

Abu Ghraib: The Immediate Reaction of Print Media to the Disclosure of  
Prisoner Abuse

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## **Abstract of Thesis**

### **Abu Ghraib: The Immediate Reaction of Print Media to the Disclosure of Prisoner Abuse**

One news story that remained undetected by major news headlines was the prisoner abuses at the Abu Ghraib prisoner in Iraq. The prisoner abuses remained largely unnoticed by the media until the revealing of shocking photographic evidence. Most studies conducted on the media's portrayal of the Abu Ghraib incident have focused on the ability of the Bush administration to influence what the media publicized about the incident, rather than the media's reaction to the sudden disclosure of the prisoner abuses. This study provides a content analysis of articles written immediately after the release of the photographs aired on *60 Minutes II* and Seymour Hersh's article in *The New Yorker*, in order to explore the immediate reaction and impression three influential newspapers – *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* - provided of the emerging story concerning the prisoner abuses.

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## Chapter One: Introduction and Literature Review

One essential element of a democracy is free and impartial media coverage. An indispensable link between government and its citizens, the news media both creates reality by what and how it publishes and broadcasts, and influences public opinion and understanding of key persons and events. Patterson (2003) argues: “in some ways, the press is better positioned than parties or groups to influence the public. On a daily basis, Americans connect to politics more through the news that is produced by the media than through the activities of parties or groups” (p. 294). Thus, the media has the ability to act as a powerful resource for the government, as various media outlets can either help or hinder an administration’s agenda (Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007, p. 89).

In today’s society of advanced communications, it seems inconceivable that momentous news stories still do unfold out of the public eye undetected by major news headlines. However, one such news story was the prisoner abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. The prisoner abuses remained largely unnoticed by the media until the revealing of shocking photographic evidence.

Media journalists were slow to grasp the magnitude of the prisoner abuse allegations. However, once aired to the public, the prisoner abuses would not only become an international embarrassment for the United States, tarnishing the Bush administration’s War on Terror, but would also create implications for the U.S. military’s organizational structure and regulations in Iraq, especially pertaining to the treatment and interrogation of detainees. In the words of Philip Taubman, the *New York Times*’ Washington Bureau Chief, “We didn’t do our job with this until the photographs appeared on CBS’ and [Seymour] Hersh’s story hit the Internet... ‘It was a failure of

news gathering” (Ricchiardi, 2004, p. 25). However, after the sudden disclosure of the photographs and Hersh’s article, published in *The New Yorker*, which detailed Major General Taguba’s classified military account of the prison, attributes of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses dominated national headlines for approximately one month. The government was forced to explain the prisoner abuses and reporters scrambled to unearth new details of the scandal.

The images that surfaced from Abu Ghraib received not only media attention, but also the consideration of scholars studying the effectiveness of media images to shape and influence news, politics, and public opinion (Anden-Papadopoulos, 2008). Additionally, studies have been conducted to analyze the use of media frames in coverage related to the prisoner abuses; specifically the Bush administration’s attempt to frame the incident in such a way as to minimize its damage to the greater War on Terror (Bennett, et. al, 2007). However, there is limited research analyzing how print media reacted to the sudden disclosure of the photos and government investigation in its immediate aftermath.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze how the press responded to the disclosure of the *60 Minutes II* airing of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse photographs and Seymour Hersh’s article, published online shortly thereafter in *The New Yorker*. By comparing and contrasting news articles and editorials from three influential national newspapers printed in the two weeks immediately following the disclosure, I analyze how these newspapers each reacted to the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib. It is anticipated that the core values and perspectives of each newspaper will affect what and how each newspaper presented information regarding the Abu Ghraib incident. The disclosure of the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib has long-lasting implications for the War on Terror

and U.S. government agencies' interrogation tactics. Thus, insight gained from the media's reaction to and presentation of information regarding Abu Ghraib can provide a greater understanding of the media's broader reporting on the War on Terror, and other politically controversial issues surrounding the Bush administration.

### Background – Origins of the “Death Chamber”

For many, Abu Ghraib can be described as “hell on earth.” In fact, the prison was linked with abuse long before the United States brought Abu Ghraib into the spotlight in 2004. Built in the 1960s by British contractors, the Abu Ghraib prison is located approximately twenty miles from Baghdad and was used during Saddam Hussein's “regime of torture” (London, 2008, pp. 130-131). Earning its reputation under Hussein as “the death chamber” (London, 2008, p. 131), Abu Ghraib became “one of the world's most notorious prisons, with torture, weekly executions, and vile living conditions” (Hersh, 2005, p. 20). Ironically, President Bush used examples of Hussein's ‘regime of torture’ to justify his war against terror, “relying heavily on the image of Saddam Hussein as the embodiment of savage evil, in part because he engaged in torture” (Smith & Dionisopoulos, 2008, p. 314).

With the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, the massive prison complex was temporarily abandoned. Shortly thereafter, Abu Ghraib was remodeled as a prison facility controlled by the U.S. military. Abu Ghraib was intended to house only Iraqi common criminals; however, due to an unanticipated volume of Iraqi detainees, U.S. military police also began placing their prisoners into the mix of inmates. By the end of the year, Abu Ghraib housed thousands of Iraqi prisoners, many of whom were civilians captured during military house raids and at highway checkpoints (Hersh, 2005, p. 21).

While the majority of inmates were classified as common criminals, some were viewed as security risks, and a small number were considered “high-value detainees,” including former high-ranking members of Hussein’s regime (Rajiva, 2005, p. 10). Importantly, Abu Ghraib contained mostly civilians and had never been intended as a military prison to detain or interrogate insurgents. Yet a key component of the Abu Ghraib scandal that presumably led to the prisoner abuses was the “softening up” of prisoners in preparation for interrogation (Brody, 2005, p. 150).

Ironically, Brigadier General Janis L. Karpinski, the initial commander of the Military Police, considered Saddam’s former “torture chamber” to be a luxurious place for detainees. Karpinski stated in December 2003 that the “living conditions now are better in prison than at home. ... At one point we were worried [the detainees] wouldn’t want to leave” (Otterman, 2007, p. 165). However, in a few short months, graphic evidence of the abuses occurring during that same time period would once again associate Abu Ghraib with its sadistic past.

#### Caught in the Act - The Evidence Revealed

Abu Ghraib was under U.S. military authority less than a year before the shocking images of prisoner abuse were broadcast, to the horror of Americans, Iraqis and the world. The notorious pictures included “leering G.I.s taunting naked Iraqi prisoners who are forced to assume humiliating poses” (Hersh, 2005, p. 23). Nobody would soon forget or dismiss the images of Private Lynndie England, one of the Military Police Officers (MPOs), dragging a naked Iraqi prisoner on a dog leash; or “giving a jaunty thumbs-up sign and pointing at the genitals of a young Iraqi, who [was] naked except for a sandbag



over his head” as he was forced to masturbate (Hersh, 2005, p. 23). One prisoner was forced to balance on a box, naked except for a black hood placed over his head, appearing as “an off-kilter Halloween Christ with bare feet and palms plaintively open, electric wires running from the hands like the stings of a marionette” (Rajiva, 2005, p. 10). Still other photos revealed prisoners posed in tangled, naked human pyramids, being forced to simulate homosexual acts, uncomfortably handcuffed in stress positions, or being intimidated by snarling dogs to the amusement of American soldiers looking on. These were the images that “set the national and international media on fire” (Rajiva, 2005, p. 10), and which disgraced and overshadowed the United States’ war efforts in Iraq.

While CBS’s *60 Minutes II* was the first to broadcast images from Abu Ghraib, the U.S. Army administration had been aware of alleged prisoner abuses for several months. In fact, Major General Antonio M. Taguba commenced his investigation at Abu Ghraib on January 14, 2004 – over four months before the images were publicly broadcast. Taguba’s report documented that “numerous incidences of sadistic, blatant, and wanton criminal abuses were inflicted on several detainees” at Abu Ghraib between October and December 2003 (Danner, 2004, p. 292).

The report cites several specific incidences of “systemic and illegal abuse” conducted by members of certain Military Police Companies and Brigades, which were substantiated by eyewitness testimony collected during his investigation and “extremely graphic photographic evidence” (Danner, 2004, p. 292). While Major General Taguba was aware of the photographs, he chose not to include them in his report allegedly due to ongoing investigations by the Army’s Criminal Investigation Command (CID) and the video and images’ “extremely sensitive nature” (Danner, 2004, p. 292). Testimony from

Major General Taguba's report became publicly available through Hersh. In April 2004, Hersh obtained a copy of Taguba's report, exposing its content in the article he wrote for *The New Yorker*, which was published two days following the airing of the photos on *60 Minutes II* (Hersh, 2005, p. 22).

