone strikes, instead of accepting the
governmental information when a drone strike killed a 68 year old grandmother in
Pakistan. HRW mixed in strongly worded editorials with first person news accounts from
the settings of drone strike activity. HRW also promoted its own work through a number
of press releases when the organization disagreed with mainstream media reports about
drone strikes. CODEPINK used the entire media landscape from press releases to
promotion of its own activist agenda through strongly worded editorials to promotion of
mainstream media organizations that acknowledged their work and stance against drone
strikes by the Obama Administration. Finally, the ACLU produced news stories about its
own legal activities that challenged the silence emanating from the White House about
drone strikes. The ACLU also promoted mainstream media outlets that challenged the silence on drone strikes and partnered with the other alternative media organizations in this study to produce press releases about their own activity but also other human rights organizations.

The alternative media organizations focused on the problem of drone strikes and what each organization could do to change U.S. policy on the issue. While all four of these media organizations differed in their depiction and dissemination of information, all four provided insight into both the impact of drone strikes and how alternative media organizations covered the story in different ways. As indicated previously, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and CODEPINK all sent representatives or delegations to the major settings of drone strikes to both challenge U.S. policy and speak with local people outside the government structure who lived the impact of U.S. drone strikes. In addition, all four alternative media organizations took a clear subjective position that criticized the U.S. government on drone strikes, a claim not taken by the mainstream media organizations. Finally, the comparison between the organizations differed greatly in the type of media produced.

In detailing the alternative media organizations that provided connections to the coverage overall, the five criteria for establishing the narrative remained consistent with the mainstream media. The researcher looked at setting, character, action, focus and tone in all four alternative media organizations and found results that differed greatly from mainstream media but provided a consistent record of criticism to the U.S. policy.

In total, I examined 164 examples of media content from each of the four alternative media organizations in this study. To find the content, I examined each of the
four alternative media organizations websites with the search terms “drone strikes” and defined the termed from the same period as the mainstream media content, 2009-2013. The results from these searches provided a litany of different content types that differed significantly in size and scope not only from alternative media source to other alternative media source but also within a specific media source. For example, Amnesty International produced 3 different studies about drone strikes that were longer than 60 pages each. Amnesty International also produced press release about particular public lectures dealing with the issue of drone strikes that had 400 words.

Each of these examples from all four of the alternative media organizations was coded for the same narrative concepts as the mainstream media content. While the number of articles were fewer than the mainstream media content, the actual amount of text far surpassed the amount of coverage from both mainstream media sources combined. I followed the same format for the results of this section as the mainstream media sections.

Setting

When examining the four alternative media organizations content about drone strikes, the same settings appeared as USA TODAY and The New York Times. However, the type of content produced about those settings differed greatly from those mainstream media organizations. The main settings from these alternative media organizations were Yemen, Pakistan and the USA. The researcher used the U.S. more generally here than in the mainstream media sections because a number of stories primarily come from New York and D.C., yet other stories provide insight into other settings in the country.
Yemen

In detailing the alternative media depiction of Yemen as a setting, the alternative media organizations referenced some of the same information as the mainstream media organizations. Yemen grew in importance during the period from 2009 to 2013, replacing Pakistan as the primary location for drone strikes. However, the alternative media content focused on the power and impact of the drone strikes in this setting with many more specifics than the mainstream media content.

An example of this practice involved the growing discontent in the region with the U.S. At the beginning of the Obama Administration, Yemen had hopes for a new relationship with the U.S.; however, the continued impact of the drone strikes changed public perception about the U.S. An example from the HRW website explained that reality in this excerpt.

During meetings with young, reform-minded activists last month in Yemen, the talk invariably turned to accelerating CIA drone strikes against Islamist militants, and the temperate voices quickly turned angry. The youths’ comments underscored how swiftly the U.S. is losing hearts and minds as it battles Yemen-based Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and its local affiliate, Ansar al-Sharia. The U.S. also is aware of the need to strike with caution, whether with drones, missiles or conventional aircraft. After a couple of horribly botched U.S. drone and cruise missile strikes in 2009 and 2010, many tribal leaders and residents no longer allege a broad pattern of civilian casualties. That gives credence to the U.S. diplomat in Yemen who told me recently that “the notion of trigger-happy Americans sitting around in some remote room with their
computers, killing Yemenis without thought to whether they are genuine militants, is utterly false. But solid information is hard to find because Washington shrouds its drones program in secrecy, leading to widespread speculation over how many civilians have been killed and in what circumstances (Taylor, 2012).

What this excerpt from HRW represented was both the hope with U.S. intervention and the discontent with the understanding of the reality of that same intervention. While tribal leaders can see drone strikes providing a channel for taking out violent threats from extremist, the means with which those strikes happen remained beyond public knowledge or local input. With this secrecy comes speculation that leads to fear and resentment from the local population. For this reason, while the U.S. drone strikes may take out local threats that hamper development and security in Yemen, the reasoning behind the strikes, which do influence local populations, remained outside of the public discourse.

This misinformation created in the Yemen setting depicted two distinct and different pictures based on who supplies the information. When the information about drone strikes came from the U.S. government, the setting of Yemen was a place that continues to battle terrorist forces from Al Qaeda on the Arabian Peninsula but was succeeding through the successful efforts by U.S. drone strikes and local citizenry that embraces U.S. support. However, the setting also provided a much more complicated picture when the information comes from the local population who lives in the setting and dealt with the ramifications of those same strikes. This example from the HRW website explained some of those complications in this excerpt.
Quoting unnamed Yemeni officials, local and international media initially described the victims of the Sept. 2 airstrike in al-Bayda governorate as al Qaeda militants. After relatives of the victims threatened to bring the charred bodies to the president, Yemen's official news agency issued a brief statement admitting the awful truth: The strike is an "accident" that killed 12 civilians. Three are children. Nearly four months later, that terse admission remains the only official word on the botched attack. A USATODAY article, published on Dec. 24, reports that "U.S. officials in Washington, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter, said it is a Defense Department aircraft, either a drone or a fixed-wing airplane, that fired" on the vehicle. But the people of al-Bayda still have received no official word as to who is responsible for the deaths - - the U.S., which in the past year has accelerated its covert targeted-killing program against Yemeni-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; or the Yemeni government, whose new president, Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi, is installed with Washington's help. (Taylor, 2012)

As HRW illustrated, when accidents happened in the Yemen setting, local civilians died. While the U.S. admitted it made a mistake, the details of that mistake and who took responsibility remains unclear. This lack of certainty trickled down to the local population that has justifiable outrage but no specific outlet for that outrage. The local population can feel like both the national government and the U.S. do not involve the local people in these operations and leaves many questions about those operations. This created distrust in the local population about the good aspects of drone strikes.
As indicated earlier, a large component of how the mainstream media and the alternative media organizations involved voice in the depiction of drone strikes. By focusing on governmental organizations as the most important content in understanding a particular setting, mainstream media marginalized other voices in this prioritization of organization information. When expanding that reservoir of information, local voices from the setting of Yemen showed the complex relationship the setting has with the U.S. and how drone strikes complicate that relationship in even more detail. In this example from the ACLU website, in front of a congressional subcommittee, a Yemeni citizen talked about that complexity.

My name is Farea al-Muslimi I am from Wessab, a remote village in the mountains of Yemen. Just six days ago, my village is struck by a drone, in an attack that terrified the region's poor farmers. Now, however, when they think of America they think of the terror they feel from the drones that hover over their heads ready to fire missiles at any time. What violent militants had previously failed to achieve, one drone strike accomplished in an instant: there is now an intense anger against America in Wessab. I have spoken to many victims of U.S. drone strikes, like the mother in Ja'ar who had to identify her innocent 18-year-old son's body through a video on a stranger's cell phone. Or the father in Shaqra who held his 4 and 6-year-old children as they died in his arms. (al-musimi, 2013).

While some form of this information appeared in mainstream media organizations, the alternative media organization, in this case the ACLU, provided only a text of his testimony and did not frame his reaction as a new story or a world issues topic. Instead, the ACLU provided his testimony by itself to show his feelings about drone strikes and
what they have done to the people of Yemen. The setting itself had a humane frame from this example by exploring the impact on people rarely emphasized in mainstream media coverage. Based on this example, the setting of Yemen dealt with the impact of drone strike rationally but the emotional wound of that military action also leaves a big impression based on the chosen organization content.

As a setting, Yemen had many of the same characteristics as the mainstream media section. However, the alternative media depictions illustrated a different picture that emerged from the content produced from those organizations. The depth of coverage by alternative media organizations showed a different human impact of drone strikes and how they become a part of the lives of the people of Yemen. Second, the role of the U.S. was one of secondary importance behind the impact on the Yemen setting, a departure from the mainstream media content. Third, the speed of the news cycle in the mainstream media organizations allowed for initial reporting but less room for future reporting that alternative media provided about the Yemen setting. Finally, the frame of the content changed from news story about a particular subject and instead becomes a human response to the military might of drone strikes. The Yemen setting showed the depth and subjective viewpoint from alternative media about drone strikes.

Pakistan

Pakistan shared many of the same attributes that Yemen did as a setting but came at those problems of drone strikes, U.S. Empire and media coverage from a longitudinal perspective. Longitudinal in this context meant that the U.S. has been involved in locations close to and involving the Pakistan setting from a much longer period when compared to the Yemen setting. Similarly as the mainstream media coverage, the
coverage of the Pakistan setting began the narrative of drone strikes during the Obama Administration and provided a location of both supposed successes and setbacks about this emerging foreign policy doctrine. The opportunity for alternative media to probe behind the official organizations and examine the true impact of drone strikes developed during the entire time of the Obama Administration.

One of the differences from the alternative media coverage to the mainstream media coverage about the Pakistan setting involved the direct inclusion of an alternative media group into the Pakistan setting. CODEPINK set up an excursion to Pakistan involving a number of its members to experience the drone strikes from an immediate perspective.

Today 40 Americans announced their intention to travel to Pakistan October 3-10 on a peace delegation protesting U.S. drone strikes and calling for relations between the U.S. and Pakistan, and the broader Muslim world, to be based on peace and friendship, not drone strikes, military occupations and religious insults. Several members of the delegation from around the country will be holding a press conference in front of the White House to talk about the trip and to answer any questions. The delegation considers drone strikes immoral, illegal and counterproductive. "President Obama's counter-terrorism chief John Brennan insists that U.S. drones strikes aren't harming innocent Pakistanis, but we know that's not true, especially since the Obama Administration calls all military-age males in the area 'militants'," said CODEPINK cofounder Medea Benjamin, an organizer of the delegation and author of the book, Drone Warfare: Killing by Remote Control. [Watch Ms. Benjamin confront John Brennan directly.] "We
want Pakistanis to know that there are Americans who stand with them in calling for an end to the CIA's killer drones and compensation for the victims.”

(Benjamin, 2012)

This example articulated one channel that alternative media provided in relation to insight about a setting that the mainstream media groups neglected. Moving beyond the hindrance of the objectivity of mainstream media, the alternative media organization provided the setting a human feel from an American citizen perspective. CODEPINK made its intentions extremely clear about the objectives of the trip and attempted to use media outlets to promote its specific agenda through the media. By using a humane connection of people to understanding drone strikes, the Pakistan setting looked different than just a setting of U.S. military action.

The ACLU, as a group that focuses on civil liberties and legal issues, examined the Pakistan setting from a legal basis of the secrecy behind the drone strike policy. From their perspective, the U.S. role in the setting needed to be fully explained from a democratic perspective and in both the short term and long term regarding this military policy.

"The American public has a right to know whether the drone program is consistent with international law, and that all efforts are made to minimize the loss of innocent lives," said Jonathan Manes, a legal fellow with the ACLU National Security Project. "The Obama Administration has reportedly expanded the drone program, but it has not explained publicly what the legal basis for the program is, what limitations it recognizes on the use of drones outside active settings of war and what the civilian casualty toll has been thus far. We're hopeful
that the request we've filed today will encourage the Obama Administration to disclose information about the basis, scope and implementation of the program."
The Administration has used unmanned drones to target and kill individuals not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but also in Pakistan and Yemen. The technology allows U.S. personnel to observe targeted individuals and launch missiles intended to kill them from control centers located thousands of miles away ("Asks For Data On "Targeted Killings" Of Suspected Terrorists And Civilian Casualties Asks For Data On "Targeted Killings" Of Suspected Terrorists And Civilian Casualties," 2010).

From the ACLU perspective, the Pakistan setting had as much to say about the U.S. as it does Pakistan. If the U.S. keeps its secrecy behind the drone strike program and only disseminates specific information about the strikes denying full democratic engagement from both the press and its citizenry, the negative impact indicates a failure from both the U.S. and its relationship to the Pakistan setting. Another important aspect of this text involved the Pakistan setting as an “active” military location in 2010 in the same manner that Afghanistan and Iraq are during this period. Drone strikes that impacted Pakistan indicated that the U.S. military action moved beyond not only settings that involved direct U.S. military action but extended to other locations, which were more distant from the public and the media’s gaze.

In much of the same manner as the other alternative media organizations, Amnesty International issued statements that made its stance clear about the relationship of the U.S. to the Pakistan setting. Moving beyond the barriers of the news cycle and official government organizations, Amnesty International instead implored the Obama
Administration to reexamine its policy to the Pakistan setting because of the impact of drone strikes on the Pakistani people.

Amnesty International urges the U.S. of America to: Undertake proper monitoring of the impact of drone attacks on the civilian population, and clarify the chain of command and rules of engagement governing the use of drones in Pakistan; investigate, discipline or prosecute, in a credible and transparent manner any officials found guilty of violating IHL or rules of engagement in conducting drone strikes. The US has increasingly resorted to drone strikes to target Taliban insurgents in North Waziristan35 As this report is prepared for publication in May 2010, the Pakistani army threatened to launch a major military operation in North Waziristan (Pakistan: 'As if Hell fell on me': The human rights crisis in northwest Pakistan, Pakistan, 2010).

This excerpt illustrated a number of points. First, Amnesty International understood the impact of terrorism on the Pakistan setting and the problems these terrorists caused. Second, that reality did not excuse the U.S. from culpability to provide a more transparent record of its drone strike numbers and impact on civilian populations. Finally, the issue of drone strikes continued to escalate without significant accountability. The open-ended policy left the Pakistan setting dealing with a covert military action without end that kills its people without any public engagement from the U.S., the military force behind the strikes. This example illustrated the multiple factors that defined the Pakistan setting.
Much in the same vein as the Yemen setting, the Pakistan setting indicated a lack of accountability from the U.S. in its drone strike policy. Alternative media organizations attempted to fill that void by becoming actors in active social change, calling on changes based on local reaction, using the legal system to challenge the dominant government narrative and taking a clear subjective position that excoriates the lack of public openness from the Obama Administration about the topic of drone strikes. In addition, other human rights issues happened in Pakistan, sometimes far from the eyes of the Obama Administration. Pakistan was depicted differently in alternative media than mainstream media in this study about drone strikes.

U.S.

The U.S. setting had a much more complex picture than the Yemen or Pakistan setting. The discourse remained consistent from both alternative media and mainstream media. The main difference between the media depictions involved how the depictions changed based on the focus in that setting. For example, as illustrated in the Pakistan setting, the ACLU focused its attention primarily on the legislative system. From this alternative media organization, they wanted the Obama administration to explain both the philosophical reasoning behind the drone strikes and the impact of the drone strikes in these other settings.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit today demanding that the government disclose the legal basis for its use of unmanned drones to conduct targeted killings overseas. In particular, the lawsuit asks for information on when, where and against whom drone strikes can be authorized, the number and rate of civilian casualties and other basic information
essential for assessing the wisdom and legality of using armed drones to conduct targeted killings. "The public has a right to know whether the targeted killings being carried out in its name are consistent with international law and with the country's interests and values," said Jonathan Manes, a legal fellow with the ACLU National Security Project. "The Obama Administration should disclose basic information about the program, including its legal basis and limits, and the civilian casualty toll thus far ("ACLU Seeks Information On Predator Drone Program", 2010).

The ACLU intended to use the legal system in the setting of the U.S. to find out information about the drone strikes. In this process, the group provided a media function by attempting to provide a location for public discussion about drone strikes that remained a clandestine government program. The U.S. setting provided tools for alternative media organizations to use in an attempt to bring forth a civil, democratic discussion about drone strikes that impacted other settings but come from the U.S. setting.

In 2013, the Obama Administration finally made public some information about the drone strike program and some of the targets of its program. Amnesty International saw this opportunity to help establish some human rights parameters by attempting to pressure the government to provide transparency.

US media over the weekend reported that the Administration of Barack Obama is finalizing guidelines setting out its counterterrorism policies. There already exists a rulebook for these issues – it is called international law. Any policy on so-called ‘targeted killings’ by the US government should not only be fully disclosed, but
must comply with international law,” said Susan Lee, Americas Programme
Director at Amnesty International. “Any policy guidelines should reject the US
government's previous reliance on a ‘global war’ legal theory that treats the entire
world as a battlefield between the USA and armed groups, on which intentional
lethal force may apparently be used without regard to human rights standards.”
The “manual” under development would reportedly exclude the CIA’s operations
in Pakistan, where reportedly more than 300 drone strikes have killed civilians as
well as suspected militants (“USA: Disclose reported guidelines on drones and so-
called ‘targeted killings’, 2013).

Amnesty International utilized the channel of alternative media to accomplish some of
their very specific goals. In addition, much like the ACLU, the U.S. setting provided both
an opportunity and a problem. On the issue of drone strikes, the U.S. could see itself
above the international community and apply its version of legal rational, separate from
the international community. Amnesty International, in reference to the U.S. setting,
attempted to reign in that ideology through its media content.

Much like in the Pakistan setting, HRW attempted to change the discourse from
only examining drone strikes in relation to human rights but expand the discussion to the
litany of social problems that face the U.S. By doing so, the discussion moved to include
the prison system and immigration in addition to drone strikes as a human rights issue.

The US incarcerates more people than any other country in the world, sometimes
imposing very long sentences marred by racial disparities. Increasing numbers of
non-citizens—363,000 in 2010—are held in immigration detention facilities,
although many are not dangerous or at risk of absconding from immigration
proceedings. The US incarcerates more people than any other country in the world, sometimes imposing very long sentences marred by racial disparities. Increasing numbers of non-citizens—363,000 in 2010—are held in immigration detention facilities, although many are not dangerous or at risk of absconding from immigration proceedings (“World Report 2012: U.S.

HRW intended to invoke the number of human rights violations perpetuated by the U.S. government whether those violations occurred in the immigration system or with drone strikes. This inclusivity also reflected another difference in the alternative media depiction of the U.S. setting from mainstream media. By having only one specific focus, human rights, HRW need not include information about other issues or programs that the mainstream media reports on in its text. The NYT and USA TODAY included sports, entertainment and financial information in their media texts, making their product available to a different consumer but moving beyond the depth of certain issues, such as human rights in the U.S. settings that alternative provided greater insight.

CODEPINK provided the strongest voice against the U.S. government, in direction action, of any of the alternative media organizations. In those direct actions, CODEPINK attempted to confront agents of the U.S. government or corporations that profit from drone strikes in an attempt to provide personal accountability instead of governmental or democratic accountability.