The six soldiers represented in the images were members of the 800<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade. Due to the military's investigation of the abuses, the six suspected soldiers were being housed together in Baghdad at the time of the images' release on *60 Minutes II*. The "bad apples of the night shift," as they would later be labeled, included Staff Sergeant Ivan L. Frederick II, Specialist Charles A. Graner, Sergeant Javal Davis, Specialist Megan Ambuhl, Specialist Sabrina Harman, and Private Jeremy Sivits (Hersh, 2005, p. 23). Their charges included "conspiracy, dereliction of duty, cruelty toward prisoners, maltreatment, assault, and indecent acts" (Hersh, 2005, p. 23). The seventh soldier depicted in the images, Private Lynndie England, would be charged later, as she was no longer stationed in Iraq when her fellow conspirators were charged. Private England had been reassigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, after it was discovered that she was pregnant with Specialist Charles Graner's child.

#### Bad Apples and Poisoned Orchards

One crucial element relating to the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses is how the government reacted to the disclosure of the incident, in addition to the various theories and explanations accounting for why and how the abuses at Abu Ghraib occurred. In light of the "international embarrassment for the United States," and the "shadow over the war in Iraq" generated by these images (Smith & Dionisopoulos, 2008, p. 309; Ricchiardi & Cirillo, 2004, p. 24), the Bush administration chose to separate itself from

the blame for these abuses, labeling them as an isolated incident. While addressing the nation on May 24, 2004, President Bush labeled the prisoner abuses “disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values” (Brody, 2005, p. 146).

However, this “bad apple” theory of the abuses occurring by a few lower-level soldiers has been largely discredited, due in part by the disclosure of additional official government memos permitting controversial interrogation techniques, and military reports that criticize the flawed policies and environment at Abu Ghraib. For example, Reed Body (2005) directly blamed the Bush administration for the abuses, stating that the events at Abu Ghraib “resulted from decisions made by the Bush administration to bend, ignore, or cast rules aside” (p. 146). Brody faults the administration for several aspects of the incident, including intentionally circumventing international law in order to further its war agenda, the utilization of coercive interrogation techniques to “soften up” prisoners, and the administration’s failure to take responsibility for the abuses (2005, pp. 146- 149). Brody argues that the Bush administration instead asserted a “see no evil, hear no evil” approach to the reports of detainee abuse that were filed long before the photographs were broadcast (2005, pp. 146-149).

Dinah Pokempner (2005) adds to Brody’s denunciation of the Bush administration by stating that the “most striking feature of the [Abu Ghraib] scandal so far has been the relative lack of consequence to those in high position” (2005, p. 168). She disagreed with the Bush administration’s decision to deny rights afforded by the Geneva Conventions to those classified as “enemy combatant,” when stating, “the idea that the Geneva Conventions were ‘quaint’ or ‘obsolete’ in the war against terror...can be

read as a legal reflection of attitudes that the highest [military] leaders were voicing much earlier” (Pokempner, 2005, p. 163). While the detainees at Abu Ghraib were entitled to the rights afforded by the Geneva Conventions, Pokempner is asserting that the Bush administration’s attitude towards the use of controversial interrogation techniques and denying rights to enemy combatants at other prisons aided in the abusive treatment at Abu Ghraib.

In addition, Mestrovic (2007) argues that although the military generally gives officers the responsibility for the actions of the soldiers below them, lower-level soldiers were blamed for the prisoner abuses and became scapegoats for the Bush administration (p. 211). Mestrovic argues that responsibility for the actions of the “bad apples” should have been accepted at a higher level in the chain-of-command rather than affixed to the bottom-rung soldiers. Thus, instead of blaming the MPOs seen abusing the detainees in the photographs, the MPOs’ superiors and the military leadership should be held responsible for the abuses. Nonetheless, Mestrovic (2007) states that this doctrine of command responsibility presupposes that “officers could have taken measures to report, prevent, or stop abuse” (p. 212). However, there is evidence “from reports and testimony that officer and soldier alike were ignored, intimidated, invalidated or otherwise rendered helpless when it came to efforts to exercise their duty in these regards” (Mestrovic, 2007, p. 212). Thus, it is possible that the complex joint command structure at Abu Ghraib reduced the ability of lower-level soldiers to report and stop the abuses.

Further evidence supporting a “poisoned orchard” (Mestrovic, 2007) explanation of responsibility, over that of simply “bad apples,” is supported by subsequently conducted military reports. As noted by Bennett, et al. (2007), the “Schlesinger report

and the Fay report ... released within days of each other in late August 2004, offered a more critical analysis that pointed to higher levels of responsibility” (p. 85). Specifically, the Fay report “faults senior military commanders for helping to create the conditions for what happened at Abu Ghraib by conducting overzealous ‘cordon and capture’ missions that brought thousands of detainees of questionable intelligence value into the facility” (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 85). The Fay report also faults General Ricardo Sanchez for the “policy confusion among low-level soldiers carrying out interrogations” (Bennett, et al., 2007, p. 85). More broadly, Bennett claims that the Schlesinger report holds Defense Secretary Rumsfeld indirectly responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib “by failing to plan for and respond to the Iraqi insurgency and the swelling of the prison population adequately, and by sowing confusion about which interrogation tactics were allowable” (Bennett et al, 2007, p. 86).

In addition to Mestrovic’s claim that the lower-level soldiers were scapegoats of the Bush administration, he also states that theories of “extreme social disorganization and chaos” describe the dire situation at Abu Ghraib that led to the prisoner abuses. “*Confusion* is the word that crops up most frequently as the explanation for the social chaos at Abu Ghraib” (Mestrovic, 2007, p. 35). Mestrovic asserts that ordinarily social systems will “self-correct” before allowing chaos to persist, as a chaotic environment lends itself to abuse (2007, p. 35). However, the social situation at Abu Ghraib was unable to self-correct and became abusive for several reasons, including the confusion over authorized interrogation techniques, the responsibility and accountability expected of various personnel at Abu Ghraib, and the lack of accountability of the chain-of-command at higher levels.

This concept of social disorganization is further explored in Mestrovic and Lorenzo's (2008) article "Durkheim's Concept of *Anomie* and the Abuse at Abu Ghraib." Theorist Emile Durkheim described *anomie* as a behavioral "state of disorganization involving lack of coordination and other variations of social chaos that sets the stage for violence and abuse" (Mestrovic & Lorenzo, 2008, p. 180). Government reports investigating the prisoner abuses documented "not only abuse but also high levels of social disorganization and *anomie* at Abu Ghraib" (Mestrovic & Lorenzo, 2008, p. 185). However, the military reports of the prisoner abuses "lay the primary blame for specifically sexual and violent abuse on a 'few bad apples' (morally corrupt individuals) and neglect the question of blame for the state of social chaos that led to the abuse" (Mestrovic & Lorenzo, 2008, p. 185). In their opinion, based on the environment of *anomie* created at Abu Ghraib, the abuses should have been anticipated by the administration.

In sum, the reviewed literature and theories provide explanations that discredit the Bush administration's explanation of how and why the abuses at Abu Ghraib occurred. The Bush administration claimed that the abuses were solely the fault of a few "bad apple" lower-level soldiers acting on their own unconscionable accord. However, others – from military investigators to academic researchers – assert one or more alternative explanations including the abuses were the result of ambiguous regulations, law was intentionally circumvented [Brody], there was inadequate planning or preparation, social chaos abounded in the prison, and normal military communications were disrupted or distorted.

## Roles of the Media

In addition to reviewing the facts and various explanations of how and why the abuses at Abu Ghraib occurred, it is essential to also explore theories of how the media creates and presents news stories, in order to gain insight on the role of the media in either promoting or hindering competing understanding and explanations of events like Abu Ghraib. The following studies analyze the effectiveness of the Bush administration to frame the War on Terror and promote its “bad apple” theory through the media.

Three basic roles fulfilled by the press include the signaler, the common carrier, and the watchdog (Patterson, 2003). While acting as a signaler, the press alerts the public to important events as they materialize. The press essentially failed in this role for Abu Ghraib, as the media did not publish details of the prisoner abuses until months after the government had announced its investigation into the allegations. However, a second aspect of the signaler role is “agenda setting,” or the ability of the press to “focus the public’s attention” and influence what people think about, thus creating the public’s agenda (Patterson, 2003, p. 308).

Aligned with the concept of “agenda setting,” framing theories describe the media’s ability to choose which events to publish and how to characterize them. Framing itself can be broken down into two categories –media frames and individual frames. Scheufele (1999) has systemized and developed a process model of framing and restated Gamson and Modigliani’s (1987) definition of a media frame as “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events... The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (1999, p. 106). Individual frames are defined as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’

process of information” (Scheufele, 1999, p. 107; Entman, 2003). At the media level, the way in which journalists frame an issue may be influenced by organizational or social-structural variables; furthermore, individual level frames are the outcomes of the way the mass media framed the event (Scheufele, 1999, p. 107). Thus, the “agenda setting” role of the media is visible in framing events that media publishes, and also how the audience will perceive such events.

From her study on the ability of “iconic news media images [to] exercise power in the shaping of news, politics, and public opinion,” Kari Anden-Papadopoulos concludes that the Abu Ghraib photographs were not “spoken for” or “tamed” by dominant news frames (2008, p. 5). Conversely, the images instead come to illustrate a view of U.S. foreign policy whereby the “sight of American troops in the role of sadistic torturers has become an integral part of our understanding of the Bush administration’s ‘war on terror’”(Anden-Papadopoulos, 2008, p. 5). Thus, Anden-Papadopoulos is arguing that the Abu Ghraib photos themselves have served to influence how the War on Terror is perceived, and were not overpowered by news frames created by the media.

Furthermore, studies have been conducted on the ability of the Bush administration to successfully create a media frame favorable to the War on Terror, and whether incidents such as the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib served to diminish such frames. Smith and Dionisopoulos (2008) argue that President Bush initially justified the invasion of Iraq through the “Manichean dichotomy of good versus evil” (p. 308). However, the Abu Ghraib images created a “break” in this frame, which the Bush administration attempted to repair by separating itself and higher-level military officials from the abuses by faulting lower-level Military Police. That is, President Bush used the



“bad apple” theory to disassociate the administration from this isolated incident of abuse and repair the image of the War on Terror as a fight of “good versus evil.”

In contrast, Anden-Papadopoulos (2008) argues that the photographs, depicting a small number of lower-level American soldiers abusing Iraqi detainees, illustrate the Bush administration’s theory that the prisoner abuses were an isolated incident performed by the lower-level soldiers, whereas Hersh’s article represents a counter frame “claiming that the photographs testified to a new policy of torture in the US war on terrorism” (p. 14). Thus, Anden-Papadopoulos believes that the *60 Minutes II* airing of the photographs and Hersh’s article in *The New Yorker*

set the stage for what, in retrospect, has crystallized as the two competing ‘master narratives’ in the subsequent debate over how to understand the content and implications of the Abu Ghraib photographs, and by extension, the meaning of the Iraq war and occupation. (2008, p. 13)

The use of the photographs and Hersh’s article as the “master narratives,” which became publicly available within days of each other, create a starting point for analyzing the media’s initial reaction to the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses.

Similarly, Cziesche (2007) analyzed the Bush administration’s War on Terror frame as a “single-sided account of reality” (p. 1). In his study, Cziesche used the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* to conduct a quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis to assess whether “criticising the administration’s ‘war on terror’ [had] become a frequent pattern after the official end of the Iraq war” (2007, p. 1). He concludes that not only had the Bush administration’s ability to maintain its single-sided press media frame diminished, but the competency and integrity of the administration was also called into question (Cziesche, 2007, p. 1).

In addition to the role of the signaler, the press may also function in the role of the “common carrier.” In this role, journalists base their stories on explanations given by public officials, as the media functions as an “open channel through which political leaders can communicate with the public” (Patterson, 2003, p. 308). Thus, the media can be seen as the “fourth branch of the government,” due to the close relationship between the government and the media (Hoffman and Wallach, 2007 p. 618).

However, this close relationship with the government can sometimes be trumped by additional sources influencing the media, thus challenging the common carrier role of the media. Moreover, “strategies such as where, when and how articles are placed on the front page of newspapers is influential” (Hoffman & Wallach, 2007, p. 618). As a *Washington Post* writer notes, the front page of a newspaper “is a newspaper’s billboard, its way of making a statement about what is important, and stories trumpeted there are often picked by other news outlets” (Hoffman and Wallach, p. 619). Thus, instead of complying with the government, the media may allow other influences to have a greater leverage on what is published, particularly when it comes to major stories.

The third function of the media is being the public’s “watchdog.” In this role, the media serves to protect the public from political deceit; “the press stands ready to expose any official who violates accepted legal, ethical, and performance standards” (Patterson, 2003, p. 311). Instead of acting as an additional branch of the government, the media uses this function to keep the government in check, both legally and ethically. The independent watchdog function of the press is essential for a democratic government (McChesney, 2006). “The notion of a free press, of an institution that monitors those in power and those who wish to be in power, that ferrets out truth from lies, that draws

public attention to the pressing issues of our times, is a cornerstone of liberal democratic theory” (McChesney, 2006, p. 116). In his article, McChesney emphasized the need for a free press that enables the citizens to monitor the government’s discretion, particularly its war-making powers (2006, p. 116). However, he argues that in reporting on the war in Iraq, the press failed to act independently; it instead acted more in the role of the common carrier. McChesney (2006) claims that despite many journalists’ belief that the news reports justifying the invasion of Iraq were based on deceptive information, journalists continued to voice these justifications without sufficient challenge the Bush administration’s policies (p. 129). In other words, he argues that media coverage on the war in Iraq was a regurgitation of the Bush administration’s version of the facts.

Likewise, W. Lance Bennett describes the Bush administration’s ability to manipulate the media into publishing a positive War on Terror frame. Bennett asserts that democratic accountability is threatened when “narrow political calculations or intense ideological preferences bend the facts in the service of poorly examined policy, and there is no opposition within government with enough power or courage to challenge that course of policy” (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 48). Here, he claims that this situation occurs when one party disproportionately controls the government, leaving the other party powerless in the decision-making process. However, “when all parties to the public information system are operating in reasonably good faith, the public receives a generally good accounting of its important issues” (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 48) Thus, Bennett asserts that when all parties responsible for relaying information to the public are reporting accurately, the public is able to receive an honest and balanced account of important events. However, when a political party controls the government, it also

controls the media. Consequently, the public receives an unbalanced account of the news.

Bennett's assumptions were further developed in his indexing theory, which theorized that mainstream news generally aligns its coverage with that of the "official consensus and conflict displayed in statements of the key government officials" in policy implementing roles (2007, p. 49). Bennett's theory is essentially a "gate-keeping" role of the media that is dictated by the government, creating a "weighting system for what gets into the news, what prominence it receives, how long it gets covered, and who gets a voice in the stories" (2007, p. 48).

Bennett has conducted several studies to test his indexing theory, including an investigation into the press' independence from the Bush administration when reporting on the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib. His study examined how national news coverage defined the incidents at Abu Ghraib, and whether they used the words "mistreatment, abuse, torture, or scandal" to test how the media used them in relation to the Bush administration's account of what happened or other reports and news sources that condemned the acts as torture (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 90). Bennett's study concluded that the Bush administration had a "near monopoly" of the story, which he believed was due to the Democratic Party's lack of power and ability to oppose the Bush administration (Bennett et al., p. 103). This conclusion supports Bennett's indexing theory and the media's tendency to report news from a perspective consistent with the views voiced by the political party in power.

The above-mentioned studies and theories exemplify the research that has been conducted on the Bush administration's use of media frames, in particular to the War on

Terror and the Abu Ghraib images. In order to set the agenda for the invasion of Iraq as a justified battle between good and evil, most studies conclude that the Bush administration utilized a War on Terror media frame, which was consequently diminished by the Abu Ghraib photographs. Furthermore, researchers argue that by emphasizing that the abuses were an isolated incident conducted by lower-level military officers, President Bush intended to rebuild this War on Terror frame, by disassociating these abuses from the administration and the policies implementing the War on Terror.

While the conclusions drawn by these studies reveal aspects of the media's portrayal of the Abu Ghraib incidents, the emphasis has been on the ability of the Bush administration to influence what the media publicized about the incident, rather than the media's reaction to the sudden disclosure of the prisoner abuses. Thus, I conduct a content analysis of the articles written immediately after the release of the photos aired on *60 Minutes II* and Seymour Hersh's article in *The New Yorker*, in order to explore the immediate reaction and impression three print media outlets provided of the emerging story concerning the prisoner abuses. My analysis will expand upon and enrich the available studies relating to media framing of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. I identify and compare specific themes and details in three newspapers' coverage and initial reporting. This approach departs from other studies that only focus on the administration's media framing of the scandal. My study will also examine the above-discussed approaches to analyzing the media, including the different roles of the media, indexing and framing theories. The accuracy of these theories, in relation to print media on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses, will be tested and compared with the results of my study.

## Chapter 2: Research Methods

In order to analyze the way in which print media reacted to the sudden disclosure of the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib, I have chosen to conduct a content analysis of the top three most influential and widely circulated U.S. national newspapers: the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *USA Today*. The *New York Times* “is not the largest-circulation daily in the country,” however, “the influence it has on the intellectual and political world is considerable” (Quick, 2003, p. 1023). The *USA Today* is considered among the top three most influential newspapers due to its influence on other papers, and its focus on news coverage from a national perspective (Quick, 2003). The *USA Today* “makes an effort to cover news of national importance and includes news from every state in every edition” (Quick, 2003, p. 1023). Lastly, the *Wall Street Journal* is “not necessarily representative of most American newspapers, but its influence on Wall Street, and thus the world, is immense” (Quick, 2003, p. 1023).

In addition to their influence in separate spheres, the writing style of each newspaper is distinctive. The *New York Times* is known for its investigative style journalism, whereas the *Wall Street Journal* focuses on “business news, and approaches national news from a business angle” (Quick, 2003, p. 1023). However, the *Wall Street Journal* has also won several Pulitzer Prizes for its reporting on non-business related news. The *USA Today* is known for its use of color photographs and its “quick read” writing style. Furthermore, “many of its design innovations have silently been adopted by competing papers;” for example, its use of color photographs and weather map, or daily infographs (Quick, 2003, p. 1023). The different writing styles and targeted

audience of each newspaper, which are anticipated to create several contrasting points, will be taken into account during the comparison of their articles on Abu Ghraib.