Activists with peace groups CODEPINK and Nevada Desert Experience will fast outside of Creech Air Force Base against U.S. drone strikes on Afghanistan and Pakistan over the Thanksgiving Holiday, November 26th through November 29th. After learning about the brutal assaults on innocent bystanders in those countries,
the activists decided to fast as a way to show to the global community and the
U.S. government that we do not support the drone strikes. According to an October
2009 New Yorker article "The Predator War" written by Jane Mayer, the Predator
drones strikes continue at a fast pace -- "a rate of approximately one bombing a
week." The pilot program is housed at various military installations in the U.S.
with Creech Air Force Base, just north of Las Vegas, as the headquarters of the Air
Force's Predator and Reaper "hunter-killer" UAV squadron, the 432nd Flight
Wing. Young Air Force pilots commute into the base every day to fly the
unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), referred to as drones, to scout over Pakistan and
Afghanistan and launch Hellfire missiles onto the region as part of a controversial
C.I.A. targeted international killing program; and at times missing their intended
targets, resulting in the deaths of many innocent people including children. The
non-violent peace activists call for a stop to U.S. drone strikes and call on our
government to stop spending American tax dollars on C.I.A. classified covert
drone programs (Manias, 2009).

CODEPINK reached out to other groups that shared the mission of disrupting the
mechanism that produces drone strikes, whether they involved government officials or
military officers. This specific agenda in the U.S. setting took them to places in a
confrontational manner that the other alternative media organizations eschewed but also
allowed for another narrative of the U.S. setting to emerge: activists that produced
alternative media also became actors that protested U.S. policy. The distance that
normally followed mainstream members disappeared as these activists engaged in a
public denouncement of U.S. drone strikes in the U.S. setting. Based on this example, the
alternative media producers also became the news they reported on in their media production.

The U.S. setting highlighted divergent views from alternative media organizations. The alternative media organizations focused on the legality of the drone strikes, the numerous human rights issues in the U.S., the inability of the U.S. in recognizing international law and the ability of alternative media producers that also produced the news. These alternative media depictions produced a picture of defiance, disagreement and democratic principles in their media content.

Overall, the setting section illustrated clearly how the alternative media organizations changed the content they produced about drone strikes depending on the setting. The importance of the settings seemed to transition from Pakistan to Yemen over the course of the period studied as well, with Pakistan acting as the main setting until 2011 with Yemen becoming a much more prominent setting after 2011. Each alternative media organization attempted to find the truth behind the governmental discourse in both Yemen and Pakistan to produce a more composite picture about the impact of drone strikes in both locations. The U.S. setting remained more static during the study based on the content produced by the alternative media organizations. However, the alternative media organizations produced content that consistently tried to put pressure on the U.S. government to act more transparently in their discourse about drone strikes.

**Characters**

The characters section provided some departures from the mainstream media while also providing a reimagination of the same characters depicted by the mainstream
media. The two main characters from alternative media organizations for this study included the Obama Administration and John Brennan. Each of these characters provided unique insight into the issue of drone strikes and how the content shifted based on these characters in the media text.

*The Obama Administration*

In much the same manner as the previous section, the alternative media text provided a much more acute criticism of the Obama Administration than the mainstream media. The strongest criticism came from the ACLU and CODEPINK but all the alternative media organizations provided pointed criticism of the Obama Administration and how they handled the drone strike policy. By providing greater depth and specific examples, the alternative media organizations reflected a position that criticized the lack of transparency on the issue along with the number of civilian casualties caused by drone strikes.

The ACLU, with its focus on the legal issues of the drone strike problem, established a clear position that the status quo lack of accountability and transparency hinders the democratic process. The ACLU wanted to help solve that problem by opening up the discussion to include other branches of the government.

Today, in an article entitled "We don't need no stinking authority," The Economist's "Democracy in America" blog points out that drone-launched missile strikes on al-Qaeda targets in Pakistan have never been voted on by Congress and that in the ongoing debate about drone strikes, there has been relatively little discussion about where the authority for these strikes come from. We are troubled
by reports that the Obama Administration has stepped up the drone program without explaining publicly what the legal basis for the program is, what limitations it recognizes on who can be targeted and where strikes can occur, and what the civilian casualty toll has been thus far. We believe that the American public has a right to know whether the drone program is consistent with international law, and that all efforts are made to minimize the loss of innocent lives (Khaki, 2010).

This example articulated the ACLU’s position but also established its position as an alternative media organization. By commenting on a post from another media organization, *The Economist*, the ACLU intended to strengthen its argument against drone strikes by drawing the credibility of other media organizations. This practice allowed the ACLU to broaden the narrative against the Obama Administration by showing the broad scope of resistance to the Obama Administration’s practices involving drone strikes. In addition, the ACLU made its stance perfectly clear by criticizing the Obama Administration and asking them to examine their relationship with international law. The ACLU wanted the Obama Administration to provide a consistent approach to foreign policy that also reflected an international standard applicable to any nation that may engage with drone strikes.

Amnesty International provided criticism of the Obama Administration in a number of ways in relation to drone strikes. One important element that they contextualized involved how the Obama Administration provided rhetoric that Amnesty International wanted to see exemplified in its effort toward a more democratic engagement with the public on the issue of drone strikes.
A series of speeches over the past two years by officials from the Administration of President Barack Obama, and an article published in the New York Times on 29 May 2012, have Revealed some details of the purported legal rationale for current policies and practices of the U.S. of America (USA) in the deliberate killing of terrorism suspects, including far from any recognized battlefield, and particularly through the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (popularly known as drones). Unlike torture, which is absolutely prohibited in all circumstances, intentional killing by the state can sometimes be justified under international law, both in situations of armed conflict and in law enforcement situations. However, as will be explained below, based on what officials from the Administration have stated publicly, and what has been reliably reported by news media, current US policy and practices for the intentional use of lethal force against terrorism suspects and other people who happen to be near such suspects appear to go far beyond what international human rights law permits. In Yemen between 2002 and 2012, there have been between 44 and 54 confirmed US operations (including 31 to 41 drone strikes); with a possible further 87 to 96 operations (including 49 to 55 drone strikes). The total number reported killed is between 317 and 826 people. All but one of these operations are carried out under the Obama Administration As with the Bush Administration’s approach to torture, the Obama Administration’s approach to deliberate killings of terrorism suspects relies to a significant extent on the unilateral redefinition of established legal concepts in radical ways, with key details kept secret. (“U.S. of America: ‘Targeted killing’ policies violate the right to life,” 2012).
Amnesty International used some of the same tactics as the ACLU when providing its criticism of the Obama Administration on the issue of drone strikes. The organization examined the relationship with international law and the policy of drone strikes. In addition, Amnesty International attempted to bolster its credibility by also using support from other media organizations that have provided criticism of the Obama Administration on the issue of drone strikes.

Amnesty International diverged from those other organizations by including an issue not necessarily aligned with drone strike policy and an issue the Obama Administration has publicly decried: torture. The organization indicated that while torture has a clear understanding under international law to be avoided at all times, the issue of intentional killing provided more room for interpretation. However, the Obama Administration had not followed international law in its own interpretation of intentional killing. This policy choice allowed Amnesty International to compare the Obama Administration’s lack of connection to international law and drone strikes with the Bush Administration and their connection to torture. This comparison allowed Amnesty International to again broaden the scope of the issue of drone strikes to other human rights issue in the short term past, which allowed for a deeper argument into the role of terrorism, the U.S. and the international community, regardless of the current presidential administration.

HRW continued that broad discussion in much the same manner as the ACLU. HRW focused on the numerous legal issues that the Obama Administration had a responsibility to examine based on its leadership as the Administration that has advanced the use of drone strikes throughout the world. This argument showed the
interconnectedness of drone strikes and the divergent alternative media organizations that
condenmed their use under the Obama Administration.

We write to ask that your Administration provide greater clarity about its legal
rationale for targeted killings, including the use of Unmanned Combat Aircraft
Systems (drones), and the procedural safeguards it is taking to minimize harm to
civilians. US history shows that once such a program is initiated, even if in
response to a specific contingency like the threat posed by al Qaeda in Yemen, it
generally becomes a permanent feature of the national security landscape. You
will not be the last US president to claim the authority to conduct such strikes.
Your Administration has dramatically expanded the use of targeted killings
outside of traditional battlefields following the attacks of September 11, 2001.
The US government asserts that it has authority under international law to use
lethal force outside of clearly defined war zones because it is engaged in a global
armed conflict with al-Qaeda and associated forces. We also recognize the
challenge that your government faces in trying to address potential threats that are
not in a traditional conflict zone yet are also beyond the reach of any law
enforcement. The notion, however, that the entire world is a battleground in
which the laws of war are applicable undermines the protections of international
law. Such a concept invites the application of lethal force by other countries in
situations where the US would strongly object to its use. (Roth, 2010).

As indicated earlier, HRW wanted to extend the discussion of the use of drone strikes on
a legal basis. The organization also criticized what that legal reasoning said in relation to
U.S. and international law. However, HRW recognized two other components in relation
to drone strikes and the Obama Administration. First, almost uniquely to all of the drone strike policy whether from the mainstream media or the alternative media, HRW understood and stated the importance of this new policy choice. In some ways, HRW left open the possibility for this policy to reflect a human rights standard that would reflect its own mission. However, this standard was not met by the Obama Administration.

CODEPINK intended to shame the Obama Administration into explaining its action on the issue of drone strike. By offering up strong rhetoric against the Obama Administration’s policy on drone strike, CODEPINK wanted to makes its position clear as an alternative media organization that does not agree with the Obama Administration and wanted to have that position changed as soon as possible. This tactic allowed for insight into how the Obama Administration examined the drone strike policy that has proliferated under its time in leadership.

As President Obama hosts a press conference at the National Defense University CODEPINK and other activists will be vigiling outside. President Obama will be speaking at the National Defense University on the topic of two of the most egregious crimes committed by this Administration: drone strikes and Guantanamo Bay. CODEPINK and allies will rally outside the premises calling for an end to targeted assassinations and indefinite detention. Visuals include people in Guantanamo jumpsuits, life-sized Obama renditions, and a large model drone. “We are anxious to hear what President Obama has to say, and hope he will announce measures to close Guantanamo and stop the drones wars,” said CODEPINK co-founder Medea Benjamin. “But if President Obama continues to rely on killing by remote control and locking people up indefinitely, we will be
constantly creating new enemies and jeopardizing our national security.

Respecting human rights, international law and the guarantees provided in our Constitution is the best way to keep our nation secure.” (“Obama Speaks On Drones & Gitmo: CODEPINK Speaks Back! 2013).

What this example articulated was the clear position of CODEPINK in relation to the Obama Administration: CODEPINK saw the Obama Administration having failed the U.S. public and intended to rectify the situation by providing an alternative narrative. This narrative had some components of the other alternative media texts that have challenged the Obama Administration on the issue of drone strikes: human rights law, lack of transparency and using the Obama Administration’s rhetoric against itself. CODEPINK has heard these points at other times in the discourse about drone strikes. In CODEPINK’S textual examples, the Obama Administration lost the right to control the discussion about drone strikes and alternative media organizations needed to provide another story that reflected the interests of people outside the Obama Administration.

The alternative media organizations provided a different interpretation of the Obama Administration than the mainstream media organization. First, all of these producers of alternative media content had some connection to human rights and wanted those rights respected by the Obama Administration in relation to drone strikes. Second, the legal reasoning behind the drone strikes needed to be made clear and provided a specific rational that is aligned with both U.S. and international law. Finally, the Obama Administration can help alleviate the issue by understanding its role in historical context and provide a narrative consistent with democratic principles of civil engagement. However, in some cases, that time for engagement passed and alternative media
organizations provide another narrative for the public to understand about drone strikes. These divergent points illustrated how the Obama Administration and alternative media organizations painted a different picture on the issue of drone strikes.

*John Brennan*

The character of John Brennan offered none of the complexity of President Obama in the USA TODAY or NYT texts. In the alternative media depictions, John Brennan acted as the catalyst for war and lack of accountability from the government on the issue of drone strikes. The alternative accounts, especially from CODEPINK and the ACLU, casted Brennan in a negative light and allowed his position as both an advisor to the Obama Administration and in his new title as head of the CIA.

Much like the rest of the CODEPINK section, Brennan deserved not only a rhetorical focus but also a personal one. CODEPINK organized a vigil outside of his residence to raise awareness about his role in the use of drone strikes throughout the world. In CODEPINK’S approach, Brennan not only needed accountability in professional prose but also with direct action.

As President Obama is nominating John Brennan to head the CIA, CODEPINK will be outside the White House protesting his nomination. Some protesters will be in orange jumpsuits representing US policy of torturing prisoners and others will carry a large model drone. Both torture and drone strikes represent John Brennan's legacy. “It is tragic that the person who is responsible for the counterproductive, illegal drone strike strategy that has killed so many innocent people and unleashed such fierce anti-American sentiment around the world is
being tapped to head the CIA,” said CODEPINK cofounder Medea Benjamin.

“We condemn President Obama for making this nomination and call on the Senate to reject it” (Benjamin, 2013).

By performing both rhetorical strength and physical direct action, CODEPINK wanted the Obama Administration to understand that nominating John Brennan to a position like head of the CIA brings with it a responsibility to protect human life. CODEPINK saw Brennan as failing in that endeavor and took its message to the White House to protest his nomination. The character of John Brennan acted as the focal point in the power and lack of accountability that came from the Obama Administration as a whole. His symbolic character extended to the entire drone strike issue.

As a character, Brennan acted in much the same manner in the ACLU textual examples. The difference being primarily between the difference of the ACLU and CODEPINK as an alternative media producer. The ACLU focused on the legality of the drone strike policy and how best to bring transparency to that process. Brennan, as a character, acted as an inhibitor to that process.

For well over a year now, the ACLU has been urging the government to level with the public about the number of civilians that are being killed in its drone strike/targeted killing operations. The government has been tight-lipped — refusing even to confirm or deny the existence of any records relating to civilian casualties in CIA drone strikes. Last month, however, John Brennan, the White House top counterterrorism advisor broke this silence, telling reporters that "in the last year 'there hasn't been a single collateral death because of the exceptional proficiency, precision of the capabilities that we've been able to develop. 'In
response to queries from the Bureau, a senior official stood by Brennan's zero-
civilian casualties claim and insisted that "the most accurate information on
counter-terror operations resides with the U.S." The trouble is that U.S. refuses to
share its information — even basic information — with the public. Indeed, it is
absurd that senior government officials would claim that there have been no
civilian casualties in drone strikes in Pakistan and at the same time refuse to
confirm or deny the existence of civilian casualty data in response to the ACLU's
Freedom of Information Act request. (Manes, 2011)

Brennan’s status as the keeper of the government secrets showed the lack of credibility
not only he has on the issue of drone strikes but the Obama Administration as a whole.
The statement of no civilian casualties has been proven wrong not only by a number of
alternative media organizations but also by the Obama Administration itself in 2013 with
the release of a limited number of U.S. citizens killed by drone strike. Brennan’s painting
of an inaccurate picture of drone strikes caused alternative media producers to lose
respect for him, and the Obama Administration by proxy, and forced the ACLU to try
alternative democratic methods, such as filing lawsuits, to ascertain the truth about U.S.
drone strikes.

Amnesty International conducted its own study about the impact of drone strikes.
For this alternative media organization, Brennan represented a lack of explanation of who
are civilians and who are the militants or terrorists that the Obama Administration
targeted in these military operations. The lack of clarity led to more questions from
Amnesty International than answers.
President Barack Obama and other US officials have stated that the USA does not conduct a strike unless there is “near-certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured.” However, the USA has never described what post-strike investigation standards, protocols and mechanisms exist to systematically verify compliance with this policy standard. It has also failed to commit to conducting investigations into credible allegations of potentially unlawful deaths from Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) drone strikes, in line with its obligations under international law. CIA director John Brennan has stated that the USA tries “to determine whether there is any collateral damage, including civilian deaths” after strikes, and leaks by US officials suggest that the USA relies on drone video to identify the number of individuals killed and their identities. It is crucial that the US government not presumptively count the bodies of “military aged males” as combatants or individuals lawfully killed, as suggested by past statements from US officials.

Moreover, there are reports that the USA relies on information provided by local paid informants or the Pakistani government about deaths, but this is not sufficient to discharge its obligations under international law to investigate credible allegations of potentially unlawful deaths (“Will I Be Next, 2013).

Echoing similar sentiments to the ACLU, Amnesty International intended to find out how Brennan determined who is a civilian and who is a militant. Based on the information gained by Amnesty International, this pursuit may have led to violations under international law about who was lawfully targeted for death. By Brennan acting as a point of hubris for the “success” of drone strikes, Amnesty International refuted that claim by
asking straightforward but unanswered questions about whom the Obama Administration actually killed in these drone strikes.

Overall, Brennan as a character reflected an important representation for the hubris, lack of accountability, lack of transparency, lack of attention to international law and technological superiority of drone strikes that proliferated during his time as a both an advisor and member of the Obama Administration. Brennan wanted to establish the success of drone strikes; however, all of the alternative media organizations wanted more information from him and the Obama Administration to prove the actual points they transmitted to the public. By offering only some information about the drone strike policy without a clear reasoning behind the policy, John Brennan elicited skepticism, anger and fear from the alternative media producers.

Each of the characters produced a different response from the alternative media sources based on the social position of the character and the character’s perceived lack of accountability about drone strikes. John Brennan became the dominant character of derision by all alternative media organizations and acted as the emblem of both governmental inaction and the credibility of governmental discourse. These character depictions illustrated a rich depth to the alternative media discourse.

Action

The action category of the alternative media text about drone strikes provided a wide variety of actions that encompassed both governmental tactics and peaceful protest. More than any other narrative category, action provided the greatest discrepancy among all the different alternative media outlets. After examining all the different alternative
media text, I found two important actions that provided a pattern within the text. The two actions were the impact of drone strikes and actions against drone strikes, which included protests, marches, fasts etc. I analyzed each sub category in this section.

**Impact of drone strikes**

The impact of drone strikes were significant in all the alternative media sections.

However, HRW and Amnesty International provided the starkest examples of this impact. For example, HRW detailed not only how drone strikes impacted the people targeted for a specific attack but also how drone strikes created a sense of fear among the population as a whole.

The US has provided inadequate or inaccurate information regarding incidents in which large numbers of civilian casualties are reported, particularly aerial attacks involving US ground forces. While the U.S. provides minimal information on drone strikes by the U.S. military, it has refused to provide almost any details on drone attacks under CIA command, citing the need to respect the covert nature of the agency. In this climate, even one confirmed civilian casualty can sway public opinion against the U.S. Some Yemenis who did not take issue with the U.S. drone strike last September that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical Yemeni-American cleric whom the Obama Administration called an AQAP operative, remain furious over another U.S. airstrike a month later that killed Awlaki’s teenage son Abdulrahman, also a U.S. citizen. In particular, they point to the U.S. failure to officially acknowledge the boy died in a U.S. attack (Taylor, 2012).
The lack of transparency about drone strikes was obvious in this example. Conversely, the true impact of drone strikes came not from a particular attack but in the impact on “public opinion”. While a particular drone strike may not be of issue, the larger question became when the civilian population not targeted for a drone strike feels negatively toward the tactic. This change in “public opinion”, especially when concerned with Anwar Al-Awlaki, showed that the impact of drone strikes came not from the actual strike but the repercussions of those strikes for those that are living in the targeted settings.

Amnesty International wanted to convey the same message about drone strikes and the impact on the population not targeted for strikes. The tactics they use, however, differed from the tactics used by HRW in the above passage. Instead of broadening the discussion to include public opinion, Amnesty International instead crystallized the human impact of drone strikes down to one particular woman who died from a drone strike.