The sample size of my data consists of 190 articles from all three newspapers, that were published between April 29, 2004 and May 13, 2004. This period encompasses the first two weeks after *60 Minutes II* first aired photographs of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. Articles were located using the Dow Jones Factiva.com database, with a keyword search for “Abu Ghraib” from the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* during the selected timeframe. Factiva.com was selected as a database because it provided full articles from all three newspapers, as compared to other search engines that were only able to provide abstracts or select editions of the newspapers. While the original sample size consisted of 211 articles, duplicates, daily “new summaries” of the articles provided in the newspaper edition, and articles that reference “Abu Ghraib” but were not related to the prisoner abuses, were removed from the sample. Articles were from any section of the newspaper, including news articles, editorials and letters to the editor.

The timeframe of two weeks – April 29 to May 13, 2004 – is representative of the initial reaction to the disclosure of the prisoner abuses by the top three most influential and widely circulated U.S. daily newspapers. As my research question focuses on the media’s reaction to this disclosure by the airing of the photographs and Hersh’s article detailing the Taguba report, the timeframe and volume of articles in this sample is large enough and appropriate for an in-depth content analysis. Moreover, several key events related to the government’s reaction to the disclosure of information concerning the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses occurred during these two weeks, including: President Bush’s

interviews with Arab satellite news channels on May 5, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's testimony before Congress on May 7 and Major General Taguba's testimony before Congress on May 11, 2004.

In order to conduct my research, several key aspects have been identified for analysis. First, in order to provide a quantitative overview of the volume and variety of articles within each newspaper, the number and variety of articles (news pieces, editorials or letters to the editor) was considered for each newspaper individually, in addition to an overall analysis.

Second, the qualitative analysis involved coding the content of each article, categorizing and analyzing the underlying meaning of the communicated ideas (Babbie, 2007, p. 325). The unit of analysis for this study is each individual article. Results will be compared and contrasted among each individual newspaper and type of article, in addition to overall results comprised of all the articles in the data sample.

In order to code the articles, the following categories and questions have been selected:

- What does each article identify as problems associated with the prisoner abuses?
- Who or what is responsible for what happened at Abu Ghraib?
- What is, or should be done to correct the situation, if anything?
- What are the consequences resulting from this incident?
- Sources used to write each article as well as who is quoted or interviewed, and frequency of these sources
- Which events are covered or left out by each paper?



- Any additional patterns from notable keywords, phrases or names used in the articles.

Additionally, a key concern of this study was to consider whether each article was balanced or unbalanced. Articles were classified as unbalanced if they contained opinions that weighed more heavily towards one explanation of events at Abu Ghraib over another, and whether they weighed heavily towards one political party over the other. For example, articles that were attributed solely to Senator John Kerry, described as President Bush's likely democratic challenger for the November 2004 election, which include how he would have handled the occupation in Iraq differently from the Bush administration, were considered to be unbalanced. Furthermore, due to the unresolved issue of who was responsible for the abuses, articles that favorably quoted Military Police Officers (MPOs) saying they were following orders from Military Intelligence, but did not equally quote Military Intelligence or others within the military leadership contesting this claim, were considered to be unbalanced.

### Limitations

The selected two-week timeframe is not intended to illustrate the media's reaction of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses as a whole, but to provide a sampling of the three influential newspapers' immediate reaction. It is also recognized that the selected newspapers differ considerably in their writing style, objective goals and intended audience. However, these differences will provide for a richer qualitative comparison of the articles' content. While a quantitative analysis of the volume of articles numerically measuring the newspaper's reaction to the Abu Ghraib incident is provided, the main focus of this study is to identify and assess the ideas that are articulated through the articles.

Lastly, the reliability of the coding must be addressed. One strength of using recorded communications as a source of data is the ability to recode the data. In order to increase the reliability of this method, the use of secondary coders were employed to ensure coding consistency.

### Chapter Three: Results

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis. Numerical and style differences have been provided for each individual newspaper – the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* – in addition to each type of article—news, editorials, and letters to the editor. This analysis provides for a quantitative image of the data, and any distinctive characteristics, such as writing style.

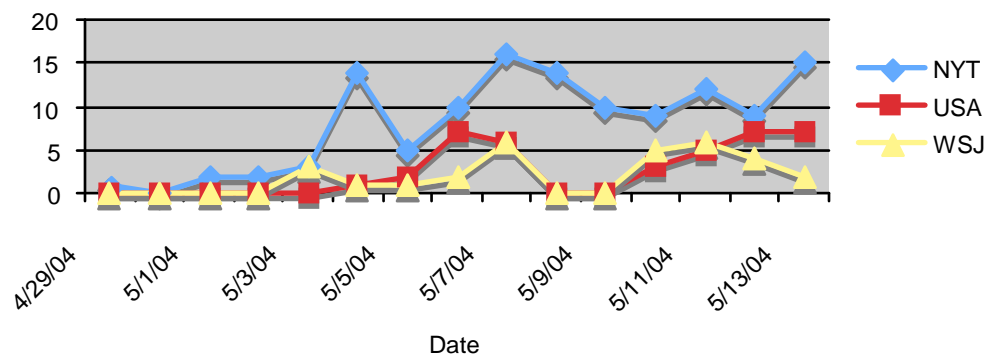
Next, the content of each article was coded into five possible categories: a) identified problems associated with the Abu Ghraib abuses; b) who or what is blamed empirically for the Military Police Officers' (MPOs') behavior; c) who is blamed morally for the abuses occurring; d) consequences of the abuses; and e) steps that are or need to be taken to correct the situation. Each category illustrates a component of how the newspapers initially reacted to the disclosure of evidence for the abuses, and serves to answer the research questions: What aspects of the prisoner abuses do the articles identify as problems? Who is responsible for what happened at Abu Ghraib? What is, or should be done to correct the situation? And last, what are the consequences of this incident? By coding the content of each article into its respective category, patterns of similar statements or explanations emerged, and were subsequently grouped into subcategories.

In addition to the overall conclusions derived as a result of assessing all articles, conclusions have been categorized by each newspaper and type of article individually. Thus, patterns of similarities and differences can be compared and contrasted among newspapers and types of article.

#### Quantitative Data Analysis

By far, the dominant source of articles in this study was the *New York Times*. Out of a total sample of 190 articles, 121 articles were from the *New York Times*. By comparison, the data sample included 31 articles from the *Wall Street Journal* and 38 from *USA Today*. The graph below displays the volume of coverage by newspaper per day during my two-week timeframe from April 29, 2004 through April 13, 2004.

**Table 1: Articles Per Newspaper Per Day**



### The *New York Times*

As previously noted, the *New York Times* comprised 121 articles, consisting of 65 news articles, 26 editorials and 30 letters to the editor. The *New York Times* is known for its style of investigative journalism (Quick, p. 1023). In separate articles, the *New York Times* discussed multiple angles and perspectives of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. For example, *New York Times* coverage of Abu for May 4, 2004 consisted of three news articles, one editorial and ten letters to the editor. Of the news articles, one discussed the role of civilian employees at Abu Ghraib, one discussed the abusive treatment of a former Iraqi detainee, and one discussed the military's first reprimands given to seven soldiers accused of conducting the abuses. All three articles are related to the Abu Ghraib scandal, but each discusses a separate and distinct aspect. In comparison, on the same

day, the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* published only one news article and no editorials or letters to the editor. It is also significant that the *New York Times* commenced its coverage of Abu Ghraib on April 29, 2004, the day after the photographs were aired on *60 Minutes II* -- four days ahead of the *Wall Street Journal* and five days prior to the *USA Today* publishing their first articles on Abu Ghraib.

Additionally, the ratio of balanced to unbalanced *New York Times* articles was assessed. Of the *New York Times* articles in my sample, 18 out of 65 (28%) of the news articles were considered unbalanced, 22 out of 26 editorials (85%) were considered unbalanced, and 25 out of 30 letters to the editor (83%) were considered unbalanced. However, it is significant that 28% of the news articles were defined as unbalanced since news articles would be expected to report facts of a particular event, rather than express an opinion.

#### The *Wall Street Journal*

The *Wall Street Journal* published the least number of articles contained in my data sample, with only 31 articles – 17 news, 10 editorials and 4 letters to the editor. While the number of *Wall Street Journal* articles is less than half the number of *New York Times* articles, it is roughly comparable to the number of *USA Today* articles. While the *Wall Street Journal* is known to approach news from a business angle (Quick, p. 1023), only 1 of the 31 articles discussed the Abu Ghraib scandal from a business perspective. That article, published on May 12, 2004, focused on how the prisoner abuses were affecting the companies whose civilian contractor employees had been named in the Taguba report for their association with the abuse (Zuckerman & Karp, 2004, p. C1).

The ratio of balanced versus unbalanced news was also assessed for *Wall Street Journal* articles. Of the 17 news articles, only 3 (18%) were found to be unbalanced, the lowest percentage among the three newspapers. As anticipated, 10 out of 10 editorials and 4 out of 4 letters to the editor were found to be unbalanced. The *Wall Street Journal's* profile of a high percentage of balanced news articles and unbalanced editorials and letters to the editor, is more in line with expected results as compared to the *New York Times*.