On a sunny afternoon in October 2012, 68-year-old Mamana Bibi is killed in a drone strike that appears to have been aimed directly at her. Her grandchildren recounted in painful detail to Amnesty International the moment when Mamana Bibi, who is gathering vegetables in the family fields in Ghundi Kala village, northwest Pakistan, is blasted into pieces before their eyes. Nearly a year later, Mamana Bibi’s family has yet to receive any acknowledgment that it is the US that killed her, let alone justice or compensation for her death (“Will I Be Next, 2013).
The language associated with the action was important when understanding the impact of drone strikes. First, using the age and title of the woman, 68 and grandmother, allowed Amnesty International to tell a human story that a good portion of its readers can identify with in their own lives. Second, the lack of accountability from the U.S. was presented as significant because of the lack of action on this particular case. The Obama Administration looked foolish in its drone strike policy because when they killed a 68-year-old grandmother, the family was not even considered for compensation. Finally, the imagery of the women being “blasted into pieces” attempted to clarify that drone strikes were powerful tools of war, not sanitized tactics of international combat. The impact of drone strikes killed human lives, even if those people were not the typical terrorist image.

The impact of drone strikes need not be only a specific strike or the fear surrounding those strikes. It can also be the lack of explanation of public officials on the topic. This silence provided significant information about how the Obama Administration feels this policy represents democratic principles. The ACLU gave its take in this example.

Editorial pages from around the country, including the USATODAY, Washington Times, and L.A. Times, have called for greater transparency, as has the Public Editor of the New York Times. The government must tell the public why it thinks it can order the deaths of U.S. citizens without going to court or otherwise ensuring due process of law. It is unacceptable for the government to hide behind claims of official secrecy when its actions are challenged, but then to leak carefully selected information to the press when it wants to rally support for its
actions. Our FOIA request joins the chorus of voices urging real transparency and
a full public debate (Wessler, 2011).

The ACLU moved the discussion from the battlefields of Yemen and Pakistan and
returned the discussion to the U.S. and the impact on U.S. society as a whole. The ACLU
stayed away from any specific human example and used the credibility of the mainstream
media to sell its message to the public. The drone strikes themselves were not the topic
for discussion in this example; instead, the discussion talked about how drone strikes
impacted U.S. society by providing a topic that the Obama Administration felt it needed
to be transparent about with the public. The culture of secrecy about drone strikes
attempted to sees the impact of drone strikes not as a military policy that killed
grandmothers but a threat to the very democratic principles that the U.S. government was
founded on over 200 years ago..

The impact of drone strikes was significant in many multifaceted ways. The
impact was on public opinion in Yemen, the life of a grandmother in Pakistan and the
lack of public accountability in the U.S. All these examples illustrated that the impact of
drone strikes moved well beyond the policy of war and moved into other human and
democratic forums.

Tactics against Drone Strikes Policy

Alternative media groups not only wanted to offer public criticism of drone
strikes; they also wanted to promote their own group in that process. CODEPINK, more
than any other alternative media group, crystallized that process down to specific and
directed action against the Obama Administration, and the corporations who work with
them, to attempt to end the policy of drone strikes. The tactics varied from protests, to marches, to fasts, to pilgrimages in the impacted settings. These tactics intended to confront the practice of drone strikes more so than any other previously stated action by the alternative media organizations.

The settings of these tactics of resistance are not constrained by locations of power. CODEPINK took its fight from Nevada, to Pakistan, to D.C. to the Democratic National Convention to the Republican National Convention. These non-partisan tactics were not an attempt to gain acceptance from the mainstream political parties; instead, CODEPINK wanted to show both its confrontational style of alternative media and its connection with other voices that questioned U.S. drone strike policy.

Members of Pox Christi USA, Foreign Policy in Focus, CODEPINK and other organizations, mock and protest the unmanned US drone attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan in Washington DC. The U.S. Thursday admitted the situation in Pakistani tribal areas is 'difficult and complex' as tensions with Islamabad escalated over US drone attacks on extremist. Over 200 radical pacifists from across the globe will swell the ranks of local activists because of the International Catholic Worker (CW) gathering in Las Vegas October 7 and 8. The CW gathering culminates with the anti-nuclear, anti-drone demonstrations which also mark the 10th tragic anniversary of the US invasion of Afghanistan. “We are at an important milestone with 10 years of occupation in Afghanistan (and 8 in Iraq), expending millions of our tax dollars on unmanned aerial vehicles which are responsible for thousands of civilian deaths. The wars have bankrupted our country. It's time to stop the deadly drone strikes,” states Nancy Mancias,
CODEPINK Ground the Drones campaigner. Jim Haber, Coordinator of Nevada Desert Experience which has a long history of peace activism in Nevada commented, “We are making connections to the Occupy Everywhere movement as well, but our prime focus is against war and killing as epitomized first by nuclear weapons and now drone assassins. Both rely on anti-democratic, secretive sites like these, the militarization of space, the desecration of ecosystems, and the swallowing of money that could otherwise be used to solve, rather than create social problems (“CODEPINK Mocks and Protests Unmanned US Drone Attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2010; CODEPINK Joins Largest Ever Anti-Drone and Anti-Nuclear Actions Sunday at NNSS and Creech AFB”, 2011).

This example exemplified the lack of agreement that CODEPINK had with the Obama Administration about the policy of drone strikes. CODEPINK wanted to broaden the discussion about drone strikes in a number of ways. First, the group showed its commitment to fighting drone strikes by focusing on a temporary endeavor and changed location based on political circumstances. CODEPINK traveled to different locations, both established locations of power and unknown locations in the desert, to confront the policy of drone strikes. Second, CODEPINK wanted to establish its connection to the other peace advocacy groups that are affiliated with ending the drone strikes. The community involved in the issue of speaking out against drone strikes was large through the perspective of CODEPINK. The group wanted to establish that point in its tactical choices.

However, CODEPINK wanted to establish a connection with divergent groups who speak out against drone strikes not only in actions of protest but also in actions of a
more traditional sense. CODEPINK organized one of the largest worldwide conferences that dealt with issue related to drone strikes. The intention of the conference had many different goals. However, one clear goal included the ability to connect with activist groups who speak out against drone strikes that may not engage with some of the direction action advocated by CODEPINK.

The peace group CODEPINK and the legal advocacy organizations Reprieve and the Center for Constitutional Rights are hosting the first international drone summit. On Saturday, April 28, we are bringing together human rights advocates, robotics technology experts, lawyers, journalists and activists for a summit to inform the American public about the widespread and rapidly expanding deployment of both lethal and surveillance drones, including drone use in the U.S.. Participants will also have the opportunity to listen to the personal stories of Pakistani drone-strike victims. (‘Drone Summit: Killing and Spying by Remote Control, 2012).

As illustrated earlier, CODEPINK wanted to establish its connection with a myriad of human rights groups who may feel uncomfortable with direct action. This conference not only allowed for the opportunity of divergent groups who focus on the topic of drone strikes to come together, it also broadened the discussion of the topic. When CODEPINK protested in front of the White House or in Nevada, robotics groups may not have a reason to participate. With a conference setting, CODEPINK showed the variety of tactical measures it took to confront the issue of drone strikes as a U.S. policy.

The action segment of the alternative media text showed not only the complicated issues involved with drone strikes but also the many divergent and connected functions
that alternative media engaged with on the issue. While the tactics may not always facilitate the most social change to the drone strike policy, each action sequence attempted to raise awareness about the drone strike that some alternative media groups see as an underreported issue from the mainstream media. Alternative media organizations intended to question both the silence and choices of the Obama Administration on the issue of drone strikes. The alternative media organizations saw their role as advocating for human rights, an issue these organizations thought the Obama Administration neglected concerning drone strikes. The action component of the narrative picture that emerged from the alternative media content produced the most resistant language and text that challenged the U.S. government’s official doctrine on drone strikes.

Focus

The types of alternative media used for this project had the greatest impact on this section of narrative construction in the findings from the alternative media text. In examining HRW, Amnesty International, the ACLU, and CODEPINK, the two main foci from these texts included the situation of human rights around the world and rules associated with drone strikes. The alternative media organizations, based on these texts, intended to find the truth behind any information presented to them from any organization, especially when that organization is a governmental organization. In addition, the alternative media organizations, as illustrated in the sections above, intended to determine not only the justification for the drone strikes but also the rules or legalities associated with those strikes. While some of the alternative media groups took action by filing their own lawsuit, the focus in this section had more to do with the existing
governmental laws that the Obama Administration used to perform drone strikes during the time period from 2009-2013.

*Human Rights in the World*

The alternative media groups used for this study, especially HRW, Amnesty International and the ACLU, focused the majority of their work on the issue of human rights. With that foci as an objective for their organization, the research and media they produced reflected that intended goal. For example, HRW did an analysis for human rights for many countries throughout the world. Here was an example of that work, associated with Pakistan, human rights and drone strikes in 2010.

The US remained Pakistan's most significant ally and is the largest donor to Pakistan's flood relief effort in 2010. However, as documented by Human Rights Watch throughout 2010, there are several instances where US aid to Pakistan appeared to contravene the Leahy Law. That law requires the US State Department to certify that no military unit receiving US aid is involved in gross human rights abuses, and when such abuses are found, they are to be thoroughly and properly investigated. In October the US sanctioned six units of the Pakistani military operating in the Swat valley under the Leahy Law even as it announced a US$2 billion military aid package for Pakistan to help the country meet unprecedented counterterrorism challenges (Rumi, 2011).

What this example articulated clearly was the complicated nexus in the relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan that detailed foreign aid, human rights and militarism. The U.S. wanted to show its paternalistic altruism by offering foreign aid to Pakistan.
However, that aid should be limited by human rights abuses set up by its own government. HRW was not completely convinced that the U.S. was following its own edicts when concerned with human rights. Finally, the U.S. had a military objective in Pakistan to eradicate terrorists. One tool they used against this problem was drone strikes. Another tool involves military aid to Pakistan to help fight terrorism with its own military. For that reason, the U.S. allocated a significant amount of money to the Pakistani military. All of these complicated factors indicated that the fight against terrorism impacted the acknowledgment of the importance of human rights in a setting such as Pakistan.

Amnesty International also saw the connection among divergent human rights issues and their connections to human rights. In this example, Amnesty International critiqued a variety of different groups that were a threat to human rights including the Taliban, the Pakistani government and the U.S. government.

On 9 October 2012, 15-year-old Malala Yousafzai is shot in the head by Taliban gunmen in Pakistan. Her crime is to advocate the right to education for girls. Her medium is a blog. Like Mohamed Bouazizi, whose act in 2010 sparked widespread protests across the Middle East and North Africa, Malala’s determination reached far beyond the borders of Pakistan? Human courage and suffering combined with the power of social media unbounded by borders has changed our understanding of the struggle for human rights, equality and justice, even as it has led to a perceptible shift in discourse around sovereignty and human rights. The USA, which continues to demonstrate a remarkable lack of respect for recognizing parameters – as evidenced by the drone strikes being carried out
around the world – has recently proclaimed the right to conduct surveillance of any information kept in cloud storage systems – digital filing cabinets that are not bound to territorial domains. To be clear, this includes information owned by individuals and companies that are not based in or citizens of the USA (“Human rights KNOW no borders,” 2013).

This passage emphasized the need for human rights to be part of a larger discourse of social inequality that involved feminism, social media and governmental law. The example of the arms trade showed the interconnectedness of the world along with the disconnection of the world when it relates to the larger issue of human rights. The connection to drone strikes was part of a larger narrative of surveillance and secrecy which does not focus on the dignity of the human person, a large component to understanding the larger issue of human rights. By focusing the discussion on one young girl from Pakistan, Amnesty International weaved together a focus for this narrative that united divergent acts against humanity and stated clearly how these acts attacked the basic human rights of all people.

The issue of human rights percolated across all of the alternative media groups in this study. As the human rights discourse connected these divergent groups together, the issue of drone strikes was central to the human rights discussion because of the lack of an understanding about the impact of drone strikes had on local populations from a human rights perspective. The issue was explained by the alternative media organizations through a lack of U.S. accountability, a promotional nexus to highlight the interests of alternative media groups and a chance to focus the narrative to include a broader worldwide discussion that could include the input of other sovereign governments. The
issue of human rights crossed time and place and the Obama administration’s policy on drone strikes needed to adhere to human rights according to these alternative media groups.

Rules and Legality of Drone Strikes

The alternative media groups in this study used the existing legal arguments given by the Obama Administration and attempted to understand how the government justified the drone strikes that continued as a foreign policy choice. The existing legal arguments and rules dealing with the U.S. government drone strikes motivated the alternative media groups for this study to take action and attempted to combat the dominant government narrative concerning drone strikes.

HRW, in many ways, acted as a somewhat understanding media organization that grasped the complexity of human rights, government policy and the possibility of terrorism. Conversely, HRW wanted the government to be more open and honest and provide more support for its drone strike argument.

Remarks by a US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) official suggesting the agency is not legally bound by the laws of war underscore the urgent need for the Obama Administration to transfer command of all aerial drone strikes to the armed forces, Human Rights Watch said today. “When the CIA general counsel says that the agency need only act in ‘a manner consistent’ with the ‘principles’ of international law, he is saying the laws of war aren’t really law at all,” said James Ross, legal and policy director at Human Rights Watch. “The Obama Administration should make it clear that there’s no ‘CIA exception’ for its
international legal obligations.” The US government’s refusal to acknowledge the CIA’s international legal obligations or provide information on strikes where there have been credible allegations of laws-of-war violations leaves little basis for determining whether the US is meeting its international legal obligations, Human Rights Watch said (“U.S.: Transfer CIA Drone Strikes to Military, 2012).

As indicated from this passage, HRW did not explicitly have a problem with the use of drone strikes. Instead, the group focused on implementation of drone strikes by the CIA and the legal reasoning behind those strikes. HRW connected the CIA as a clandestine operation that did not have the same international standards as the military with the issue of governmental accountability. Second, HRW saw the U.S. as not meeting the standards set by the international community regarding human rights law. HRW saw the legal rationale as not exclusively using the U.S. military to conduct drone strikes while castigating the Obama Administration for not following a recognized set of world standards when conducting drone strikes.

In May of 2013, when the Obama Administration finally talked publicly about the issue of drone strikes, HRW acknowledged the transfer of drone strikes from the CIA to the military as a positive sign. The group also suggested additional factors to consider when using drone strikes.

Human Rights Watch said that a reported plan to transfer the US targeted killing program from the Central Intelligence Agency to the Defense Department could make targeted killing operations more accountable and transparent to the public. Human Rights Watch warned that the military also needs to ensure that attacks are conducted in accordance with the requirements of international human rights
and humanitarian law. Human Rights Watch joined nine other human rights and civil liberties organizations in calling on President Obama to publicly disclose the Administration’s targeted killing standards and criteria and ensure any US lethal force operations comply with international law (“US: Policy Recommendations on Counterterrorism, 2013).

This example supported the Obama Administration past argument of military accountability echoed by HRW. However, HRW does not think the Obama Administration did enough to satisfy the legal and international criteria for justifying drone strikes. For that reason, HRW joined together with other groups to hope to persuade the Obama Administration to use a more significant act of transparency and adhere to international legal standards. These actions will show HRW that the Obama Administration is committed to providing a clear legal argument for the use of drone strikes.

The ACLU, the most legally focused of these alternative media groups in this study, used the law not only as a place to open up public discussion but they also responded to legal actions by the Obama Administration. This focus allowed for the ACLU to provide an in-depth critique of the legal decisions associated with drone strikes. The following example examined the justification for the death of Anwar Al-Awlaki.

Just before a midnight deadline on Wednesday, the government filed its legal brief responding to the ACLU’s Freedom of Information Act lawsuit seeking information about the legal and factual basis for the deaths of three U.S. citizens in targeted killing drone strikes last fall. Our initial reaction to the brief is here, but the government’s position is so remarkable that it warrants further comment.
They pointlessly acknowledged that the CIA has in its files copies of recent public speeches by Attorney General Eric Holder and the President’s chief counterterrorism advisor, John Brennan. And they acknowledged that they have identified other documents relevant to our request, but refuse to discuss what those documents are about or even how many there are. The government’s brief amounts to a total secrecy snow job. In every relevant respect, the government’s stonewalling continues. Although in public speeches and in the press government officials have repeatedly acknowledged the CIA and military targeted killing programs and discussed the U.S. responsibility for killing al-Awlaki, in court the government continues to cling to a patently implausible invocation of official secrecy. (Freed Wessler, 2012).

What this example represented was the ACLU’s position as an alternative media group whose expertise on issues of legal reasoning provided insight into the policy behind the drone strikes. The ACLU questioned the very argument that the government had not fully explained its justification for Al-Awlaki’s death and presented its dissatisfaction with the government’s inability to provide any transparency on the topic. The use of secrecy as a defense in this proposition was refuted by the ACLU. The alternative media organization wanted clear and concrete legal reasoning about the use of drones that killed al Awlaki. By providing such a blistering critique of the Obama Administration’s reasoning, the ACLU showed its stance as an organization that promoted its own interests but used its background on legal understanding to question the basic premise involved in a particular drone strike.
All of these examples showed that the legal reasoning behind the drone strikes was problematic in relation to these alternative media groups. The alternative media group saw some progress by the Obama Administration with small steps toward transparency and more influence from the military than from the CIA. However, the questions remained about the legal reasoning behind U.S. drone strikes agreeing with international law and how much the U.S. really wanted to make public the specific reasoning behind drone strikes. This lack of information led other alternative media groups to engage the community through protest actions. The legal reasoning behind the drone strikes was not good enough according to these alternative media organizations.

The alternative media content produced by the organizations in this study had a much clearer focus than the mainstream media outlets. First, the skepticism of each alternative media organization dominated the coverage on the issue of drone strikes. The content produced by these organizations reflected a pursuit of the truth that these alternative media organizations in this study felt was neglected by the Obama Administration. This type of focus showed both the alternative media organizations commitment to produce media content that promoted their own interests but also how the relationship between activism and media production synthesized on the issue of drone strikes.

Tone

The tone of the alternative media text for this study was substantially different from the mainstream media text. Many mainstream media texts focused on an indecipherable concept of objectivity. The alternative media organizations had no such standards and presented their arguments along with research they did and press releases
they shared with the public. For these reasons, the tone took on a much more critical and assertive approach than with mainstream media outlets. The critical and assertive tone dominated the alternative media coverage and organized not only a number of actions by these alternative media groups but guided their arguments against the current drone strike policy adopted by the Obama Administration.

*Military AND Assertive*

As illustrated earlier, the alternative media groups had no issue with providing a subjective understanding of their interpretation of both the Obama Administration’s discourse and other sovereign nations on drone strike policy and the frustration with the glacial pace that the Obama Administration decided on when talking publicly about drone strikes. This frustration led to some withering critiques that showed the exasperation from the alternative media groups about the lack of transparency and accountability on the policy of drone strikes.

HRW made this position very clear from its initial reporting on drone strikes. This critique established a standard for the type of alternative media coverage that the organization would provide. Their stance was clear and provided an example why HRW took this position.

There can be no more powerful symbol of the state than truly functional courts in Swat where Taliban ingress is a function of a legal vacuum in the first place. It is bewildering that a bullet in the back of the head is considered an effective counter-terrorism strategy. There are equally worrying but unverified reports from FATA. Even the US, no friend of the Taliban, finds the strategy unacceptable.
More importantly, the Leahy Law requires the US State Department to certify that no military unit receiving US aid is involved in gross human rights abuses and requires a thorough investigation when such abuses occur. In October, six units of the Pakistan Army operating in Swat are sanctioned under this law even as the US announced a US$2 billion military aid package for Pakistan. Unless the army rapidly holds accountable those within its ranks responsible for summary executions, it risks jeopardizing further aid. US law and internal political pressure will leave the Obama Administration little choice (Hasan, 2010).