#### The USA Today

*USA Today* contributed 38 out of the total 190 articles, of which 22 were news articles, 6 were editorials, and 10 were letters to the editor. As previously noted, *USA Today* was last to commence its reporting on the Abu Ghraib abuses, publishing its first article on May 4, 2004. While the *New York Times* discussed distinct aspects of the Abu Ghraib incident in separate articles, both the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* published a smaller number of articles discussing the latest and most pertinent newsworthy developments from Abu Ghraib. However, *USA Today* was unique in considering the effects that Abu Ghraib could have on other cultural events. For example, one *USA Today* article discussed how members of the U.S. Olympic team needed to be sensitive to the fact that the image of the U.S. had already been badly tarnished by the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses and therefore should not be overzealous in their display of American pride.

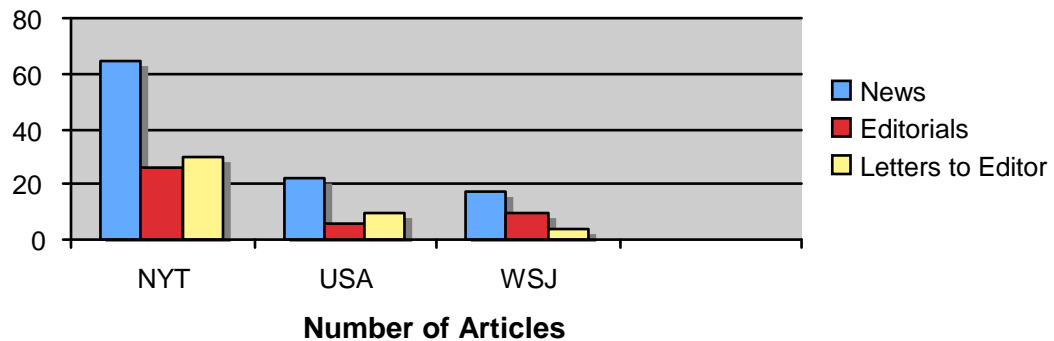
Similar to the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today* articles were analyzed to determine levels of balanced versus unbalanced reporting. Out of 22 news articles, 7 (32%) were defined as unbalanced. This percentage is the highest of the three

newspapers. *USA Today* articles convey more of an editorial edge than the other two newspapers, and use stronger more definite language to convey its points. For example, one *USA Today* news article offers strong character opinions about Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, including the comment, “The photographs that have shocked Americans, the Arab world and many in uniform also have the ultra-confident Rumsfeld fighting to save his job” (Drinkard, Moniz & Diamond, 2004, p. A.01). Additionally, similar to the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, six out of six (100%) of the editorials and seven out of ten (70%) of the letters to the editor were considered to be unbalanced.

### Type of Article

In addition to analyzing the newspapers individually, it is important to analyze the different types of articles separately. Numerically, of the 190 articles in my sample, 104 were news articles (65 *New York Times*, 22 *USA Today*, 17 *Wall Street Journal*). In addition, 41 articles were editorials (26 *New York Times*, 6 *USA Today* and 10 *Wall Street Journal*). Lastly, my sample included 45 letters to the editor (30 *New York Times*, 10 *USA Today*, 4 *Wall Street Journal*). The graph below illustrates the number of articles by article type for each newspaper.

**Table 2: Number of Articles by Article Type**



## **Qualitative Content Analysis**

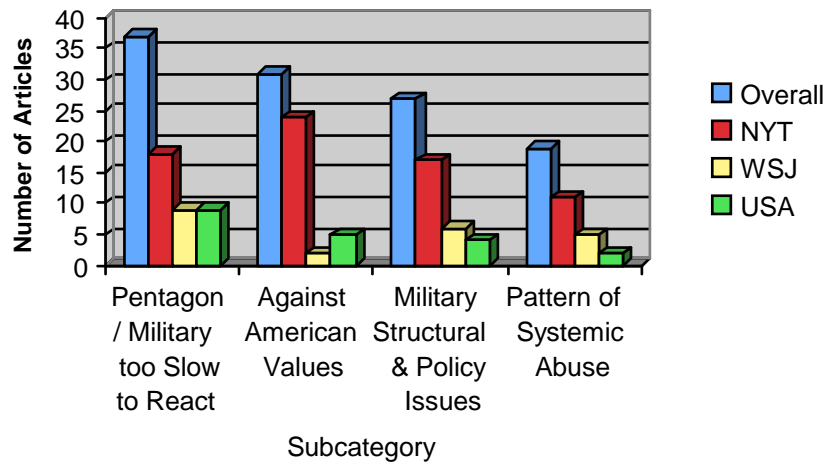
This section provides an explanation for the contents of each of the five categories, and the results from the content analysis. Again, the five coding categories are: a) identified problems associated with the Abu Ghraib abuses; b) who or what is blamed empirically for the Military Police Officers' (MPOs') behavior; c) who is blamed morally for the abuses occurring; d) consequences of the abuses; and e) steps that are or need to be taken to correct the situation. Within each category, the similar responses from the articles were grouped into subcategories, and labeled according to their common attributes.

### Identified Problems

The first category discusses the problems that were identified in association with the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. From analyzing the content of my data sample, 16 subcategories were documented through patterns of recurring problems identified in the articles. Some subcategories identify moral issues, such as the abusive behavior being contrary to American or U.S. military standards and values. Other subcategories identified more tangible problems such as violations of international human rights law, the fact that prisoners died while being detained at Abu Ghraib, and questions concerning the regulations for prosecuting civilian contractors or service members in an occupied territory. Furthermore, although one additional subcategory found the abuses to defy human decency, two other subcategories identify the problem to be as an overreaction to the photographs, or the belief that a double standard of acceptable behavior exists between the United States and the Middle East. The graph below illustrates the four most frequently cited subcategories, and the corresponding results for the three newspapers.



**Table 3: Top 4 Identified Problems**



The most frequently identified problem from all of the articles is that the Pentagon leadership and military were too slow to react to the abuse allegations. Individually, this subcategory was also the most frequently cited problem in both the *Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today*. For instance, an editorial published by the *USA Today* on May 4, 2004 it states: “Nearly as disturbing as the repulsive behavior by some U.S. soldiers is the fact that the Pentagon has been so slow to share the sense of outrage over their actions, even though it has known about the allegations for almost six months” (“Pentagon too slow to decry shameful U.S. acts in Iraq,” 2004, p. A.12). This subcategory also contained text and quotations describing the irate reaction of members of Congress to the fact that Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had not informed them earlier of the photographs and acts of abuse.

The vast majority of articles in this subcategory discuss the delayed reaction of the Pentagon to actively investigate the abuse allegations and timely inform President Bush and Congress. However, some articles defend the Pentagon’s actions, stating that

the military had publicly announced an internal investigation into the abuses starting in January 2004, presumably when military leadership first learned of the photographs taken at Abu Ghraib. In a news article published on May 3, 2004, the *Wall Street Journal* quotes General Richard B. Myers saying: “It’s important to realize that it was American soldiers that turned [the photographs] in and that as soon as we found out about it, we took very quick action to investigate the situation” (Fassihi, Jaffe & Cloud, 2004, p. A3).

Differing from the results for the combined articles, the most frequently mentioned subcategory in *New York Times* articles was that the abuses were against American values. This subcategory contains text and quotations from a variety of articles asserting the abuses do not represent the American people or their ethical values. For example, articles frequently mention President Bush’s April 30, 2004 public address regarding the disclosure of information on Abu Ghraib. A *New York Times* article from May 1, 2004, quotes President Bush asserting: “I share deep disgust that those prisoners were treated the way they were treated... Their treatment does not reflect the nature of the American people” (Shanker & Steinberg, 2004).

The second and third most frequently cited subcategories pertaining to the *New York Times*, were the military’s problematic policies and organizational structure, and that the Pentagon and military were too slow to react to the abuse allegations. A *New York Times* news article from May 3, 2004 exemplifies military structural and policy issues when asserting, “The Taguba report... reveal[s] a much broader pattern of command failures than initially acknowledged by the Pentagon and the Bush administration in responding to outrage over the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison” (Risen, 2004).

While these two subcategories were tied for second in the *New York Times*' news and editorial articles, they were only cited once each in letters to the editor. The two most frequently mentioned subcategories within the letters to the editor were that the abuses were against American values, and defied human decency. For example, concern that the abuses defy human decency is evident in a *New York Times* letter to the editor, asking "Do you really need training or supervision to know that treating human beings in such a manner is simply wrong and inhuman" (Singh, 2004). This result shows a different focus between what the *New York Times* published in their news articles, and what their readers wrote to the editor in response.