What this example illustrated was that HRW not only focused on the Obama Administration when issuing a critique of drone strike policy. Pakistan, as a country, had a responsibility to end terrorism in its own country and that onus falls, at least in part, on the Pakistani government to end this problem. The U.S. played an important role because it provided such a large amount of aid to Pakistan and some of that aid was contingent on the work the Pakistani government did on human rights and terrorism. This excerpt showed that HRW had no particularly affinity for any government that did not exorcise the problem of terrorism while understanding the importance of human rights in the execution of law and justice.

Much like Amnesty International, CODEPINK provided its critique of the drone strike policy on a human level. By using people as the standard for evaluating the effectiveness of drone strikes, CODEPINK hoped its critique of this policy by the Obama Administration raised awareness from the international community.

Since the US provides no assistance to innocent victims, we are collecting funds for their rehabilitation, including prosthetic legs. One of the people we will help is
16-year-old Sadaullah, from North Waziristan, who lost an eye and both legs in an attack on his home. “I had a dream of becoming a doctor, but now I can't even walk to school,” said Sadaullah. Whose story is related in Medea's book Drone Warfare? We are trying to raise $5,000 to help the victims, so please consider making a donation. We will also be taking petitions to the US Embassy in Islamabad, so make sure you have signed. We would like to deliver 5,000 signatures to the Ambassador, and right now we have just under 2,000 (Benjamin & Wright, 2012).

What CODEPINK wanted from the world community was an understanding about the people whose lives have been ripped apart by drone strikes. Using the example of teenagers who have lost limbs from the execution of drone strikes brought that critique to their audience in a visceral and high critical manner. CODEPINK also wanted the international community to contribute to the livelihood of these people impacted by drone strikes because, from their perspective, the Obama Administration was not providing for these victims. By using its power as an alternative media organization, CODEPINK not only provided a critique of drone strikes but attempted to rectify the human fallout from this policy by raising money for these victims. Finally, CODEPINK performed these actions in a manner fit with its prerogative as an organization that promoted its own interests. CODEPINK was not putting the onus for raising money on another organization but instead used this platform as way to get its message to the public. The critique was framed through their location as an alternative media organization on the issue of drone strikes.
Overall, the tone from the alternative media organizations in this study showed a striking dissimilarity from the mainstream media organizations. First, the critiques provided by the alternative media organizations did not come from a specific resentment about the issue of drone strikes but instead a multifaceted argument that included a failure to acknowledge human rights, an exasperation with the lack of public information, the influence on commercial interests and the human cost of war. By taking a firm critical stance against the issue of drone strikes, either through material consequences or through lack of transparent discourse, each alternative media group in this study showed its critical stance on the policy of drone strikes.

*Intersections*

While reviewing the text from both USATODAY and The New York Times, several alternative media organizations emerged from those texts. In deciphering the importance of the relationship between mainstream media and alternative media, specific patterns emerged from these documents. These patterns represent overarching intersections about the depiction of alternative media by mainstream media in general and not each individual alternative media organization. First, mainstream media organizations used alternative media organizations as a source that confronted and challenged the information that mainstream media reported from governmental officials. In these examples, alternative media provided a counter narrative that challenged government depictions and information regarding drone strikes, especially when the government made assertions about civilian casualties and the legality of drone strikes, according to the U.S. Constitution. These examples did not dominate mainstream media the coverage of drone strikes. The second, and most common, intersection illustrated how similar
content connected both mainstream media and alternative media. Alternative media used similar mainstream media content to legitimize their work on drone strikes. The mainstream media adopted alternative media practices, indicating that while mainstream media did not overtly acknowledge alternative media, those media organizations legitimized the type of media accrued and produced by alternative media organizations. The third intersection included how both mainstream media and alternative media included sources from ordinary people, a dominant practice with alternative media but adopted for this discussion about drone strikes. The final intersection involved how alternative media intersected with each other on the topic of drone strikes while attempting to grow their revenue stream and brand. While alternative media organizations shared a vision on the topic of drone strikes, material realities forced alternative media organizations to consider how they might generate revenue and connect with the public through the growth of their brand on the issue of drone strikes.

In this section, I will first use Kenix’s work on the intersections between mainstream and alternative media. Second, I will detail each of the intersections I mentioned in the above paragraph. I will provide a brief introduction under each subheading. The unit of analysis for these intersections will be the narrative components I used to organize and decipher my findings from each of the media examples. Finally, I will include a summary of all of my intersection findings and answer my research questions.

*Kenix’s, Alternative Media and Mainstream Media Intersections*

The view of alternative media argued by Kenix (2011) provides substantial impact and insight into previous alternative media scholarship developed by Atton
(2002), Downing (2003), Lievrouw (2011) and Atkinson (2006). With the growth of alternative media, many more opportunities exist to contribute to the overall discourse about a social or political issue. This growth of alternative media can provide divergent voices about a particular subject. The professionalization of alternative media, borrowed in many ways from mainstream media, has improved the reporting of alternative media while opening up the number of resources that alternative media content producers focus on when they make their own content.

Kenix (2011) while not specifically disagreeing with Atton’s (2002) take on alternative media does focus on the fact that alternative media has always used mainstream media as means of difference when concerned with ideological approaches to information. Their resources in reporting information and specific connection to social movements have also limited alternative media. Mainstream media conversely reports from official sources through a professionalization of its reporters and influences a wider spectrum of society. The technological advances made in recent years have allowed mainstream and alternative media to overlap, creating less division between alternative and mainstream media.

While Kenix (2011) would not argue with Atton (2002) about the focus of alternative media, she would suggest that all media products exist in the capitalist market and share the most mundane economic challenges of survival. With these challenges facing both mainstream and alternative media, the audience becomes an essential factor in any media production. Kenix would argue with Atton regarding the idea that alternative media lacks hierarchies of access. With the advent of the Internet, some
alternative media sources access mainstream media content and then provide commentary on that content, abandoning the principles of production espoused by Atton.

I see this change as an enhancement to the alternative media tradition as defined by Atton. Kenix argues that more media groups have access to information. This type of access allows traditionally marginalized voices, coming from alternative media, the chance to comment on information previously unavailable to them. The discourse that develops from this media “discussion” can only add to the complexity of discourse around any number of social issues. Any exploration into the strength of a democracy hinges on the fact of a diverse number of ideas coming from all points on the political spectrum. Kenix would argue, at least with some alternative media sources, that not just alternative but mainstream media now provide some of these opportunities for critical thought.

Kenix (2011) details the relationship with the audience that alternative media needs for its own survival. Alternative media does not share the same ownership concerns and individual motivations that Downing (2003) details in his definition. Kenix sees the convergence of mainstream and alternative media through how information is gathered and how that professionalization of all media content has produced a homogenization of results. Mainstream media has a larger number of resources available to them in gathering information, and with the increased media convergence, these expanded resources have allowed investigative journalism to provide the type of content that Downing desires from alternative media content by challenging systems of power and political elites. Another example to help illustrate Kenix’s point develops out of the number of radical theatrical productions coming from mainstream movie studios. These
films have provided insight into government malfeasance and even the sacred cow of capitalism.

At first glance, Downing (2003) and Kenix (2011) seem to view alternative and mainstream media through very different theoretical and ideological lens. However, under closer examination, both authors want the media to function in the same way: a channel for people to have their voice heard about social issues affecting their community and as a check on systems of governmental and political power. Downing and Kenix want to accomplish that goal through very different means. Downing wants alternative media to go back to its roots of engaging the public and continuing to establish relationships with groups that challenge power on a grass roots level. Kenix argues that the same type of content can emerge from mainstream media channels and the resources available to mainstream media may actually allow that process to happen in a much quicker time period. I would argue that Kenix does not negate or enhance Downing’s approach to alternative media but instead a different path to the same critical content objective.

Kenix (2011) agrees with the need to involve ordinary people in the process of newsgathering and the importance of finding new ways to organize information for the public to consume. She disagrees with Lievrouw (2011) by challenging her assertion that mainstream media does not provide the same type of service to the news consumer. While historically reader input has been relegated to the editorial pages, mainstream media now produces content that coincides with many readers interest and encourages readers input on what mainstream media should focus on in the future. Early newspaper produced this type of public connection but that policy has largely been ignored over the
last 100 years. This new commitment to a public connection to the media being produced by mainstream news sources could in fact produce a higher degree of democracy and informed citizenry in contemporary U.S society. The fusion of mainstream media news coverage with opinion-laced critiques allows media content the chance to act as a fourth estate of factual information and a location that presents a reader’s insight into the social world.

In many of the same ways that Downing (2003) and Kenix (2011) arrive at the same ends from divergent means, Lievrouw (2011) and Kenix take a similar journey, with the focus being an engaged public that can produce media content and human insight into the best way to connect media and people together. Lievrouw wants the public to take ownership of this process and become the media by creating a substantial relationship with the public and using those sources of information to produce insights often marginalized by the mainstream media. Kenix has the same ultimate goal as Lievrouw but sees this type of citizen-engaged journalism as already happening at the mainstream level. At one point in history, mainstream media provided a voice to outside populations on a number of social issues and Kenix sees that process happening again, albeit perhaps from more of an individual than a group level. I could argue that Lievrouw provides more of an opportunity for the average citizen but in reality the aims of both Kenix and Lievrouw meet at the same location through alternative or mainstream media.

Kenix (2011) has both a fundamentally different approach to her studies on mainstream media than Atkinson (2010) does with alternative media while at the same time hitting on some of the same issues raised by Atkinson’s definition. Kenix sees how different alternative and mainstream are but raises important points as to how any media
agency accesses information. Alternative media relies on the same type of pack journalism that dominates mainstream media while at the same time acknowledging that mainstream media can provide social commentary insights in many of the same issues that alternative media does through its publication. The overlap between mainstream and alternative media is clear in this example: both mainstream and alternative media perform functions that a number of scholars have reserved for other. In other words, alternative media can produce high quality reporting while mainstream media can produce unique insights into social issues and problems.

Kenix uses Atkinson’s definition for a way to judge a study on political blogs. While Kenix acknowledges that her study does not strictly fall under Atkinson’s definition because the information came from non-commercial sources (Kenix, 2011). However, the critiques provided by the blogs did not advocate for a change in the power structure, just a change in the actors who run the power structure from Republican to Democratic. These bloggers did not offer a resistance narrative but instead reinforce dominant ideologies of power. These blogs also offer a larger platform for “alternative content” than had previously been available to alternative media publications, suggesting that a larger swath of the population can receive its message.

These examples illustrate how mainstream media works in many of the same ways as alternative media. First, one can produce alternative content and still use a mainstream channel on their platform. Second, interpretative strategies of audience have blurred, especially when a researcher considers that mainstream media outlets continue to use analysts from outside traditional media sources. Third, alternative production will always distance alternative media from mainstream media. While the production
technology available to alternative media has changed and allowed for growth, the platform provided by mainstream media will always reach larger audiences. Conversely, people who produce alternative media for their own platform will connect to the text in ways not possible through mainstream media channels. Atkinson provides perhaps the best theoretical example about the negation and enhancement of Kenix’s argument involving the overlap between alternative and mainstream media.

Overall, Kenix provides several challenging arguments to the distinction between mainstream media and alternative media. Atton and Atkinson’s argument about the importance of media production in the final product of alternative media still creates a distance between mainstream and alternative media while the overall aims espoused by Downing and Lievrouw echo the aims by Kenix, albeit from distinctively different channels. Alternative media and mainstream can both exist and even borrow from each other to create a media landscape that provides a conduit of information for an informed public.

While Kenix (2011) sees the intersection of mainstream and alternative media, she also examined the relationship between mainstream media and its capitalistic interests. Kenix argues that the frame used by the mainstream media in relation to visual identity has continued to be refined while reproducing the intended desires of commercialism and corporate interest. An alternative media example of this reality comes from an anarchist group that advocates for social change but does so through a website that does not deviate from the norm and provides the viewer images without confrontation. Based on this example, while the anarchist group may diverge from societal norms in terms of philosophy and action, their website reinforces public
expectations of website content through non-dramatic means. This example illustrates another way that groups who use alternative media can engage the public.

The Internet has established more of a horizontal pattern of hierarchy in terms of both media access and traditional flows of information. This new type of communication could allow the public a space to engage each other as to how different public view a particular issue and what meanings develop from those people. This opportunity, however, would most likely come from an alternative source and not the mainstream media (Kenix, 2011). While Kenix has established the overlap between mainstream media and alternative media, alternative media through the technological advances of the Internet, may in fact allow for groups to change dominant meanings through new communication channels and outreach.

Kenix (2011) sees an opportunity for democracy on a mainstream level in some of the ways articulated by Pickard (2006) and develops that point very clearly through how sources that make up mainstream media have changed during the last generation. The Internet has provided an opportunity for alternative media in new and exciting ways, yet that opportunity has largely resulted in personal fulfillment and not the continued evolution of social change. In fact, some alternative media sources have now viewed the Internet as a commercial source for revenue for items and information they once determined to be free (Kenix, 2011). Alternative media sites have even take the drastic steps of selling list serves of information to commercial entities, which often use the information for marketing purposes. This example illustrates the other end to the anarchist collective illustrated by Pickard.
Pickard (2006) outlines through very specific examples how the anarchist structure of Indy Media hinders its expansion and growth with the mainstream public. The directionless group often times struggles with finding its place as a social movement group. Kenix (2011) would argue that moving beyond the limitations of an anarchist collective and embracing the new technology and commercial opportunities that come with that may not in fact benefit an alternative media production. Both Pickard and Kenix depict in very obvious ways how the anarchist model for alternative media may be flawed and embracing the new technological advances that change the communication channels may also be flawed. The inability of the anarchist groups to connect to the public are only detrimental when compared with its alternative media brethren selling out their own members for commercial gain because a new revenue stream emerges in the Internet. Perhaps alternative media groups could reach a happy medium between hardcore anarchist principles that limit hierarchy and alternative media groups that use their own members as capital, echoing the commercial sentiments of mainstream media.

Kenix sees the inherent worth in the democratic tradition and the potential for that growth to explode with the overlapping of mainstream and alternative media. Kenix sees this process of understanding democracy through alternative media content as developing from the continued practices of citizen journalism, as outlined earlier in the alternative media format by Lievrouw (2011). The citizen can now move past the traditional sources of media content and find information from everyday people in new and exciting ways that the technological advances of the Internet has provided. The synthesis between mainstream and alternative media is very apparent in this type of citizen journalism as well. Both alternative media sources and mainstream media sources offer similar
opportunities for people to report on information that then transmits through either an alternative media channel or a mainstream media channel. Mainstream media outlets have given average people this opportunity at journalism and seen the results in a high number of submissions involving not only story ideas but also stories themselves (Kenix, 2011).

The overlapping of alternative media and mainstream media has provided the chance for democracy to grow through content made by and for citizens. Some problems with this rosy picture of democracy are that both mainstream and alternative media see the Internet as the location for this process to happen. People view the Internet as a place to send information but without a specific end of interactive communication (Kenix, 2011). People who produce citizen journalism content could put up the most committed text to ask for democratic participation; however, if the audience does not engage in that discussion, the impact on society is minimal. Citizen journalism for reasons including ordinary people initiative and user producer content can act as a channel for democracy in both alternative and mainstream media. The key for those media outlets remains how do those media outlets connect with the public at large, allowing for a democratic opportunity.

Kenix’s (2011) conceptualizes the overlapping of alternative media and mainstream media and provides a number of interesting and compelling insights. Alternative media groups can struggle with both the non-hierarchical limitations of anarchy and the commercial interests provided by new technological advances in communication systems that the Internet provides. Democracy, a complicated idea for any type of media source to engage with, can be helped by both mainstream and
alternative media if the public at large can connect to that media. Alternative and mainstream media will provide new sources of information in the future.

Intersection 1: Mainstream Media Using Alternative Media Actors

This section will focus on the intersections between mainstream media and alternative media in this study. I will define this intersection as mainstream media using alternative media actors as sources. These intersections privileged alternative media divergent voices that deviated from the governmental discourse that focused on the success of drone strikes. When I began this study, I predicted this intersection would dominate the coverage of drone strikes, especially toward the end of this study. Instead, this section permeated mainstream media coverage throughout the duration of the study without a dominant impact from alternative media actors at any specific time period. The mainstream media sources in this study used quotations from alternative media actors, primarily from Amnesty International and HRW, to provide a critique of drone strikes primarily based on two viewpoints: the amount of government secrecy about the program and the death of civilians in drone strikes not targeted for execution by the Obama administration. These quotations did not come from alternative media texts but instead came organically from mainstream media text production on the topic of drone strikes; however, these sources did appear in alternative media text production in other stories about drone strikes. The mainstream media used alternative media sources that primarily came from alternative media authorities that have a title or a career record on the issue of human rights. For that reason, the mainstream media and alternative media intersected clearly on the issue of human rights on the topic of drone strikes.
One example of this divergent voice came when USATODAY provided an article in 2013 about the impact of drone strikes on people that did not reflect international human rights norms. When USATODAY commented on that issue, the mainstream media source used a source from Amnesty International. This Amnesty International source not only reflected the growing animosity about human rights issues but the Obama administration’s lack of public accountability. This example also reflected the more acerbic narrative tone that percolated through the alternative media text about drone strikes in this study.

Human rights advocates were not satisfied with Holder's explanation. “The Obama administration continues to claim authority to kill virtually anyone anywhere in the world under the 'global battlefield' legal theory and a radical redefinition of the concept of imminence,” said Zeke Johnson, Amnesty International USA's director of Security with Human Rights. Dixon Osburn, director of Human Rights First's Law and Security Program, said the group was "deeply concerned that the administration appears to be institutionalizing a problematic targeted killing policy without public debate. “The American public deserves to know whether the administration is complying with the law,” he said. (Johnson, 2013).

This intersection example supported Kenix’s position on alternative media providing mainstream media with divergent voices. In this example, the divergent voice criticized the Obama administration not only for human rights, the main focus of Amnesty International, but also a lack of democratic accountability to the public. In addition, both character and setting were important narrative components in this example as well as
tune. With Obama being a significant character in the drone strike findings and the U.S. setting a privileged location for critique of U.S. policy, the critical voice from Amnesty International revealed who and where alternative media actors can critique U.S. governmental officials and will be acknowledged by mainstream media.

Another example of alternative media providing divergent voices and those voices appearing in mainstream media text in this study happened very early in the NYT coverage of drone strikes in 2009. The alternative media actor, again from Amnesty International, provided a counter example to the "precision" argument that came from NYT coverage in both the action and tone sections of narrative components.

About 80 missile attacks from drones in less than two years have killed "more than 400" enemy fighters, the official said, offering a number lower than most estimates but in the same range. His account of collateral damage, however, was strikingly lower than many unofficial counts: "We believe the number of civilian casualties is just over 20, and those were people who were either at the side of major terrorists or were at facilities used by terrorists.' That claim, which the official said reflected the Predators' ability to loiter over a target feeding video images for hours before and after a strike, is likely to come under scrutiny from human rights advocates. Tom Parker, policy director for counterterrorism at Amnesty International, said he found the estimate "unlikely," noting that reassessments of strikes in past wars had usually found civilian deaths undercounted. Mr. Parker said his group was uneasy about drone attacks anyway: "Anything that dehumanizes the process makes it easier to pull the trigger."