After the above-noted primacy of the slow Pentagon and military reactions, the *Wall Street Journal*'s second and third most frequently cited subcategories were problems with the military's structure and policies, and that the prisoner abuses violated military standards and values. For example, one article quotes Rumsfeld saying:

The images that we've seen that include U.S. forces are deeply disturbing, both because of the fundamental unacceptability of what they depicted and because the actions by U.S. military personnel in those photos do not in any way represent the values of our country or of the armed forces." (Fields et. al, 2004, p. A4)

Although the *USA Today* also most frequently cited the Pentagon reacting too slowly as an identified problem, its second most cited subcategory was that double standards of acceptable or ethical behavior exist between the U.S. and the Middle East. For instance, a *USA Today* news article from May 11, 2004, quotes a local resident of Colorado Springs saying that although the abuses at Abu Ghraib were disgraceful,

If we're going to show our soldiers pointing guns at naked men, why not show what they've done to us... I went on the Internet and saw the pictures (of the Fallujah mob), cutting our men, limb from limb, for no reason. You don't see that on FOX or CNN." (Ritter, 2004, p. A.01)

This resident is referring to the March 31, 2004 incident in Fallujah during which Iraqi insurgents ambushed and killed four American contractors; beating them and setting them on fire before “jubilantly” dragging their corpses through the streets and hanging them over a bridge (Gettleman, 2004). While the Iraqis were outraged by the abuses at Abu Ghraib, the same outrage was not demonstrated for the graphic incident at Fallujah, which took place just a few weeks prior to the release of the Abu Ghraib photographs.

Furthermore, the top two subcategories for *USA Today*'s letters to the editor were, again, the double standards that exist between the U.S. and the Middle East, and second, that there was an overreaction to the photographs. While small in quantity, these two subcategories combined made up five out of eight of the cited problems from *USA Today*'s letters to the editor. It is significant that other newspapers did not mention these two subcategories as predominantly as the *USA Today*, as they are the two “problem” subcategories serving to undermine the harm and importance of the abuses. While 20% of *USA Today*'s total identified problems were included within these two subcategories, only 7% and 11% of *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* articles identified problems within the two above-mentioned subcategories, respectively.

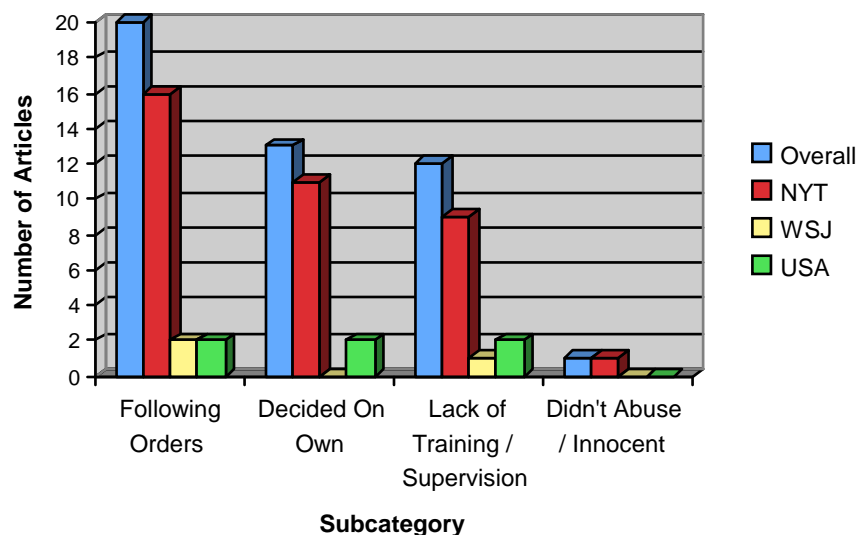
#### Empirical Blame

The next category considers the empirical blame, or actual causes for the abuses at Abu Ghraib. The newspapers in my sample did not question the authenticity of the photographs, but rather considered why the abusive behavior displayed in the photographs had occurred. This category consists of rationales for the behavior of the MPOs, and is separate from the category that questions who or what is morally responsible for the abuses.

From the content analysis, four subcategories were identified: a) Military Police Officers following orders from their superiors; b) a lack of training and supervision; c) the Military Police decided on their own to behave the way they did; and d) that the Military Police did not abuse detainees and are innocent. It is important to note that text from only 1 article out of 190 fell into the fourth category – a *New York Times* news article quoting the father of one of the accused MPOs, Sergeant Frederick. Frederick’s father said, “I’m sure that when all the stuff comes out they’re going to find that the military was wrong. I don’t believe my son would have done anything mean unless it was a direct order. He says he didn’t do any of the things he is accused of” (Day, 2004). Additionally, the overwhelming majority of articles that included explanations of empirical blame were news pieces. Editorials and letters to the editor scarcely included text that was coded into this category – only 5 out of 42 editorials and 1 out of 44 letters to the editor.

The articles’ most frequent empirical explanation for the MPOs’ behavior was that they were following orders from their superiors. This explanation was offered 20 times out of the 190 articles; the claim that MP decided to abuse the detainees on their own was cited 13 times, and the lack of training or supervision explanation was offered 12 times. The graph below illustrates the number of times the four subcategories of empirical blame were cited overall, and by each different type of article.

**Table 4: Empirical Blame**



Examples of articles stating the MP were following orders included several quotations from the accused MPOs themselves, in addition to their lawyers and family members. For instance, Sergeant Frederick is quoted in a *New York Times* article from May 2, 2004 saying:

I questioned some of the things that I saw... such things as leaving inmates in their cell with no clothes or in female underpants, handcuffing them to the door of their cell... The answer I got was, 'This is how military intelligence wants it done'. (Shenon, 2004)

One of the main dilemmas mentioned in the articles is whether the MPOs were following orders from Military Intelligence officers, or whether the MPOs acted independently. Thus, it is significant that the majority of articles explain that the MPOs were following orders from their superiors.

Results for the *New York Times* were the same as the overall analysis – most frequently citing the actual cause of the abuse as the MPOs following orders from their

superiors. This result was expected, as *New York Times* articles make up 16 out of the 20 articles in the combined results that stated the MPOs were following orders.

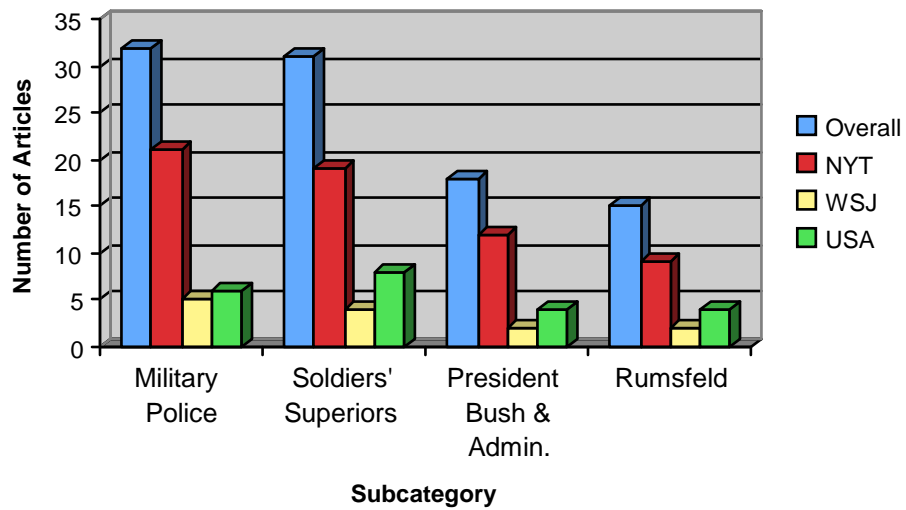
Furthermore, it is significant that only 1 out of 30 letters to the editor mentioned actual causes for the abuses, a pattern that is similarly seen in the individual analysis of the remaining two newspapers.

It is more significant to note that 29 out of the 31 *Wall Street Journal* articles did not mention actual causes for the abuses. Additionally, only 6 out of 38 *USA Today* articles mentioned actual causes, of which two subcategories were equally represented; thus providing no dominant explanation for the MPO's behavior.

#### Blame (Moral)

While the previous category dealt with what caused the MPOs' behavior, this section considers who or what should be blamed for the prisoner abuses that occurred. In other words, this category considers who is morally responsible for the abuses at Abu Ghraib, as portrayed in the three newspapers. From the content of the articles, 11 subcategories have been created. The articles blame not only the MP or the soldiers' superiors, but also specific individuals – such as President Bush or Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, as well as the environment at the prison. The graph below illustrates the four most frequently cited subcategories overall and by newspaper.

**Table 5: Moral Blame**



Overall, the results from this category are almost evenly split between the MP, and the soldiers' superiors or military leadership, as the top categories for moral responsibility. The MPs were cited as responsible in 32 articles and the soldier's superiors were cited 31 times. It is significant that the majority of articles mentioning empirical blame cited the MPOs following orders from their superiors, yet the results are spilt evenly for who is morally responsible for the MPOs' behavior.

Statements blaming the MP include remarks from a *New York Times* letter to the editor that states, "The soldiers who photographed themselves torturing prisoners explain that they were following orders. That old excuse leads to a breakdown of moral order. Rather, we must each say that we stand on our actions" (Somerstein, 2004). Additionally Colonel Phillabaum, who commanded the 320<sup>th</sup> Military Police Battalion at Abu Ghraib, stated of the MPOs' abusive behavior, "If they thought these acts were condoned, then why were they only done a few nights between 0200 and 0400 instead of during any time



between 0600 and 2400 when there were many others around” (Shanker & Filkins, 2004). Colonel Phillabaum’s point is that the MP knew their superiors would not approve of their behavior, and thus the abuses only occurred covertly at night, so as to not get caught. This statement not only suggests that the MP are responsible for their behavior, but that they also knew their behavior was unacceptable and thus cannot blame others for their actions. Furthermore, Colonel Phillabaum’s statement asserts that these tactics were not approved by the military as acceptable ways to “soften up” prisoners before their interrogation.