(Shane, 2009).
The use of divergent voices from the alternative media source, Amnesty International, revealed an early rejection of the concept that drone strikes kill fewer civilian that government accounts. This position by an actor from Amnesty International is contradictory to the NYT narrative components of action, which showed the immense technological power of drone strikes and the tone section, which illustrated examples of confidence from the U.S. military at the “victories” obtained by the use of drone strikes. The alternative media source used other information on civilian casualties and insight into the dehumanization of war that provided a different picture of the impact of drone strikes. This information challenged the dominant government position illustrated clearly in the NYT coverage of drone strike in both action and tone. This intersection again illustrated the importance of alternative media using divergent voices in mainstream media accounts of drone strikes.

In addition to divergent voices that intersected alternative media and mainstream media content in this study of drone strikes, another key component appeared in mainstream media texts from alternative media sources. The intersection of an alternative ideology from the alternative media organizations in this study provided mainstream media access to actors who challenged the government sources that dominated mainstream media in this study. I am defining alternative ideology in this study as a focus on human rights of all people and a transparent and accountable government that reflects that ideology. With alternative media freed from the shackles of market constraints, pop culture minutiae and strict concepts of news production, alternative media organizations produced media content that reflected this ideology throughout the course of this study. Alternative media organizations promulgated this ideology more overtly than mainstream
media organizations promulgate the importance of a traditional media ideology. This ideology appeared over 50 times in the alternative media coverage of drone strikes and appeared in the mainstream media text 10 times through the channel of alternative media actors used as sources. As illustrated earlier, these sources mainly came from alternative media organizations that had designated a person to comment directly on the issue of human rights. When alternative media organizations did not specify a person to perform this function, like CODEPINK, the mainstream media sources marginalized those alternative media sources and their alternative ideology.

One example of this alternative media ideology, from the NYT, used a former government official, now working for HRW, that both illustrated the reasoning behind drone strikes but also the alternative ideology that gave as much concern to civilian casualties as military objectives.

Despite threats of retaliation from Pakistani militants, senior administration officials said Monday that the U.S. intended to step up its use of drones to strike militants in Pakistan's tribal areas and might extend them to a different sanctuary deeper inside the country a senior Taliban leader vowed to unleash two suicide attacks a week like one on Saturday in Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, unless the Central Intelligence Agency stopped firing missiles at militants. Pakistani officials have expressed concerns that the missile strikes from remotely piloted aircraft fuel more violence in the country, and some U.S. officials say they are also concerned about some aspects of the drone strikes administration officials said the plan to intensify missile strikes underscored President Obama's goal to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat" Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Marc Garlasco, a
former military targeting official who now works for Human Rights Watch, the international advocacy group, said the drones had helped limit civilian casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq, where the Air Force uses them to attack people laying roadside bombs and to attack other insurgents but in trying to take advantage of what can be fleeting chances to kill top Taliban and Qaeda leaders in Pakistan, the C.I.A. faces a much more difficult task, especially if it follows the targets into more populated areas. "When you're operating under very short time frames, like the C.I.A. is in Pakistan, you are exponentially increasing the risk of killing noncombatants," Mr. Garlasco said. In Pakistan, the extensive missile strikes have been limited to the tribal areas, and authorities say they have killed 9 of the top 20 Qaeda leaders. U.S. Officials say the missile strike (Schmitt & Drew, 2009).

This example illustrated two important components of the intersection between mainstream media and alternative media. First, this example represented the alternative ideology approach in a mainstream media text excerpt. As indicated earlier, the alternative ideology preferred the impact of drone strikes on civilian casualties to a higher degree than military objectives dictated by the Obama administration to achieve foreign policy victories. While the example indicates that military objectives are being achieved, the use of time and its narrow parameters reflected a location for mainstream media to examine the fall out of drone strikes on the civilian population. In addition, the use of Mr. Garlasco reflected a use of alternative ideology because of his position as a source from the alternative media sphere. The interesting aspect of Mr. Garlasco’s point in this example was that drone strikes could be used in some theaters of combat but may not apply equally to every location of war. This concept challenged the idea that a drone
strike policy should remain the same in every military situation. Instead, Mr. Garlasco as a voice from the alternative media sphere, evaluated the effectiveness of drone strikes on a setting specific basis and examined a multitude of factors besides just military objectives about the use of drone strikes as a tool of foreign policy.

This example also illustrated the complexity of the intersection in the media coverage of the drone strike issue by providing credibility to an alternative media source. An interesting sub point from this example involved a mainstream media outlet using an alternative media source that use to be a governmental source. These sources not only provided clear information about drone strikes but played key roles in developing the narrative components for this study, including character, setting and tone. The NYT could have found this source more credible than another alternative media source because the source previously worked for the government. In this example, an alternative media organization, in this case HRW, used a former governmental source to provide insight into a deeper understanding of human rights. This intersection between mainstream media and alternative media provided support for the ideology of an alternative media source; however, that source had the added legitimacy of previously working for the government, a more traditional and historically supported means of information in the mainstream media.

As reflected in the tone section of the alternative media discourse on the topic of drone strikes, a clear critical stance emerged about not only the Obama administration’s policy on drone strikes but also in who constructed and enacted that policy throughout the world. One of the characters in this study took a large brunt of this critique: current CIA director John Brennan. Brennan, as a character, provided an opportunity for an
intersection between alternative media and mainstream media because of his stature in the security community. Both mainstream media and alternative media commented on his work in this study. Mainstream media, in this example from the NYT, also produced media content about Brennan, albeit with less of an acerbic tone in the construction of him as a character as a narrative component.

Last week, the debate over drone strikes broke out into plain view during the confirmation hearings for John O. Brennan, President Obama's choice to head the Central Intelligence Agency. Given that the program has been operating largely under the public radar, a question has been raised whether the news media have done their job in keeping the American public informed about this radically different approach to warfare. Some think not. In a report released last week by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy, Tara McKelvey, who has done her share of significant reporting on the issue, suggested that during Mr. Obama's first term, "the media fell short in its coverage" of the drone program. She applauded the increased attention to the issue, saying in a survey that coverage in five major media outlets had almost doubled since the start of that term, rising to 625 stories in 2012 from 326 in 2009 (Carr, 2013).

This intersection indicated that both alternative media and mainstream media continued to fall short in their coverage of drone strikes. However, the source from an alternative media organization and showed up in a NYT editorial about the shortcomings of that coverage. This alternative media source provided information to a mainstream media channels that critiqued not only the NYT but also all mainstream and alternative media organizations on the issue of drone strikes. This intersection also showed that the action
of drone strikes, a key component in the narrative analysis of this study grew in importance in the course of this study in both mainstream media and alternative media sources.

When I began this study, I hoped to find many clear intersections of mainstream media using alternative media in their content about drone strikes to illustrate the importance of alternative media to broaden the discussion about this important political issue. As I finished my study, I noticed that not as many intersection happened in this way as I had thought would happen when I began my study. However, based on these examples, mainstream media did use alternative media in their content about drone strikes. These examples did not happen in a high volume through the course of this study.

**Intersection 2: Access to Similar Content Information Intersection**

In this section, I will illustrate the overlapping of access to content information in both mainstream media and alternative media on the issue of drone strikes. As illustrated clearly in their critique of the Obama administration’s policy on drone strikes, the alternative media organizations in this study reacted with frustration and bursts of anger about the lack of information made available to the public about the topic of drone strikes. Some of this information included, precise number of civilian casualties during a particular drone strike, how the government constructed the definition of the term militant, the clear legal justification for the use of drone strikes and possible explanations for when drone strikes killed the unintended target, leaving entire families with questions about the death of their loved ones. Mainstream media also struggled with this access to content information in this study. While not as frustrated or angry as the alternation
media organizations in this study, mainstream media text did reflect an acknowledgment about the lack of information about drone strikes.

This intersection existed without a clear overlap of mainstream media using alternative media sources or content and vice versa. This intersection of access to similar content information also acted as a legitimizing force for alternative media to show the importance of its work has crossed over into mainstream media, providing a credibility aspect on the issue of drone strikes. This intersection connected to Kenix’s work from her position that both mainstream media and alternative, albeit from different channels and different approaches to the craft of media production, can provide a conduit for information to an informed public to develop a clear democratic and informed citizenry. Both mainstream media and alternative media provided examples that chafed at the amount of secrecy about the drone strike program, denying the public important information into the nature and scope of the drone strike program.

The intersections that emerged from both mainstream media and alternative media on the issue of drone strikes were not in the crossover of information between the two media sources but instead in the similar content that both media entities produced. One example from the alternative media content in this study that produced narrative components of focus and tone was an article that questioned the very existence of the drone strike program and its use by the Obama administration. That example came from Amnesty International.

Earlier, on 6 July 2012, 18 male laborers, including at least one boy, are killed in a series of US drone strikes in the remote village of Zowi Sidgi. Missiles first struck a tent in which some men had gathered for an evening meal after a hard
day’s work, and then struck those who came to help the injured from the first strike. Witnesses described a macabre scene of body parts and blood, panic and terror, as US drones continued to hover overhead. The use of pilotless aircraft, commonly referred to as drones, for surveillance and so-called. Targeted killings by the USA have fast become one of the most controversial human rights issues in the world. In no place is this more apparent than in Pakistan. Amnesty International calls on the USA to comply with its obligations under international law to ensure thorough, impartial, and independent investigations are conducted into the killings documented in this report. The USA should make public information it has about all drone strikes carried out in Pakistan. The US authorities should investigate all reports of civilian casualties from drone strikes. (“Will I Be Next? 2013)

This example clearly illustrated Amnesty International’s goal of critiquing the impact of a drone strikes on one specific person. This excerpt also clearly reflected Kenix’s work about alternative media producers distributing alternative content that reflected its mission as an alternative media organization. No examples emerged in this study that produced intersections of mainstream and alternative media about the death of one particular person from one particular drone strike. However, the critique of the dominant political institution in the country, the presidency, intersected in both organizations coverage of drone strikes. The intersection happened in parallel coverage but not perpendicular intersections of mainstream media and alternative text I examined in this study.
Another example of a content similarity intersection was the intersection between mainstream media and alternative media on the issue of drone strikes focused on the lack of both alternative and mainstream media to verify information about specific drone strikes. This lack of information also provided less depth in the depiction of the setting where drone strikes happened in both mainstream media and alternative media content in this study. One example of this intersection involved how drone strikes provided an apparent end to U.S soldier involvement in international conflicts. However, in a media sense, the reality of an unpredictable terrain and potentially dangerous location limited both alternative media organizations and mainstream media organizations. This example from USATODAY illustrated that point here.

Drones offer the tantalizing possibility of cleanly and quickly taking out a few dozen of America's worst enemies. In reality, the lure of drone technology has drawn us into messy conflict zones in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia, where we have conducted about 400 strikes and killed more than 3,000 people. We wage this drone war secretly, through the CIA and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), because the Pakistani and Yemeni governments have at times feared that their citizens would oppose open U.S. involvement. The CIA and JSOC, built for one-off shadow operations rather than for long-term military campaigns, refuse this duty. They do not publicly admit to any role in drone strikes. They refuse to respond to reports that some strikes are wrong-headed -- targeting men who oppose the local government but who do not threaten the U.S. Nor do they acknowledge credible reports that mistakes have been made -- killing innocent men, women and children who were in the wrong place, at the wrong time.
Indeed, with only a few U.S. boots on the ground, we might not truly know whom we are killing. Reliant on the intelligence of the Pakistani and Yemeni governments, we might not know whether drone strikes truly serve our interests, or merely theirs. (Shah, 2013).

This excerpt illustrated as much about the unknown related to drone strikes as the actual known information. Neither mainstream media nor alternative media could hurdle these impediments, providing an intersection of uncertainty that connect each media source. The lack of information also provided less depth to the setting depiction in the narrative components in this study in both alternative media and mainstream media.

While Kenix offered technology as a panacea and a possible location for an intersection on the reporting of information between mainstream and alternative media sources, the drone strike issue complicated that conclusion by showing the dangers of technology, the dehumanization of life, and the unknown context when the Obama administration uses drone strikes. All of these similar content concepts, to a certain degree, appeared in both mainstream media and alternative media without a clear overlap between the two media sources. The similar content in this example about drone strikes in both alternative media and mainstream media illustrated the complicated newsgathering process for mainstream media sources and alternative media sources by illustrating the lack of government accountability on the policy. This information created media content, such as this example from the ACLU, where no clear characters emerged to depict accurately who drove the action in the narrative construction about drone strikes.
Today, in an article entitled "We don't need no stinking authority," The Economist's "Democracy in America" blog points out that drone-launched missile strikes on al-Qaeda targets in Pakistan have never been voted on by Congress and that in the ongoing debate about drone strikes, there has been relatively little discussion about where the authority for these strikes come from. We are troubled by reports that the Obama Administration has stepped up the drone program without explaining publicly what the legal basis for the program is, what limitations it recognizes on who can be targeted and where strikes can occur, and what the civilian casualty toll has been thus far. We believe that the American public has a right to know whether the drone program is consistent with international law, and that all efforts are made to minimize the loss of innocent lives (Khaki, 2010).

While the *Economist* was not a mainstream media source for this study, the ACLU used its content as a channel to illustrate the lack of public knowledge and input on the issue of drone strikes. This intersection showed how mainstream media and alternative media both suffered from the lack of transparency on the issue of drone strikes throughout the duration of this study. The use of this mainstream source also expanded the discussion from the ACLU to encompass democratic principles of law and the value of human life. The ACLU, in this example, reflected Kenix’s work on the use of online access by both mainstream and alternative media to broaden the criticism about drone strikes, an important intersection in this study. For these reasons, while not overlapping in coverage, both mainstream media and alternative media produced similar content about drone
strikes, providing a clear intersection and the ACLU used The Economist to legitimize its content.

Another clear intersection of alternative media and mainstream media content similarity came when an alternative media, much like the previous example, used mainstream media work to emphasize its critique of drone strikes. In this example, HRW wanted to illustrate the continuation of civilian death from drone strikes. HRW used the Washington Post as support to illustrate their position that government officials did not report on civilian casualties associated with drone strikes. While the setting is clear in this example, the construction of narrative again is limited by the use of unnamed officials, limiting the character development to analyze the media narrative about drone strikes.

Quoting unnamed Yemeni officials, local and international media initially described the victims of the Sept. 2 airstrike in al-Bayda governorate as al Qaeda militants. After relatives of the victims threatened to bring the charred bodies to the president, Yemen's official news agency issued a brief statement admitting the awful truth: The strike is an "accident" that killed 12 civilians. Three are children. Nearly four months later, that terse admission remains the only official word on the botched attack. A Washington Post article, published on Dec. 24, reports that "U.S. officials in Washington, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter, said it is a Defense Department aircraft, either a drone or a fixed-wing airplane, that fired" on the vehicle. But the people of al-Bayda still have received no official word as to who is responsible for the deaths - - the U.S., which in the past year has accelerated its covert targeted-killing program against Yemeni-based al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; or the Yemeni
government, whose new president, Abd al-Rab Mansur al-Hadi, is installed with Washington's help. (Taylor, 2012)

This intersection showed how the mainstream media was used to legitimize an alternative media point on the issue of drone strikes. This intersection, depicted not in the mainstream media text but in the alternative media text, showed that the intersections of mainstream media and alternative media not only happened in the mainstream media text but also in the alternative media text. This process also developed a clear setting, adding additional credibility and support for the argument that alternative media provided a media place of critique of U.S. drone strike policy using specific narrative components.

CODEPINK used the mainstream media not only to legitimize its work but also to show their growing influence on media content through the reporting from mainstream media sites. CODEPINK became a character in their own narrative about drone strikes hoping to unite the settings of Pakistan, Yemen and the U.S. in an effort to raise awareness about the horror of drone strikes.

CODEPINK activists are in the streets at the Democratic Convention calling for significant economic reform, an end to US wars, and money out of politics.

CODEPINK has already managed to make waves in the news; from Tighe Barry of CODEPINK DC featured in a New York Magazine article, to Jodie Evans of CODEPINK LA being quoted in a piece by the Atlantic, and Politico dubbing our Make Out Not War stickers as "ubiquitous". CODEPINK created a splash at the RNC with its bold actions both inside and outside the Convention Center, and will do the same at the DNC. "Both the Republicans and Democrats are war-addicted parties, continuing to pour money into the bloated Pentagon budget instead of
addressing people's real needs," said co-director Medea Benjamin. "We'll be on the streets, loudly and boldly protesting the ongoing war in Afghanistan, killer drone strikes and a potential war on Iran.” (CODEPINK actions at the DNC, 2012).

In this example, CODEPINK reported on its effort at the Democratic National Convention by showing its impact in mainstream media content. This example also illustrated the dominant pattern of the intersection between mainstream media and alternative media in this study on drone strikes. Some of the alternative media organizations in this study cited their impact on mainstream media without the same reciprocation from mainstream media sites.

As illustrated in the introduction to this study, Kenix saw the importance of an informed public about governmental programs through the channel of both mainstream media and alternative media. In this section, mainstream media and alternative media struggled to inform the public about this issue of drone strikes based on the lack of content information about the government program. The ACLU used the NYT as a means of support for its work to help alert the public to the lack of democracy from the Obama administration on the issue of drone strikes. This excerpt below provided a clear focus as a narrative component in the construction of the narrative about drone strikes by examining how the use of mainstream media sources legitimizes alternative media content on the issue of drone strikes.

Editorial pages from around the country, including the Washington Post, Washington Times, and L.A. Times, have called for greater transparency, as has the Public Editor of the New York Times. The government must tell the public
why it thinks it can order the deaths of U.S. citizens without going to court or otherwise ensuring due process of law. It is unacceptable for the government to hide behind claims of official secrecy when its actions are challenged, but then to leak carefully selected information to the press when it wants to rally support for its actions. Our FOIA request joins the chorus of voices urging real transparency and a full public debate (Wessler, 2011).

As this example illustrated, the ACLU reflected the words of the NYT in its action of filing a FOIA to help broaden the discussion about the importance of drone strike. This example, however, came from the alternative media text and not the mainstream media text. This finding articulated clearly that alternative media looked for intersections from mainstream media to help legitimize its critical stance on the issue of drone strikes.

Another example of limited access to information came from Amnesty International. This alternative media organization hoped to understand the legal rationale the Obama administration used for the justification of drone strikes. However, the access of information again proved difficult on the topic of drone strikes. As a character, Obama acted as the gatekeeper of information that stunted coverage from any type of media organization whether alternative media or mainstream media.

A series of speeches over the past two years by officials from the Administration of President Barack Obama, and an article published in the New York Times on 29 May 2012, have Revealed some details of the purported legal rationale for current policies and practices of the U.S. of America (USA) in the deliberate killing of terrorism suspects, including far from any recognized battlefield, and particularly through the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (popularly known as
drones). Unlike torture, which is absolutely prohibited in all circumstances, intentional killing by the state can sometimes be justified under international law, both in situations of armed conflict and in law enforcement situations. However, as will be explained below, based on what officials from the Administration have stated publicly, and what has been reliably reported by news media, current US policy and practices for the intentional use of lethal force against terrorism suspects and other people who happen to be near such suspects appear to go far beyond what international human rights law permits. In Yemen between 2002 and 2012, there have been between 44 and 54 confirmed US operations (including 31 to 41 drone strikes); with a possible further 87 to 96 operations (including 49 to 55 drone strikes). The total number reported killed is between 317 and 826 people. All but one of these operations are carried out under the Obama Administration. As with the Bush Administration’s approach to torture, the Obama Administration’s approach to deliberate killings of terrorism suspects relies to a significant extent on the unilateral redefinition of established legal concepts in radical ways, with key details kept secret. (U.S. of America: ‘Targeted killing’ policies violate the right to life,” 2012).

What this example illustrated was that even when the Obama administration reported on information from governmental sources and used information from mainstream media sources to examine the issue of drone strikes, Amnesty International still wanted more access to the details of information about legal concepts behind drone strikes. This access would allow for a deeper more meaningful and democratic discussion about the merits of drone strikes as a foreign policy choice.
Even though alternative media organizations have reported on the issue of drone strikes, the access to information, for both mainstream media and alternative media organizations, remained cloaked in secrecy. This discourse came from the intersection of alternative media reporting on mainstream media accounts of drone strikes instead of mainstream media using alternative media sources in their media content.

Another example of the limited access of information on drone strikes to both mainstream media and alternative media involved how the ACLU used a comparison between the corporations APPLE to the NYT as another gatekeeper of information. This analogy involved APPLE refusing to give access to a group wanting APPLE to use an app for its IPHONE that acted as a shortcut to information about drone strikes.

Wired reported last week that the Apple App Store has rejected an app that compiles news reports in order to map overseas U.S. drone strikes, and provide users a pop-up notification whenever a drone strike has been reported. Apple rejected the app several times, at first citing problems with its functionality, and then telling the developer that the app “contains content that many audiences would find objectionable.” U.S. drone strikes have become a highly controversial issue, with critics saying that the strikes are counterproductive and immoral (and the ACLU taking issue with the legality of some of the strikes). The issue has emerged as one of the hottest foreign policy issues of our time. Of course, Apple is a private company not covered by the First Amendment, and the App Store is not a public forum. In fact, Apple is arguably like the New York Times, with a right to pick and choose what it “publishes.” When you’re the gatekeeper, of course, you get criticized not only for what you block, but what you allow. But
the problem with censorship—public or private—is that it’s devilishly difficult to administer consistently. A company like Apple, once it decides to become a gatekeeper, should not be surprised to quickly find itself in a morass—not only the morass of “junk” in its slush pile, but a political morass as it gets drawn into various passionate debates, and a public relations morass as its judgments are ridiculed (Stanley, 2012).

What this example illustrated was the limited access to information that the public has not only from the government but also from corporations about the issue of drone strikes. By comparing APPLE to a highly valued news source, the NYT, the ACLU concluded that any limitation on the access of information, either from a corporate or a governmental source, hurt the democratic process about the issue of drone strikes. The intersection of mainstream media and alternative media relies upon the free flow of information, regardless of the source of information.

In addition, the setting holds great value for the construction of the narrative about drone strikes that emerged from both mainstream media and alternative media. The U.S. setting stood as the exemplar for the free flow of information to the settings of the Muslim Majority country settings where drone strikes actually happened. However, based on this example, the U.S. setting provided no media panaceas of hope on the issue of drone strikes from a narrative perspective. Finally, the intersection of this information again came from the alternative media text and not the mainstream media text, indicated that alternative media text needed mainstream media text to legitimize its critical work on the issue of drone strikes.
One example from the NYT that involved how that media organization covered a drone strike was in the example below that refuted the contention that a capitalistic news source only focuses on information for its economic gain while supporting the dominant political position. Instead, this article, from a news report, illustrated some of the shortcoming of the Obama administration on the issue of drone strikes. The narrative components in this example illustrate the importance of the character of Obama and prioritize the U.S. as an important setting.

Mr. Obama could not be very specific about his Pakistan strategy, his advisers conceded on Monday evening. U.S. Operations there are classified, most run by the Central Intelligence Agency. Any overt U.S. Presence would only fuel anti-U.S. ism in a country that reacts sharply to every missile strike against extremists that kills civilians as well, and that fears the U.S. is plotting to run its government and seize its nuclear weapons. Yet quietly, Mr. Obama has authorized an expansion of the war in Pakistan as well -- if only he can get a weak, divided, suspicious Pakistani government to agree to the terms. In recent months, in addition to providing White House officials with classified assessments about Afghanistan, the C.I.A. delivered a plan for widening the campaign of strikes against militants by drone aircraft in Pakistan, sending additional spies there and securing a White House commitment to bulk up the C.I.A.’s budget for operations inside the country. The expanded operations could include drone strikes in the southern province of Baluchistan, where senior Afghan Taliban leaders are believed to be hiding, officials said. It is from there that they direct many of the
attacks on U.S. troops, attacks that are likely to increase as more U.S. s pour into Afghanistan (Sanger & Schmitt, 2009).

This example, while not overtly taking a political position, did examine the U.S. burgeoning war in Pakistan, a war that primarily works through the military tactic of drone strikes and under a government understood public disclosure of silence on the issue of drone strikes. While capitalistic gain could be accrued from selling this story from the NYT exclusively, the information could be interpreted as critical to the dominant political ideology in the U.S., a position not illustrated by Kenix. This study illustrated where that critique of dominant political institutions does happen about the issue of drone strikes in some examples of mainstream media text and how those texts construct a clear narrative using characters and settings. This example of critical content produced by mainstream media illustrated the similar content intersection between mainstream media and alternative media. In addition, while not an overt legitimization, this critical example showed how mainstream media can adopt alternative media policies in their depiction of drone strikes.

As illustrated clearly in this section, the point of intersection between mainstream media and alternative media happened with similar content production. Both mainstream media outlets in this study about drone strikes, but primarily the NYT, produced content that also raised the same issues as the alternative media sphere: the impact on civilians not intended for target and government secrecy about the drone strike program. The construction of these narrative components also intersected in both mainstream media and alternative media, including setting and characters. This example from the NYT illustrated that point clearly.
Drone-fired missiles struck a convoy of cars returning from a wedding on Thursday afternoon in a remote area of Yemen, witnesses said, killing at least 11 people in what appeared to be the second American drone strike in the past week. Most of the dead appeared to be people suspected of being militants linked to Al Qaeda, according to tribal leaders in the area, but there were also reports that several civilians had been killed. The violence also sharpens a dilemma for President Obama, who said in May that he had approved new, stricter guidelines for drone strikes, and promised to make the drone campaign more transparent. After the president's speech, the frequency of drone strikes in Yemen briefly dipped (Worth, 2013).

This example illustrated the content from a mainstream media corporation that challenged the traditional government position that drone strikes produced few civilian casualties. In this example, civilians died as part of a wedding procession, an example of how drone strike target militants but could cause civilian death. In this example, the intersection between mainstream media and alternative media did intersect at points of content that emphasized the loss of civilian life from drone strikes.

The NYT also produced content that reflected the other core content that alternative media producers focused on in their drone strike coverage: government secrecy. The setting was key in the narrative construction as well in this example. Yemen was portrayed in a very different way than the U.S. setting. In addition, while President Obama did not comment on this particular drone strike, the importance of himself as a character in this narrative stood out clearly.
Moreover, the president said in May, no strike can be authorized without "near certainty that no civilians will be killed or injured" -- a bar he described as "the highest standard we can set." At the time, administration officials said that authority over the bulk of drone strikes would gradually shift to the Pentagon from the C.I.A., a move officials said was intended partly to lift the shroud of secrecy from the targeted killing program. But nearly seven months later, the C.I.A. still carries out a majority of drone strikes in Yemen, with the remote-controlled aircraft taking off from a base in the southern desert of Saudi Arabia. The Pentagon strikes, usually launched from the Djibouti base, are cloaked in as much secrecy as those carried out by the C.I.A (Mazzetti & Worth, 2013).

While this example also articulated clearly the importance of civilian life in mainstream media coverage, the secrecy that the Obama administration continued to conduct about drone strikes adds significant importance to this coverage. This illustration supports the type of coverage that Kenix suggested that alternative media could provide on a political issue but could be used in mainstream media depictions. This example illustrated an individual story that challenged dominant government narratives and added a critique to media coverage. These depictions transpired in this study from both mainstream and alternative media sources on the issue of drone strikes. By adopting these practices, mainstream media, again not overtly, but did legitimize the work of alternative media producers. Critical coverage of drone strikes did take place from both mainstream and alternative media on the Obama administration’s policy on drone strikes.

As illustrated clearly in the above examples alternative media organizations produced similar content to mainstream media corporations. Another similarity in this
study reflected the production of news from both mainstream media and alternative media on the topic of drone strikes. While mainstream media produced content as an accepted norm in the news gathering process, alternative media organizations in this study mimicked those processes to produce content that echoed similar components with mainstream media.

Both HRW and Amnesty International conducted their own studies about drone strikes that produced narrative components that shaped the drone strike story through the distribution of their media. These alternative media organizations made this information public through press releases, content on their websites and more traditional news stories. The ACLU also produced its own content using press releases and more traditional new stories. CODEPINK produced content that indicated a point of advocacy to either raise awareness about drone strikes or to end the practice of drone strikes.

HRW used an example of a traditional news story in an article released on its website about the lack of access information about drone strikes that emerged from the Obama administration.

The US has provided inadequate or inaccurate information regarding incidents in which large numbers of civilian casualties are reported, particularly aerial attacks involving US ground forces. While the U.S. provides minimal information on drone strikes by the U.S. military, it has refused to provide almost any details on drone attacks under CIA command, citing the need to respect the covert nature of the agency. In this climate, even one confirmed civilian casualty can sway public opinion against the U.S. Some Yemenis who did not take issue with the U.S. drone strike last September that killed Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical Yemeni-
American cleric whom the Obama Administration called an AQAP operative, remain furious over another U.S. airstrike a month later that killed Awlaki’s teenage son Abdulrahman, also a U.S. citizen. In particular, they point to the U.S. failure to officially acknowledge the boy died in a U.S. attack (Taylor, 2012).

This example showed the type of alternative media product produced by HRW. The article read as a news story with several opinion laced statements that condemn drone strikes. This example articulated clearly how alternative media groups produced alternative content on the issue of drone strikes and created their own narrative using the same narrative components as mainstream media. These types of stories, with similar content, emerged in the mainstream media text as well.

Overall, the intersection of access to similar content information provided the clearest intersection between mainstream media and alternative media in the course of this study. Alternative media used mainstream media to legitimize its work while mainstream media, covertly, produced critical content that echoed the sentiments of alternative media coverage of drone strikes. This similarity, while not a clear overlap as the previous section, did allow for an intersection to emerge from both mainstream media and alternative media in a parallel manner of content instead of a perpendicular crossover.

**Intersection 3: Ordinary People as Sources**

In this section, ordinary people dominated the discussion about drone strikes in both mainstream media and alternative media. These depictions transpired in much the same manner as the previous intersection; while both mainstream media and alternative media detailed these depictions, no overlap happened in specific news stories or was
acknowledged by each media source in this study. The intersections of using ordinary people as sources did not happen in an overlap fashion, as illustrated in the first intersection example. Instead, using ordinary people as sources reflected a clear content overlap between mainstream media and alternative media. For that reason, this intersection shared more commonalities with the second content information intersection. In her work, Kenix, and Lievrouw, espoused the importance of citizen journalism to convey the clear connection between the public and media through the work of ordinary citizens to both construct and report on information from the public sphere. This study reflected Kenix’s position on the importance of citizen journalism through the prism of an existing media structure. While alternative media organizations used citizens as sources more so than mainstream media texts, both groups used citizen journalists to provide depth to the narrative about drone strikes by depicting the lived experiences of those who lived under both the threat and reality of drone strikes. In this intersection, ordinary people do not construct the news content or provide the channel directly to the public but instead shared their stories through an existing media apparatus. I observed this intersection primarily in the NYT of the mainstream media texts in this study. The NYT provided 21 examples of ordinary people as content providers on the topic of drone strikes. From the alternative media sources in this study, each organization used ordinary people as content providers in this study, with Amnesty International producing the most first person accounts with 9 and the ACLU using ordinary people as enhancing their position against government secrecy and civilian casualties in 8 of their media content examples.
The use of ordinary people in drone strike impacted settings popped up in the NYT coverage of drone strikes. In this example, from the NYT, local sources rebuked the military officials’ assessment of civilian casualties of drone strikes. In relation to narrative, the setting played a key role in this study of drone strike both in the narrative development of the findings but also in the depiction of the impact of drone strikes on different locations. The role of U.S. government in drone strikes also played a key part in the focus of the narrative in this study. This excerpt reflected both of these narrative components in a mainstream media excerpt about civilian deaths, a key point in much of the alternative media literature as well.

Military commanders and intelligence officials point out that drone attacks have disrupted terrorist networks in Pakistan, killing key leaders and hampering operations. Drone attacks create a sense of insecurity among militants and constrain their interactions with suspected informers. And, because they kill remotely, drone strikes avoid American casualties the drone war has created a siege mentality among Pakistani civilians. While violent extremists may be unpopular, for a frightened population they seem less ominous than a faceless enemy that wages war from afar and often kills more civilians than militants. Press reports suggest that over the last three years drone strikes have killed about 14 terrorist leaders. But, according to Pakistani sources, they have also killed some 700 civilians. This is 50 civilians for every militant killed, a hit rate of 2 percent -- hardly "precision." (Kilcullen, McDonald Exum, 2009).

In this example from the NYT, Pakistani sources indicated that the problem of drone strikes impacted the setting of Pakistan and the civilians that lived there in many direct
and profound ways. By having a local source to provide another version of the drone strike story, the NYT showed how a mainstream media source could provide ordinary people as sources and gave them the same credibility as military or governmental sources on the issue of drone strike. The use of ordinary people dominated much of the alternative media text and depictions of drone strikes, indicating that the use of ordinary, local people in the setting of drone strikes reflected a key intersection between mainstream media and alternative media of similar content. In addition, when mainstream media used these sources, it legitimized alternative media by acknowledging the importance of their newsgathering process about drone strikes.

As illustrated in the paragraph above, both alternative media organizations and mainstream media corporations used actual depictions from people impacted by drone strikes to reflect a critical commentary and important similarity intersection in the media’s reporting on drone strike policy. This commentary, from the alternative media organizations, reflected a strong narrative tone of criticism throughout the scope of this study. This excerpt from the ACLU used a Yemeni man’s conversation with U.S. congressional leaders to reflect the power of the words that come from ordinary people.

My name is Farea al-Muslimi I am from Wessab, a remote village in the mountains of Yemen. Just six days ago, a drone, in an attack that terrified the region’s poor farmers, strikes my village. Now, however, when they think of America they think of the terror they feel from the drones that hover over their heads ready to fire missiles at any time. What violent militants had previously failed to achieve, one drone strike accomplished in an instant: there is now an intense anger against America in Wessab. I have spoken to many victims of U.S.
drone strikes, like the mother in Ja’ar who had to identify her innocent 18-year-old son's body through a video on a stranger's cell phone. Or the father in Shaqra who held his 4 and 6-year-old children as they died in his arms. (al-musimi, 2013).

The ACLU used a source that actually had a great affinity for the U.S.; however, the drone strike policy adopted by the U.S. created hatred in Yemen from people who felt targeted by drone strikes for no particular reason. This example showed how the intersection of using ordinary people in the drone strike discourse intersected in both alternative media and mainstream media. Both alternative media and mainstream media used ordinary people as sources that reflected a richer, deeper and more critical narrative tone about drone strikes.

Amnesty International also adopted this policy of using ordinary people as sources to add complexity and a more human component to its coverage of drone strikes. This excerpt showed the importance of ordinary people not only as sources of information but as characters in the narrative construction of the human story of drone strikes promulgated by alternative media organizations in this study. In this example, the woman depicted showed a clear character in the narrative that indicates the value of human life over U.S. military intervention. Amnesty International looked at one particular victim of a drone strike.

On a sunny afternoon in October 2012, 68-year-old Mamana Bibi is killed in a drone strike that appears to have been aimed directly at her. Her grandchildren recounted in painful detail to Amnesty International the moment when Mamana Bibi, who is gathering vegetables in the family fields in Ghundi Kala village, northwest Pakistan, is blasted into pieces before their eyes. Nearly a year later,
Mamana Bibi’s family has yet to receive any acknowledgment that it is the US that killed her, let alone justice or compensation for her death ("Will I Be Next, 2013).

This example illustrated the terrible impact of drone strikes. Instead of listing statistics from official governmental sources, the true impact of drone strikes transpired through the loss of life of one particular woman in the setting of Pakistan. The use of an ordinary person showed the power that drone strikes have not only on people but also in how the narrative is told through media depictions of character and setting.

While mainstream media and alternative did not report on all the same events in their coverage of drone strikes, both mainstream media and alternative media reaffirmed Kenix’s assertion that of both mainstream media and alternative media should use ordinary people to tell the story involved with the reporting of the news.

Intersection 4: Alternative Media Intersections and Brand Awareness

In the course of this study, some intersections emerged between mainstream media and alternative media on the issue of drone strikes. However, throughout the coverage, other intersections emerged that showed an intersection of media content from one alternative media source promoting the work of another alternative media source.

Kenix saw alternative media organizations as monetizing on their audience to provide a capitalistic outlet for their content through constructing a visual identity that could be used to increase profit. This visual identity primarily came through the construction of their alternative media content and how they packaged that content to the public through the channel of their website. This study did not reflect Kenix’s work on that issue.

Instead, alternative media organizations used their platform to promote the work of other
alternative media organizations and ask the public for money to provide assistance to those people who dealt with the realities and repercussions of drone strikes. For that reason, the capital that alternative media organizations produced about the issue of drone strikes did not help alternative media actors.

While specific capital achievements did not grow in terms of Kenix’s position on the intersection of mainstream media and alternative media, the growth of the alternative media brand did grow in this study about drone strikes. Kenix indicated that alternative media organizations has sold their list serves in an effort to promote the marketing of their identity through a more mainstream channel. This study did not directly reflect this aspect of marketing growth that Kenix researched but instead intended to market its own interests through a radical engagement with the public and promote their own interests and other alternative media organizations interests. The marketing component in this study did not show a direct marketing approach, as indicated by Kenix by the selling of list serves, but instead a more brand awareness marketing approach that would help to grow the concept of the alternative media organization in the larger public, outside of the alternative media sphere.

These intersections showed a clear consistency not only in media content but also a narrative constructed using similar components. In this example, CODEPINK promoted the work of the ACLU. The channel they used to produce the alternative media content was a protest.

As the American Civil Liberties Union challenges the CIA's secret drone program in federal appeals court Thursday, CODEPINK will be outside the courthouse with a model drone and banners calling for an end to the CIA's covert drone
program, and will stage a die-in to draw attention to the innocent people killed in these drone attacks. They will also stand in solidarity with the ACLU's challenge to the CIA's absurd denial of the existence of the government's targeted killing program and its refusal to respond to Freedom of Information Act requests about the program while officials continue to make public statements about it (Benjamin, 2012).

The ACLU wanted to promote its legal work through posts on its own website about the problems of transparency with the Obama administration on the issue of drone strikes. CODEPINK used protests as another channel for promoting its position against drone strikes. This example showed, while using different tactics, how the intersection between two different alternative media organizations in this study.

The technological innovations, that Kenix indicated would create intersections between mainstream and alternative media, instead allowed for alternative media organizations to intersect with each other through the distribution of information on websites that these alternative media organizations controlled. Alternative media organizations promoted the interests of other alternative media organizations in much the same manner as mainstream media used alternative media as sources in their own media content.

Kenix saw the intersection of mainstream media and alternative media converging on the issue of revenue stream. More alternative media organizations would use their websites to grow in the capitalistic structure of media production. In this study, the alternative media organizations promoted their brand through their own websites to publicize their organization. However, while the alternative media organizations
promulgated their own interests through their websites, the direct focus on revenue stream did not enter into the media text on the issue of drone strikes in this study. While the increase in revenue is not directly growing from this example, CODEPINK hoped to grow its brand recognition out of the alternative media sphere of influence. While CODEPINK primarily focused on growing its brand and not on generating revenue, they did ask for donations, as long as those donations when to other sources. This example illustrated CODEPINK wanting to raise money for drone strike victims. CODEPINK intended to become the main character in the narrative they created about drone strikes and offered this example from the Pakistan setting to elicit support. The tone is clearly one of sadness and tragedy.