The total results for the *New York Times*’ most frequently cited subcategories of moral blame were the same as the top two for the combined article results. While this result is consistent with the *New York Times*’ news articles, both the editorials and letters to the editor cited different subcategories as their top two. For the editorials, the two most frequently cited subcategories were tied: first, blaming President Bush and the administration; and second, blaming Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld specifically. It is interesting to compare that the *New York Times* news articles primarily place blame with either the MPOs or the soldiers’ superiors, whereas the editorials blame President Bush or Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. The results for the letters to the editor are a mixture of the leading results from the other two article types: first blaming President Bush and the administration; and second, the MPOs for their own actions.

Furthermore, the results from the *Wall Street Journal* analysis for moral blame are consistent with the combined results and the *New York Times* analyses. However, it is significant that no *Wall Street Journal* letters to the editor mentioned blame, either empirically or morally. Consistent with the other two newspapers, the *USA Today* also

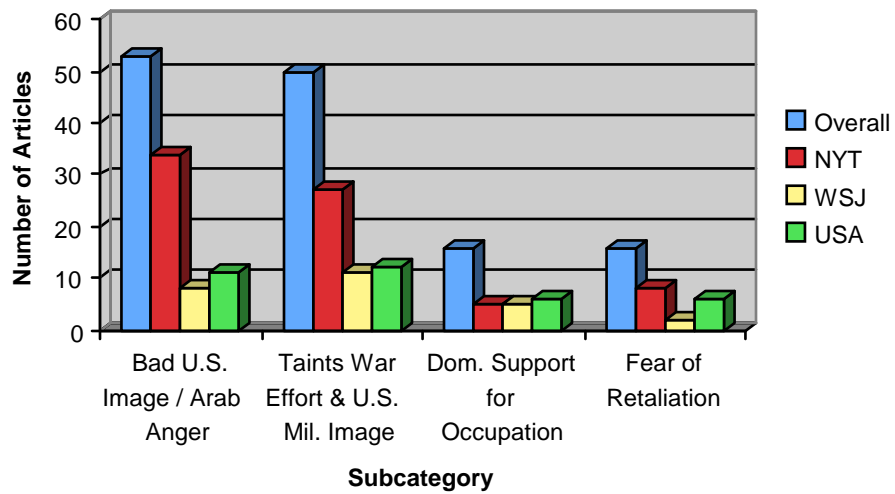
listed the soldiers' superiors and the MP as the two most cited categories. However, the only subcategory cited by *USA Today's* editorials blames Rumsfeld specifically as responsible for the abuses.

#### Consequences of Prisoner Abuse

The fourth category assesses the adverse consequences to U.S. policy and diplomacy caused by the abusive behavior at Abu Ghraib, as depicted by the photos and the Taguba report. This category includes 10 subcategories, which include a fear of retaliation of violence or abuse projected at U.S. troops, a decline in U.S. domestic support for the occupation in Iraq and President Bush's War on Terror, and the delegitimization of U.S. moral authority over global human rights issues.

The two most widely cited consequences were that the abuses created a negative image of the United States in the Middle East, engendering particular anger in the Arab world, and that the abuses tainted the war effort and the image of the U.S. military. Overall, the former category was cited within 53 articles, and the latter was cited within 50 articles. Furthermore, the overall results for the top two subcategories are consistent with the results of each newspaper individually, emphasizing the overwhelming prevalence of these two subcategories compared to the remaining eight subcategories. The graph below illustrates the four most frequently cited consequences overall and by newspaper.

**Table 6: Consequences**



Emphasizing the angry Arab reaction to the abuse photographs, a *Wall Street Journal* article noted “Many Iraqis were appalled but not shocked by the photos and new allegations of abuse, saying that they simply confirmed long-held suspicions that Iraqi prisoners were mistreated” (Fassihi, et al., 2004, p. A3). Furthermore, as a *New York Times* editorial argues:

Terrorists like Osama bin Laden have always intended to use their violence to prod the United States and its allies into demonstrating that their worst anti-American propaganda was true. Abu Ghraib was an enormous victory for them, and it is unlikely that any response by the Bush administration will wipe its stain from the mind of Arabs. (“The Nightmare at Abu Ghraib,” 2004)

An example of content illustrating concern that the behavior at Abu Ghraib would taint the war effort and the U.S. military included Senator John Kerry’s statement that “we cannot let the actions of a few overshadow the tremendous good work that thousands of soldiers are doing every day in Iraq and all over the world” (Shanker & Steinberg, 2004). Similarly, President Bush also asserted “the actions of a handful of soldiers should not taint the tens of thousands who serve honorably in Iraq” (Shanker &

Steinberg, 2004). An additional example is stated in a *New York Times* editorial from May 5, 2004, which states, “the most enduring image of the occupation may be those pictures of grinning American soldiers torturing Iraqi prisoners” (“The Torture Photos,” 2004).

As Smith and Dionisopolous (2008) discuss, President Bush was insistent that the United States was fighting a war of good versus evil. Thus, it is not surprising that the disclosure of photographs from Abu Ghraib, in which Americans are abusing detained prisoners, undermines the image of the United States as “good,” and compromised the legitimacy of the United States’ occupation of Iraq. As stated in a *USA Today* article from May 13, 2004:

Widely publicized photographs of U.S. guards humiliating naked Iraqi inmates at Abu Ghraib prison have dealt the American mission a new hammer blow. In the scandal’s aftermath, many Iraqis... ridicule the idea that the U.S. authorities are the ‘good guys’ who have come to establish human rights and democracy. (Lynch, 2004, p. A.13)

The results of the content analysis for the *New York Times* were the same as the overall results. The most frequently cited subcategory was a negative image of the U.S. and the angry reaction of the Arab people. The second was that the abuses tainted the war effort and the image of the U.S. military. Although these results were consistent for the *New York Times’* news and editorial articles, the letters to the editor equally mentioned three subcategories: the aforementioned two leading subcategories, plus the subcategory documenting that the abuses delegitimize U.S. moral authority over global human rights issues. For example, one author of a letter to the editor writes, “With every revelation of extra-legal abuse tolerated by the Bush administration, America’s once sterling human rights reputation gets dragged down to the level of some third-rate tinpot

dictatorship” (Mezoff, 2004). While this third subcategory is tied for the most cited of the letters to the editor, it is only mentioned 3 times out of the 65 possible news articles; thus illustrating differences among what the *New York Times* publishes as the leading consequences, and the opinions of readers writing to the editor.

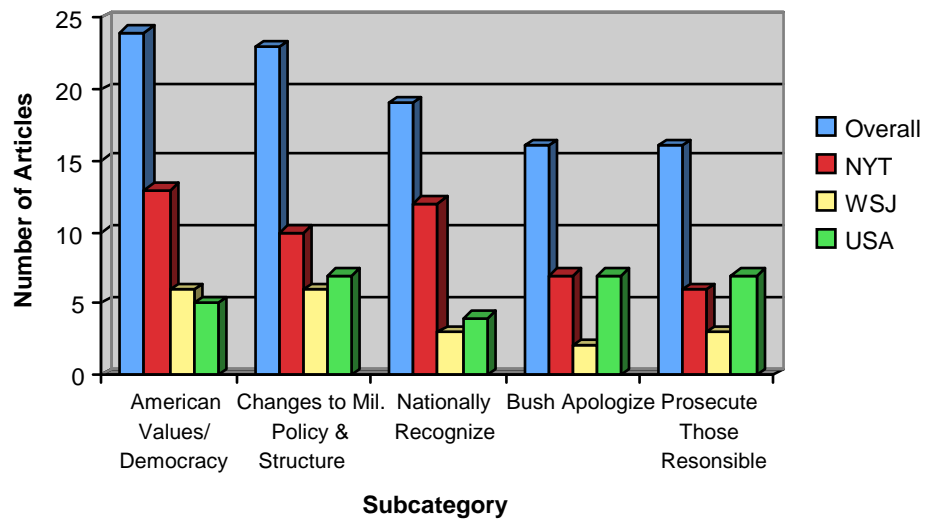
While the top two subcategories for the *Wall Street Journal*'s news articles and editorials were consistent with the other newspapers and combined results, there was divergence related to *Wall Street Journal*'s letters to the editor. Only three out of the four letters to the editor mentioned a consequence, and each was a separate subcategory: a negative image of the U.S., the delegitimizing of U.S. moral authority, and domestic political consequences. While the first two have been discussed, the latter subcategory describes domestic political consequences that could result from the Abu Ghraib abuses. For example, the author of a *Wall Street Journal* letter to the editor discusses his opinion on a previously published editorial; stating that leaking President Bush's reproach of Rumsfeld to the public, “coupled with [Rumsfeld's] contrite testimony before a Senate committee on Friday, has helped deflate the hubris and seeming arrogance that has defined some of his public image during the war in Iraq” (Rice, 2004, p. A19). This description of Rumsfeld responds to a previously published editorial that argued leaking Bush's admonishment of Rumsfeld would show weakness within the administration and harm President Bush's chances for re-election.