Since the US provides no assistance to innocent victims, we are collecting funds for their rehabilitation, including prosthetic legs. One of the people we will help is 16-year-old Sadaullah, from North Waziristan, who lost an eye and both legs in an attack on his home. “I had a dream of becoming a doctor, but now I can't even walk to school,” said Sadaullah. Whose story is related in Medea's book Drone Warfare? We are trying to raise $5,000 to help the victims, so please consider making a donation. We will also be taking petitions to the US Embassy in Islamabad, so make sure you have signed. We would like to deliver 5,000 signatures to the Ambassador, and right now we have just under 2,000 (Benjamin & Wright, 2012).

What this example exemplified was how CODEPINK dealt with the idea of revenue. The money they focused on with drone strikes had to do with how it could help people involved in drone strikes and less about how much revenue could be generated from its
coverage of drone strikes. Kenix’s argument about alternative media growing its revenue as an intersection with mainstream media did not reflect the content in this study about drone strikes but indirectly some alternative media organizations did promote their own brand through the acknowledgment of their work about drone strikes in mainstream media outlets. The CODEPINK brand produced a narrative a clear tone of sadness especially in the setting of Pakistan with itself as the main character.

This study illustrated how alternative media organizations used content examples that intersected with other alternative media organizations. In addition, Kenix examined expectations of media organizations and how those expectations changed the product each media organization produced. For example, a mainstream media group needed to generate revenue and an alternative media group needed to produce content that would define its work as alternative, regardless of the dissemination of information. The fourth intersection produced content from alternative media organizations that would be considered alternative and would grow the brand of that alternative media organization.

Summary

Overall, some of the intersections that Kenix stated about mainstream media and alternative media happened in this study. Both mainstream and alternative media produced content that challenged the Obama administration’s assertion that drone strikes created few civilian casualties and the policy to keep drone strikes shrouded in secrecy. The intersection did not happen in cross-pollination of coverage but instead in parallel coverage about the same topic. Second, alternative media referenced their work about drone strikes in mainstream media outlets, both those used in this study and other
mainstream media outlets, to promote their alternative media brand outside of the alternative media ghetto, a term coined by Comedia.

In addition, the alternative media organizations in this study intersected quite often with each other, not only in terms of media content produced but also as a means of critical solidarity against the policy chosen by the Obama administration on the issue of drone strikes. A clear narrative tone of critique dominated that coverage. Finally, this study supported the concept of citizen journalism in average citizens reporting the news, in the alternative media coverage, and also in the content produced by both mainstream media and alternative media regardless of the reporter. The content about drone strikes came from these media organizations without a large public outcry for more information. The intersection of mainstream media and alternative media happened without a clear public engagement on a mass movement level.

As illustrated clearly in both the USA TODAY and NYT sections, the alternative media organizations primarily acted as voices of critique from outside the standard of government silence that dominated the coverage of drone strikes from both mainstream media organizations in this study. In addition, the tactics used by these alternative media organizations, primarily from the ACLU, provided some textual news stories for the mainstream media sources, especially the NYT, to provide a discourse that challenged the dominant government discourse about the success of drone strikes in the impacted area. However, when the alternative media organizations used different tactical choices as a means to engage the public on the issue of drone strikes, such as CODEPINK protests at the Democratic National Convention, the Republican National Convention, the Nevada
Desert Experience, at pilgrimage to Pakistan, both USA TODAY and the NYT did not provide any media coverage of those types of tactics.

The numerous studies conducted by both Amnesty International and HRW about the impact of specific drone strikes to local areas in both Pakistan and Yemen did not receive any media coverage from either mainstream media outlet in this study. The lone exception to this standard of ignoring the work done by the alternative media actors came when CODEPINK founder Medea Benjamin literally interrupted both John Brennan’s confirmation hearing as potential head of the CIA or when Benjamin interrupted President Obama’s first public speech about drone strikes in 2013. It literally took an alternative media organization to perform a criminal act for the mainstream media to respond to their actions against drone strikes in a highly visible media focused environment. Both USA TODAY and the NYT did not provide the alternative media organizations the same access for commenting on the issue of drone strikes as officials from both the governmental and military establishment and any civilian leader who worked within the Obama administration. However, the coverage from alternative media actors did increase over the course of the study and provided a clear critical voice in both mainstream media outlets, primarily from the opinion section of both outlets, especially the NYT.

The alternative media organizations used a litany of media production and tactics to engage with mainstream media outlets. In press releases from HRW to lawsuits filed by the ACLU to protests organized by CODEPINK, all of the alternative media organizations used a number of different narrative actions to promote their message about drone strikes in an effort to engage the mainstream media. The alternative media
organizations in this study, especially the ACLU and CODEPINK, used mainstream media outlets to both legitimize their work against both the actual use of drone strikes and the silence about drone strike policy from the Obama administration. Both HRW and Amnesty International produced studies that contradicted the information coming from both USA TODAY and the NYT about the continuing use of drone strikes based on their own studies of particular drone strikes. The primary reasons for these contradictory findings about drone strikes reflected a policy to engage local populations in the areas impacted by drone strikes, primarily Yemen and Pakistan.

While the mainstream media outlets, primarily the NYT, attempted to use some of these same sources, the fear of reprisal from both local militants and government officials stunted that journalistic practice. While both Amnesty International and HRW encountered some of the same problems, both of these organizations eschewed the Obama administration’s protocol of not commenting on any specific drone strike, leaving open the possibility for both alternative media organizations to find local actors who would comment on a particular drone strike. An example of this came from Amnesty’ International’s reporting on the family of 68 year old Mamana Bibi, a Pakistani grandmother killed by a drone strike. Both USA TODAY and the NYT did not provide much media text of this particular drone strike, leaving open an opportunity for Amnesty International to provide analysis previously unreported on the impact of this specific drone strike.

In terms of narrative, the setting and characters in this study provided clear intersections in the coverage from both mainstream media and alternative media. However, the type of coverage from both mainstream media outlets and all four
alternative media organizations differed in the characterization of those settings. In both mainstream media outlets, particularly USA TODAY, both Yemen and Pakistan suffered from a number of problems outside the U.S. government and military control, which helped contribute to the problem of terrorism and leading to the need for the U.S. to use drone strikes against the local “militants”. The NYT provided a more composite coverage of drone strikes than USA TODAY based on their use of more local voices from both settings and the volume of coverage in individual news articles over the course of the study.

The alternative media organizations coverage of the settings primarily came from HRW, Amnesty International and CODEPINK. HRW offered a world report of each of the settings and provided a clear critique of human rights violations in both settings primarily perpetuated by both the local governments of Yemen and Pakistan and also from the U.S. based on the their global influence. Amnesty International, while providing a local critique of human rights in both settings, primarily focused on the lack of accountability from the U.S. in the use of drone strikes in both settings. By producing studies on drone strikes, Amnesty International wanted to focus primarily on what the U.S. could do, especially according to International law, to help both settings fight terrorism holistically and act with more democratic transparency. CODEPINK primarily saw both settings as suffering under the yolk of neocolonial U.S. power and attempted to engage any local actors from either setting as a means to help both give another face to U.S. engagement other than drone strikes and attempt to understand the problem of terrorism that leads to drone strikes from local perspective. CODEPINK, through different tactics than Amnesty International, laid the problems in the Yemen and Pakistan
setting on the U.S. CODEPINK also promoted their own brand through the construction of themselves in the narrative about drone strikes in the alternative media they produced and promulgated on their website.

The character that connected both the mainstream and the alternative media coverage in this story was President Obama. USATODAY depicted Obama as a polemic figure who provided the triumph of killing Osama Bin Laden and but also lackluster leadership whenever any public condemnation about drone strikes appeared in its coverage. Much like the setting component, the NYT provided a much more nuanced view of Obama. In the beginning of its coverage, the NYT depicted Obama as stoic and measured based on his lack of public comment about drone strikes. He showed his leadership with his first public comments on the drone strikes, according to the NYT, and answered the most pertinent questions about drone strikes based on their coverage. That mostly positive depiction of Obama changed in late 2013 with the drone strike that killed a wedding party in Yemen. For the first time, the NYT provided a clear critique of the president as a character in this narrative, not solely because a drone strike ended civilian life, but because the Obama administration had not commented publically on the incident, a policy that President Obama said would change in his speech from earlier in 2013. For the first time, the NYT depicted the character of Obama in negative way, transitioning from its overall positive coverage of the president.

The alternative media coverage primarily focused on the character of Obama as a person of promise who ultimately provided very few answers about drone strikes and led the U.S. to violate international law based on their use of drone strikes. At the beginning of the coverage, organizations such as HRW attempted to engage the President by writing
opinion editorials that reflected an engaging tone that asked the president, to explain his
decision making behind using drone strikes throughout the world and why he, and his
administration, provided so few answers about the policy. As the coverage continued, the
tone of engagement disappeared to the point where the alternative media organizations
became frustrated by President Obama’s lack of public response and democratic
engagement and produced content that reflected that tone of frustration. A brief
opportunity emerged after Obama’s public comments on drone strikes in 2013, yet the
alternative media organizations saw the President as being not forthcoming enough in his
comments. While applauding any open discussion about drone strikes, the alternative
media organization, especially Amnesty International, saw President Obama as not
stating clearly enough how drone strikes followed international law and why it took so
long for him to comment publically on the issue. Any chance for support completely
disappeared with the incident at the wedding party in Yemen in 2013, a clear departure
from President Obama’s stated objective of more transparency on the issue of drone
strikes from earlier in 2013.

Research Questions

In this section, I explored two mainstream media outlets, USATODAY and The New York Times (NYT) and four alternative media organizations, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU and CODEPINK. The main results from the USATODAY section on drone strikes included a cursory exploration into the policy with general support for the topic provided primarily from governmental sources about the issue. Any critiques of the drone strike policy
primarily came from alternative media actors, although that critique did not provide the
textual support that came from members of the political establishment.

The NYT provided much more coverage on the issue of drone strikes and
provides some voices from outside the political establishment on the issue of drone
strikes, including local actors who dealt with the material consequences of drone strikes
and alternative media actors concerned with the lack of transparency from Obama
administration officials on the topic of drone strikes. However, any critique was muted by
the overall “success” of the program in eliminating high level terrorist threats, such as
Anwar al-Awlaki, and not putting U.S. soldiers’ lives at risk in a ground war that could
cost billions of dollars.

The alternative media organizations began their media discourse by attempting to
gently prod the Obama administration to make more public comments about the drone
strike policy while understanding the complexity of any foreign policy issue. By the end
of the study, the alternative media organizations through different media production and
tactical choices had soured on the Obama administration’s response to both the legal
standards used in drone strikes and the lack of public comment and governmental
accountability on the issue of drone strikes, especially when drone strikes kill civilian
populations not intended for target. I will now provide brief answers to both research
questions.

1. How do alternative media sources that break into the mainstream media in any
   way alter or challenge narratives about cultural militarism?

Based on the study I conducted from both the mainstream media outlets I used
and the alternative media organizations that emerged from those mainstream media
outs, alternative media outlets challenge government positions about cultural militarism based on the assumption of information that government officials provides the public on the issue of drone strikes. The alternative media organizations also prodded the governmental officials to adhere to basic democratic engagement to the public about what transpires about that particular policy, in this case drone strikes.

The narrative that emerged from the mainstream media outlets in this study, based on the five components established in the method section did not change or alter in any significant way throughout the course of the study. At the same time, more critical voices did emerge from the mainstream media coverage toward the end of the study. The main critiques provided by these alternative sources indicated that cultural militarism is predicated upon the public accepting the information that the government releases to the public. In this study, in most examples, the mainstream media outlets followed that policy. Based on the information about drone strikes in this study, whether the strike happened in 2009 or 2013, neither mainstream media outlet provided any information from any specific government official. The Obama administration’s policy to not comment publically on any specific drone strike was followed by the mainstream media outlets in this study. Based on the findings in this study, cultural militarism was reified by mainstream media outlets reporting on information directly in their media text that came straight from the channel of the government in an account without any specific source attribution.

The clear challenge that emerged about cultural militarism that came from the alternative media organizations in this study focused on the lack of governmental response and accountability on the issue of drone strikes. Both mainstream media outlets,
especially the NYT, focused more of their coverage not only on the fallout of what happened to civilian populations who perished from drone strikes but the continuing lack of response from the Obama administration about the totality of the drone strike policy during the Obama Presidency. Alternative media organization, based on their own studies, their tactical choices of activism, and public condemnation of drone strike policy to public officials in highly confrontational manners, provided a channel for the mainstream media outlets to not necessarily change the narrative of cultural militarism but instead broaden the narrative to include voices from outside the Obama administration and attempt to end the silence on the topic of drone strikes.

2. How do mainstream media sources respond to the alternative media sources?

Based on the study I conducted about these mainstream media sources and these alternative media sources, the mainstream media uses alternative media sources for legitimacy about the human rights impact of drone strikes and possible critical voices that might differ from the conventional governmental discourse about the issue of drone strikes. The mainstream media sources did not use each of these alternative media sources in the same way over the course of this study. For example, based on their shared interest on the legality of national security issues, the NYT found the ACLU had many of the same concerns about the governmental secrecy associated with drone strikes as they did. In addition, the tactics that the ACLU used in the course of this study to produce their media content, filing lawsuits and speaking at conferences, fit the narrative structure espoused by the NYT in the construction of media content on the topic of drone strikes. For that reason, the ACLU and the NYT fit together more closely as intersectional
partners on drone strikes than an alternative media organization, such as CODEPINK, which promoted their work in the public based on protests and marches.

The mainstream media outlets preferred alternative media voices that used more conventional tactics of justice, including lawsuits and press releases, two ACLU tactics, than protests and interrupting governmental officials during public speeches and legislative matters, two tactics that CODEPINK used to show its critique for the Obama administration’s drone strike policy. For that reason, the mainstream media outlets responded differently to each of the alternative media organizations based on the tactical choices of those alternative media organization and what type of alternative media these organizations produced.

This choice seemed particular powerful when looking at the textual examples produced by these alternative media organizations. The ACLU and CODEPINK joined forces to protest the Obama administration’s lack of transparency and accountability in relation to drone strikes outside the White House. In addition, all four alternative media organization organized public forums and participated in and created conferences dealing with issues of drone strikes and included a number of non-governmental actors that worked extensively on the issue of drone strikes throughout the world. The mainstream media outlets did no cover these events at all during the course of this study.

On the issue of human rights, HRW and Amnesty International both provided voices that the mainstream media outlets acknowledged over the course of this study, especially the NYT. These voices grew louder during the course of this study and HRW and Amnesty International responded with fervor. Mainstream media outlets did catch that fervor while balancing it with the dominant governmental position of the drone
strikes as a military success and the helping to save the lives of U.S. soldiers. Based on this study, the alternative media organizations did not provide much source material to support any transferal of a narrative that changed over the course of a study from one that initially supported drone strikes to a narrative that rejected this foreign policy choice. Instead, alternative media organizations provided a counter narrative from mainstream media outlets that focused on human rights and democratic transparency. This discussion transpired in the mainstream media outlets but not with same importance as the ending of terrorism and military success that predominated the mainstream media coverage on the issue of drone strikes. This finding supports Comedia’s (1984) take that alternative media performs in a separate location from mainstream media and ghettoizes the content created by these alternative media organizations.
CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

Drone strikes are one of the biggest foreign policy decisions of the Obama administration. I attempted to find out about the issue when the Obama administration failed to comment publically on the issue for almost the entire five year period of my study. When the Obama administration did comment, they refused to add further comment when drone strikes impacted civilian communities in other world settings. I attempted to conduct a study about a policy that existed in governmental silence during a communication age of immediacy and social media unknown in human history. With this background here are my findings.

My main findings from this study were first that alternative media organizations altered the mainstream media outlets I chose for this study by broadening the discussion about the issue of drone strikes from only accepting the information that came directly from governmental sources. Second, a high level of secrecy emerged from the Obama administration on the topic of drone strikes. I will take the next few pages to look at possible implications for this study and possible future studies that might build on these findings. I will accomplish this task by breaking down my findings and examining these findings in terms of each section of literature detailed in Chapter 2. The findings will be broken down into four main sections: alternative media, media and power, ideology and cultural militarism.

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Alternative Media

As illustrated in the previous chapter, alternative media played a key role in the discussion about drone strikes. Alternative media allowed non-governmental actors a voice for echoing their critical sentiments against the use of drone strikes. These actors often times came from the actual settings of drone strikes. In addition, alternative media developed a clear tone of frustration and anger with the Obama administration on the use of drone strikes based on the number of civilian casualties that the government refused to report on and the lack of public accountability based on a clear protocol of public secrecy about the drone strike program. While alternative media organizations did intersect with mainstream media in this study, alternative media organizations also intersected with each other in this study to produce a critical and humane media coverage on drone strikes.

Another clear result from this coverage was that alternative media organizations impacted the narrative about drone strikes in mainstream media texts. This process showed that the mainstream media sources in this study, USATODAY and The New York Times, used alternative media sources in this study, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch (HRW), differently than other alternative media sources, such as
CODEPINK. When CODEPINK was portrayed by the mainstream media in this study, CODEPINK actually made the news instead of producing the news. This finding illustrated that mainstream media actually preferred alternative media sources that produced content according to standard mainstream media practices of media production: editorials, sources from these media organizations and commentary about human rights issues affiliated with the use of drone strikes.

This finding presents a clear addition to the literature about the conceptual framework of how alternative media works in cohesion with mainstream media and allowed for specific tactics used by alternative media organizations to be privileged over other tactics. These findings help to broaden Kenix’s discussion about the convergence of mainstream media and alternative media while also adding to the Herman and Chomsky literature about the relationship between media and power. The mainstream media has a clear structure for how they want to develop a narrative about drone strikes privileging not only specific alternative media outlets but also the narrative components of those alternative sources to produce content that reifies the existing power of the mainstream media texts.

This concept, called the subtle intersectional narrative adjustment, reflects a media world that has not converged with the clear intersectionality espoused by Kenix, nor has completed moved away from each other to provide a clear distinction between the mainstream media and alternative media. As was the case throughout this study, alternative media organizations, especially the ACLU and CODEPINK, used the mainstream media to promote their message of critique against drone strikes and used the mainstream media to clearly attempt to provide legitimacy to its work about drone
strikes. However, the narrative with which alternative media organizations could present their work to the public and the tactical choices used by those alternative media organizations had to follow the mainstream media format or be relegated to the media ghetto that has defined the alternative media literature for a number of years.

Another interesting aspect of this concept is that both alternative media and mainstream media believe clearly in the use of narrative to develop how the public understands the information about drone strikes. In both media texts, clear characters, such as President Obama, and clear settings, such as Pakistan and Yemen, emerged as important locations in the drone strike story. For this reason, both types of media, mainstream and alternative, understand the importance of narrative in shaping how to share this information with the world. This study reflected that importance while also showing which types of narrative construction holds more significance for mainstream media when those media organizations use alternative media organizations in their media texts.

The clear narrative tone of critique that emerged from the alternative media also had a clear impact on mainstream media outlets in this study. This finding supports the concept of a subtle narrative adjustment not in the tone of the mainstream media text but more in the amount of alternative media texts used by mainstream source in this study. As this study concluded in 2013, a clear frustrated and angry tone dominated all the alternative media organizations in this study and some of sources, especially from Amnesty International, crossed over into the mainstream media text on the topic of drone strikes. The narrative adjustment in this example did not change the tone of mainstream media content about drone strikes completely but instead the critical work done by
alternative media organizations gained a place for comment in the mainstream media
texts alongside unidentified Obama administration officials and local security officials in
areas directly impacted by drone strikes. In this example, the tactical adjustment of the
narrative did not happen in terms of a specific narrative component, tone, but instead in
the source information that mainstream media used to construct their entire narrative
about drone strikes.

Another clear example of the tactical narrative adjustment in this study transpired
in the construction of the narrative used by alternative media organizations as they
constructed stories about drone strikes. As illustrated earlier, alternative media
organizations had significant hope for the Obama administration to move away from
militaristic polices that dominated the foreign policy of the Bush administration. This
hope emerged clearly in the construction of the character of Obama at the beginning of
this study, especially in the media text produced by HRW. As the study progressed, the
narrative construction of the character Obama changed greatly on the topic of drone
strikes based on the growing frustration from alternative media organizations at their
perceived lack of action from the Obama administration on the issue of drone strikes.
This frustration also led to a clear change in tone of the alternative media narrative
constructed in this study, from one of hope to one of frustration and anger. This clear
result indicated that even within the narrative constructed exclusively by alternative
media organizations in this study, the tactical narrative adjustment by these alternative
media organization reflected a protocol that changed from one of possibility to one of
frustration on the issue of drone strikes.
Finally, as illustrated clearly in the previous section, alternative media organizations in this study provided a clear, cohesive intersection among each other on the topic of drone strikes. The clear difference in tactics used by those alternative media organizations provided clear results that changed how each of those alternative media organization produced their own distinctive narrative on the topic of drone strikes. First, HRW showed the most support for the Obama administration on the issue of drone strikes at the beginning of this study. The early 2009 narrative constructed from HRW about drone strikes reflected a position that the U.S. had to deal with a complicated world of human rights and terrorism. By late 2013, HRW based on their own reporting from drone strike impacted settings and specific focus on the fall out of drone strikes based on civilian casualties and governmental silence had clearly changed their narrative from one of anticipation to one of frustration. HRW tactically constructed this narrative using studies done by workers at its own organization, commenting on information produced by the Obama administration and reaching out to local citizens who bore the brunt of these drone strikes. Based on the type of reporting done by HRW on the topic of drone strikes, one alternative media organization changed its narrative throughout this study based on clear choices made within that alternative media organization.

CODEPINK began this study without same degree of hope espoused by HRW. For that reason, the tone of the narrative CODEPINK constructed on the topic of drone strikes did not change to the same degree as the tone of the narrative constructed by HRW. However, the construction of the narrative established by CODEPINK, used significantly different tactical choices in establishing their position on drone strikes that established a departure from the tactics used by HRW. CODEPINK produced media
content based on media interruptions of political events, raising money to help drone
strike victims, protesting in front of drone profiteers houses and marching in the streets at
both the Republican National Convention and the Democratic National Convention.
These tactical choices established a clear confrontational narrative that illustrated a clear
departure from HRW. The uniting factor in both media organizations, however, is their
clear critique of drone strikes by the Obama administration. The narratives both media
organizations constructed about drone strikes changed clearly with their tactical choices
in the construction of those narratives that provided a clear intersection between both
media organizations.

I found a new concept, subtle intersectional narrative adjustment, which impacted
not only the relationship between mainstream media and alternative media but also
reflected a clear intersectionality among the different alternative media organizations in
this study. This concept could lead to future studies that examine not only how media
organizations construct narratives but also how to construct a narrative based on the
standards of that media organization. As illustrated clearly in this study, mainstream
media has specific parameters for establishing how to create a news story. Alternative
media has fewer parameters, allowing for a more exploratory process of narrative
construction that could combine a number of different tactical choices. By allowing for
the possibility of numerous way to both gather news and produce a narrative, future
studies should consider not only how to construct a narrative but also how that narrative
might change through the course of that study.

*Media and Power*
The implications from this study in relation to media and power reflect numerous findings from previous studies and provide examples for future research locations. In relation to narrative and media, the media sources in this study reflected many of the arguments presented by Phelan and Fisher. The mainstream media entities did reflect the dominant ideologies of cultural militarism through the dominant use of governmental sources, the focus on U.S. interests over local voices in the impacted settings and the implied success of a governmental policy that remained in silence during almost the entire duration of the study. However, some of the most distinctive information came from alternative media studies that reflected the voices of local people, reinforcing the importance of stories from ordinary people.

The symbolic meaning, and actual meaning, about drone strikes changed based on the media text, another example that supports Fisher’s narrative argument. The symbolic meaning from this study showed the rest of the world the power of the U.S. militarism and how drone strikes have focused and harnessed that power into a single military tactic that annihilates human life ascribed to potential terrorist threats and leaves the rest of society unharmed.

This argument dominates the majority of information coming from the Obama administration and governmental officials. The actual meaning of drone strikes in this study had a much more complicated meaning based on the source information for the media text and the location of that discussion. In Pakistan, for example, several people from areas outside of the drone strike area saw these military operations as impediments to sovereignty and the exercise of U.S. power through those operations. Other media accounts, especially from the NYT, emphasized local populations in the targeted areas of
Pakistan, primarily along the border with Afghanistan, feeling conflicted by ultimately positive about drone strikes because of the impact of militants in those areas. Alternative media sources added to the complications of the actual meaning of drone strikes by providing first person and individual accounts of the true impact of drone strikes, including the death of a 68 year old grandmother from a drone strike. Based on all this information from a variety of media sources, the implications for the symbolic meaning and actual meaning of drone strikes varied from source, setting and even sub source and individual story. Future research could address each of these factors with more depth and discussion to the future of the symbolic and actual meaning of drone strikes.

The professional impact of the news media standards in U.S. society, argued by Nossek and Berkowits, also were reflected in these findings. The dominant governmental response to drone strikes, even when it was not officially a policy discussed policy, percolated the entire mainstream media sections based on off the record sources and remittance of “factual” information about drone strikes that killed a certain number of people, almost always important militants or terrorist. The degree with which people in the impacted areas dealt with the fall out of drone strikes remained outside of the mainstream media depiction, although a factor in leaving out those voices in these depictions could have been from fear of terrorist or governmental violence. The amount of access even the mainstream media corporations had to the government to question or even confirm the events of a particular drone strike reached another level of lack of democratic engagement, based on the Obama administration’s policy of only leaking the information about a drone strike without any attributable source content.
The findings in this study both build on the work of Fuchs and also show a different interpretation of both media coverage and the impact of U.S. militarism. The findings supported Fuchs work by showing the growing connection of the media and governmental information, along with the technological advances the military has made to “humanize” war. By minimizing civilian casualties and executing potential terrorist, the narrative the Obama administration fed to the public, both on the record and off, showed not only a “compassion” for human life by limiting the impact of war but also showed the importance of precision and intelligence when performing that action. However, the antiseptic channel of conducting a military action from a different location half a world away through a video screen based on information that involved intelligence that sometimes proved faulty also provided clear results and support for the argument that drones trikes actually dehumanize war in new and disturbing ways. Soldier now need not see the true impact of their military might on a population because after the drone strike hits, the soldier turns off a video screen and returns to an otherwise “normal” life.

Based on some of the media coverage in this study, especially from the NYT, this type of military advancement shows how important the drone strike technology is and why it adds support for humanity instead of devaluing humanity. However, when a drone strike hits a wedding party, as it did in Yemen in 2013, the humanization argument of drone strikes produces less credibility. In addition, with drone strike largely remaining publically unacknowledged by the government, the lack of information about the topic produced a lack of accountability and transparency, two human factors that could lead to public discussion about human a war the drone strike war actually is.
The concepts espoused from the political economy literature also were reflected in these findings. Political and cultural assumptions dominated the coverage of drone strikes both from the mainstream media and from the alternative media in this study. Harmon and Lee detailed these arguments in their work on political economy and media. In this study, the unspoken assumption that the government provided accurate information about the policy of drone strikes dominated the mainstream media coverage, especially from USA TODAY and provided a clear point of rebuttal for the alternative media organizations in this study.

The flaws in the accuracy of information argument on the issue of drone strikes, however, had several contributing factors throughout the media coverage, including the NYT coverage of drone strikes. The first flaw dealt with the assertion from an Obama administration official that no civilians died as a result of drone strikes. Several alternative media outlets, including the ones chosen in this study, refuted those claims publically and the NYT provided a location for those voices and other voices from outside the government structure that refuted that stance. Another key argument that questioned the accuracy of information involved the source information about drone strikes. While government officials would provide one set of numbers, other local sources would give a different number of people killed in drone strikes. Sometimes these local sources embellished the number to provide a source of anti-American sentiment that prevailed throughout Pakistan. However, the source of that information did provide a clear departure from the accuracy of information provided by the Obama administration. Finally, the Obama administration provided numerous reports about drone strikes from off the record sources in government. As indicated earlier, the Obama administration
remained silent about drone strikes officially until May 2013. However, information appeared from government sources in media accounts, especially from the NYT as early as 2009. When a source does not provide an actual name to the news report, the public is left with questions about the real credibility of that source. The implications from this study on this topic could provide future research for both on the record and off the record media accounts of different political events.

As illustrated by a number of the alternative media sources, not all of the information provided by the government was accurate leading to different conclusion about what actually happened during any specific drone strike. The wedding example from Yemen in 2013 illustrated this point clearly. Kumar’s idea of the propaganda model morphing into the propaganda machine also found support in these findings. The government used the mainstream media to make a comment when a drone strike hit the intended target and remained silent when problems arose.

Many of the frames that emerged in this study included the U.S. exceptionalism frame through militarism, the sanitized war frame and the unstable Muslim Word frame that dominated the mainstream media coverage. All of these findings build on the work of Reese and Entman. The hierarchy of influence from Fahmy and Johnson also dominated the coverage of governmental sources over human rights sources, although some of that influence could have come from the remoteness of the settings of the drone strikes. However, this lack of access refutes the technological gain that mainstream media use to promote dominant U.S. ideologies about the connection of information to the public through new media channels. Even technology could not connect the public to entire truth about the impact of drone strikes.
Many of the alternative media texts reflected the work of Atton, Atkinson and Downing. Especially in regards to their mainstream media counterparts, the alternative media sources provided a radical critique of a dominant government narrative. Some of the reasons for that critique would include a focus on alternative content, including a litany of local people as sources, the audience not including a public that focused on capital accumulation through the selling of newspapers or defining its economic existence through web traffic. The types of media produced by the alternative media organizations also differed greatly from the mainstream media standard of news, feature or opinion articles.

The alternative media sources used press releases, news stories, editorials and public protests to promote their own interests and raise awareness about the topic of drone strikes. Many of the findings in this study did not support Kenix’s assertion about the synthesizing of information gathering of both mainstream and alternative media organizations. Instead, the type of information differed greatly based on how that information was gathered. For example, the ACLU produced information related to filing lawsuits, participating in conference and issuing press releases about drone strikes. CODEPINK gathered information through issuing press releases, but also traveled to the settings impacted by drone strikes to provide another avenue for collection information about the topic. Amnesty International and HRW, while producing other media content than CODEPINK, also found the importance of traveling to the settings important for producing their media content.

However, the findings did reflect Kenix’s assertion that alternative media organizations used ordinary people to join their media coverage. The issue of drone
strikes took on a very different tone when the source changed from U.S. official to a local person in Yemen. The alternative media groups also embraced Kenix’s idea of using new technology to produce their alternative media content. All of the alternative media organizations in this study updated their websites frequently and even promoted the interests of other alternative media groups on their own websites.

**Ideology**

My study reinforced several of the claims established in the literature review about ideology. My findings reflected many of Gramsci’s work on the subjective nature of the human experience through the lens of a critical engagement with a media text. For example, with alternative media focusing almost exclusively on sources from non-governmental sources, the information they collected about drone strikes differed greatly from mainstream media findings. By accessing different speakers, alternative media provided a critique of drone strikes unavailable from mainstream media and exemplified the subjective nature of the human experience.

Gramsci’s comments on the printed word taken on a number of different meanings were also reflected in this essay based on the source of that information. In many of mainstream media articles, the dominant narrative about the drone strikes focused on military accomplishments and the ending of terrorism while the same strike in an alternative media source could reflect a lack of political engagement with the public or the death of civilian life. This study supported those findings. The implication of these findings suggest that narrative change based on the information collected and published by media outlets.
The subjective approach to information which Althusser wrote about in relation to ideology also reflected the findings of this study. While another person could perform this same study with same information, my subjective position as a government critic and proponent of alternative media sources impacted my findings on the issue of drone strikes. This space I occupied provided a setting for the findings of this study to reflect my position as a critic of militarism and government secrecy. However, the findings also provided points that contradicted my position as a government critic by providing clear content about the importance of drone strikes in killing potential terrorist threats and attempting to provide support for the legitimation of the Pakistani government. The implication of these findings challenged not only the ideology of the media content but also the person responsible for conducting this study.

The culture industry, as defined by Adorno and Horkheimer, also impacted the type of content produced by the mainstream media sources in this study. The mainstream media entities used in this study have to produce a media product either ever day or almost every day to a wide audience that wants information about drone strikes but also about upcoming nuptials. For that reason, the product released by mainstream media corporations did not produce the same critique that alternative media organizations did in this study based on the need to capitalize on a media product for a corporate interest. In addition, alternative media organizations in this study adapted the policies of mainstream media and the approach of the cultural industry by hoping to grow its brand with the media content they produced about drone strikes. The alternative media organizations in this study, especially CODEPINK, hoped not only to get the information to the public about drone strikes but wanted the public to know who CODEPINK was as an activist.
group that took a clear position in opposition to the Obama administration on the issue of drone strike. Based on this finding, the implication of the work of alternative media matters in terms of the media content they produce but also the significance that content has on raising public awareness of the organization that produced the content.

Finally, the public sphere espoused by Habermas reached the sites of both media types, with the alternative media sector providing the best channel for voices outside of the dominant governmental structure. In addition, the mainstream media did provide a section for voices from outside the governmental structure primarily in the content they produced from their editorials, especially in the NYT. This landscape allowed for critical voices to emerge not only in terms of the impact of the drone strikes but especially in the early part of this study that drone strikes happened at all. The public remained officially in the dark, although drone strikes happened, until May 2013, and even after that date when a drone strike did not hit the intended target, the Obama administration remained silent. In this study, both mainstream and alternative media contributed to the public sphere by promoting information the government wanted kept secret for this study. The implication from this finding is that the public sphere remains a location for critical thought that the media can provide content for critical engagement.

*Cultural Militarism*

While this study focused on media production of both alternative media organizations and mainstream media corporations, the topic of drone strikes led the discussion of the media content. For that reason, this study has several implications for the cultural militarism literature.
Stahl’s work on the speed and precision of modern U.S. military operations was supported clearly in this study. Stahl could see the cleanliness of drone strikes, an improvement from smart bombs, and the perceived precision of drone strikes to only kill terrorist targets and leave the rest of the population unharmed dominated the majority of the mainstream and alternative media coverage. Drone strikes not only provided an avenue for governmental officials to cherish the lives of U.S. soldiers and still kill terrorist provided by drone strike technology, the new advances in weaponry allowed for this process to happen quickly and clinically from the safety of a U.S. based headquarters. Over the five year period of this study, hundreds of drone strikes took place throughout the world. The future of military action, started by the work of Stahl and advanced through this study, supports future research for military advancement that promotes a government narrative of military speed and precision.

Cultural militarism, especially in the work of der Derian, was both supported and refuted in significance based on the findings of this study. The concept of the Military Industrial Media Entertainment Network (MIMENET), grew in importance based on the findings of this study. The technological advancements made by drone strikes, in relation to the high precision of the supposed execution of the strikes provided a clear advancement in terms of the government narrative about drone strikes and increasing importance of the military industrial complex. The other implication from the study comes from the finding that throughout the course of this coverage, the Obama administration remained mum about the policy of drone strikes. This policy allowed for little entertainment value from this practice and this study refuted the clear relationship between the advancement of weaponry technology and entertainment function of military
combat. However, future research from this study could examine MIMENET and drone
strikes in context with the cultural militarism fascination with service members and
popular event during this period. Future research about cultural militarism should include
discussions about not only militarism as entertainment but which components of
militarism invoke public support while other aspects of military action demand silence.

These findings also both support and refute the work of Butterworth and Stahl
who looked at the normalization of entertainment standards based on the production of
symbols that reflect U.S. exceptionalism through militarism. Much of the technology
used the military, especially the Air Force as chronicled in this study, showed the
importance of not only military advancement but also how it connects to the new
generation of soldiers who have been trained for combat by years of video gaming. The
lessening of human life through a culture of people who kill on a screen in a game and
are then trained to kill on a screen for their country has several implications for the value
of human life and future study about what cultural practices connect a lack of humanity
to the growing technological advances in military policy.

The sanitization of war coverage as illustrated by der Derian in his work on
Bosnia grew in importance based on the findings of this study. Drone strikes provide the
most sanitized version of war in human history. The strikes happen in areas too
dangerous for the media to access, allowing the government to control the flow of
information to the media outlets and the public by proxy. The government can then
inflate the number of deaths or influence the narrative to produce the most public friendly
information that allows the practice to continue. The implications from these findings
could find future locations of research to find other locations of sanitized media coverage in modern warfare and drone strikes have added to that discourse.

This study supported Martin’s work on new cultural militarism standards that minimized harm but the harm always fit through a prism of U.S. exceptionalism. Drone strikes allowed U.S. soldiers to be put outside of harm’s way and in theory provided a precision standard to lessen civilian casualties from military action. However, this narrative did not always support the findings in this study and the Obama administration did not publically comment on drone strikes for much of the study and never commented on drone strikes that killed civilian targets. This subjective harm showed the importance of U.S. exceptionalism from both drone strikes and media coverage. The implications of future research should include media coverage in relation to harm when the media sources come from local settings impacted by drone strikes.

Overall, cultural militarism both grew in significance based on the findings from this study and also supported conclusions that differed from previous research about cultural militarism. With the lack of public admittance of the drone strike program by the Obama administration, the entertainment factor provided by military operations did not happen. However, the speed and power and excellence of U.S. technology through military advances in weaponry grew in significance based on the use of drone strikes. Drone strikes allowed for the video game generation to adapt to the military standards of modern warfare while sanitizing the impact of war regardless of technological advancement. Future research should address other locations of media content, especially in areas directly impacted by drone strikes.

Additional Future Research
Future research studies for the topic of drone strikes could transpire in a number of ways. I will outline three using text to illustrate my points. First, I would like to see the continuing relationship between surveillance and cultural militarism grow in more detail. Many of the drone strikes happen after an examination of hundreds of hours of surveillance videos of people in Yemen and Pakistan performed by military analysts in Virginia. The relationship for how the government can justify its actions through a legal basis for its surveillance would also build on the work for this study. Second, I would like to examine other cultural institutions and how they have been impacted by the new channel of militarism that is drones. I would like to examine how the military is using drones as a means to connection with an audience that previously viewed war negatively based on large casualty counts of U.S. personnel through traditional ground wars. The use of drone strikes eliminates these concerns and provides a more technologically advanced channel for a new military age populace. Finally, the emerging stories of PTSD from both a U.S. and world perspective based on the use of drone strikes would also build on the work of this study. Many early reports from both the Air Force and the local populations in both Yemen and Pakistan indicate a clear impact of drone strikes not only on the material lives of potential terrorists but the psyches of both soldiers and children. The new landscape of war has changed with drone strikes and future research about the impact of these wars needs closer examination.
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