#### How to Correct the Situation

This category considered necessary steps the United States is, or needs to be taking in order to undo the damage created by the prisoner abuses, and to ensure that this kind of abuse does not recur at Abu Ghraib or other U.S. detention facilities. From the

content analysis of the articles, 14 subcategories were created based on patterns and repeated phrases and ideas among the data sample. Examples include suggestions that Bush must apologize to the Iraqi people, Rumsfeld should resign, or that the U.S. should ask for international assistance from the United Nations for carrying out the occupation in Iraq. The graph below illustrates the five most frequently cited subcategories overall and by newspaper.

**Table 7: How to Correct the Situation**



The two subcategories most frequently cited were that the United States needs to demonstrate American democratic values, and the need for changes to U.S. military policy and structure in Iraq. The top two categories are mentioned evenly among the articles, 24 in the first and 23 in the second, providing a balanced solution for correcting the situation with a more idealistic moral approach first, and a realistic approach of changes in policy and structure second.

The first subcategory suggests that the United States needs to demonstrate to the Iraqis that the U.S. would use its democratic system to correct mistakes. Victor David Hanson (2004) in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial argues that the United States “must insist on a higher standard of human behavior than embraced by either Saddam Hussein or his various fascist and Islamicist successors” (p. A20). A *New York Times* letter to the editor asserted “the real message is that, under American rule and even during wartime, their crimes have been revealed to the world and that the perpetrators will be prosecuted” (Sichol, 2004). This letter proposed that the lesson from the Abu Ghraib abuses should not be that the U.S. is capable of committing abuse, but rather that the U.S. democratic system works transparently to correct the situation by prosecuting those found to be responsible.

The second subcategory included specific implementations to U.S. military policy and structure in Iraq necessary to ensure that abuse cannot recur. For example, David Brooks (2004) wrote in a *New York Times* editorial, “To conserve our strategy [in Iraq], we have to fundamentally alter our tactics. To shore up public confidence, the U.S. has to make it clear that it is considering fresh approaches.” A *USA Today* article from May 5, 2004 specifically identified various practical changes it would make: “the U.S. military command in Baghdad said Iraqi prisoners will no longer have bags placed over their heads... The population at Abu Ghraib will but cut in half, to fewer than 2,000, to relieve overcrowding and free those held without cause” (Diamond & Squitieri, 2004, p. A.01). This article provides examples of changes to the military policy at Abu Ghraib for the number and treatment of detainees. The first change – no longer placing bags over detainees’ heads- improves the treatment of the detainees. The second change – reducing

the population at Abu Ghraib – will improve the overall environment by making the prison less crowded. Significantly, it also requires a review of who is being detained at Abu Ghraib, and releasing those who are being detained without warrant. As mentioned by Hersh (2005), prisoners detained at Abu Ghraib were not necessarily part of the insurgency, but had been picked up during military house raids and at highway checkpoints.

The results for the *New York Times* were slightly different from the combined results, as the top two subcategories were the need to demonstrate American values and democracy, but also that the U.S. needs to recognize and assume responsibility for the abuses as a nation. The latter subcategory discussed that the U.S. needs to nationally acknowledge the unethical, and possibly illegal, behavior of American soldiers. For example, it is stated in a *New York Times* letter to the editor, “a great nation acknowledges its errors” (Seaquist, 2004).

While this result corresponds with the top two for the letters to the editor, the *New York Times* editorials were split evenly between demonstrating American values and democracy, and seeking international assistance to aid with the Iraqi occupation. An example from this latter subcategory is a discussion on Senator Kerry’s suggestion to engage the United Nations to assist in Iraq, “For months, Mr. Kerry has advocated broader international oversight of Iraq’s prospective interim government, a formula that might open the door to additional peacekeeping contributions and generate some real support for nation-building there” (“Another Vision of Iraq,” 2004).

Furthermore, the *Wall Street Journal* also mentioned the need to demonstrate American values and democracy, and the need to reform military policy and structure as



the top two subcategories. However, it is significant that no *Wall Street Journal* news articles mentioned the need to demonstrate American values and democracy, a unique result among the three newspapers and the different types of articles. Instead, the *Wall Street Journal* news articles emphasized the need for changes to the military structure, illustrating a broader pattern that the *Wall Street Journal* predominantly cited problems and solutions relating to the military.

*USA Today* results for the most frequently mentioned ways to correct the situation were split evenly among the following three subcategories: changes to the military structure and policy, prosecuting those found responsible, and President Bush apologizing for the abuses. Compared to the overall results and the other two newspapers, *USA Today* infrequently mentioned prosecuting those responsible for the abuses or the need for President Bush to apologize.

### Summary of Results

While each category has been analyzed in depth, it is essential to also keep in mind the overall results of the data analysis. The following is a summary of the top three most frequently mentioned subcategories for each of the five major categories.

Table 8: Most Frequently Mentioned Subcategories Identified Problems	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pentagon and military were too slow to react to the abuse allegations</li> <li>2. Contrary to American values</li> <li>3. Military structural and policy issues</li> </ol>
Empirical Blame	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Military Police were follow orders from their superiors</li> <li>2. Military Police acted independently</li> <li>3. Lack of training or supervision</li> </ol>
Moral Blame	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Military Police</li> <li>2. Soldiers' superiors and military leadership</li> <li>3. President Bush and administration</li> </ol>

<b>Consequences of the Abuses</b>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Negative image of the U.S. and angry Arab reaction</li><li>2. Taints war effort and the image of the U.S. military</li><li>3. Domestic support for the occupation of Iraq and War on Terror; Fear of retaliation</li></ol>
<b>How to Correct the Situation</b>	
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Demonstrate American values and democracy</li><li>2. Changes to military policy and structure</li><li>3. Acknowledge the abuses as a nation</li></ol>

## Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusion

Previous research has been conducted on the media's portrayal of the Abu Ghraib abuses; however, most studies focus on the Bush administration's ability to influence what the media publicized about the incident. The purpose of this study was to examine the print media's immediate reaction to the disclosure of information on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. As Ricchiardi (2004) stated, the media did not pay attention to the abuse allegations until the photos were aired on *60 Minutes II* and Seymour Hersh's article in *The New Yorker* revealed details of the Taguba report (p. 25). However, the sheer volume of articles printed within the first two weeks immediately following the disclosure demonstrates the sudden and in-depth reaction to the Abu Ghraib abuses by the newspapers within the data sample.

Additionally, several significant patterns and conclusions can be drawn from analyzing the content of these articles. There are numerous instances where newspapers and the types of articles drastically differ in their coverage of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. The prominence or disdain placed on certain aspects of the prisoner abuses helped to shape the overall impression of the media's reaction to the disclosure of information on Abu Ghraib.

One pattern is that on several occasions, the focus of the news articles differed from that of the editorials and letters to the editor. Not only are the editorials and letters to the editor more opinionated and unbalanced, as would be expected by their nature, there are several instances where the key focus of the letters to the editor and editorials reveal entirely different perspectives and judgments related to the prisoner abuses. For example, the second and third most frequently cited subcategories of the *New York Times*

were that the military's policies and command structural in Iraq contributed to the abuses, and that the Pentagon and military were too slow to react to the abuse allegations.

However, each of these subcategories was only mentioned once in letters to the editor. Furthermore, after analyzing the *Wall Street Journal's* contributions to the consequences category, the most frequently cited subcategory was that the prisoner abuses tainted the war effort and image of the U.S. military. While this is true for *Wall Street Journal* news articles and editorials, this subcategory is not mentioned at all within the letters to the editor.

This pattern is further exemplified by the analysis of the subcategories suggesting how to correct the adverse ramifications to the United States that were created by the abuses at Abu Ghraib. Overall, the most frequently mentioned way to correct the situation is by demonstrating American democratic values, which is consistent with the total results for all of the newspapers. However, the news articles from the *Wall Street Journal* do not mention this subcategory at all, illustrating a disparity between ideas published in the *Wall Street Journal's* news articles, and the paper's editorials and letters to the editor.

An additional pattern that is evident from the results of the content analysis is the focus of the *Wall Street Journal* news articles on the role of the military within the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. The news articles suggest empirical problems and corrections that were associated with the military over a moralistic approach. For instance, of the identified problems, *Wall Street Journal* news articles most frequently mentioned that the Pentagon and military leadership were too slow to react to the abuse allegations. The following three categories were tied for the second most frequently identified problem:

problems within the military's structure and policy attributing to the abuse; an alleged pattern of systemic abuse occurring at Abu Ghraib; and that military officers allegedly encouraged the abuse in order to "soften up" prisoners before interrogation. While a cornerstone of *Wall Street Journal* news articles, these categories were not cited frequently in the other newspapers or in the overall results. It is also significant that subcategories identifying moral or ethical problems, such as the abuses being contrary to American values or defying human decency, were not as frequently mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal*.

Moreover, *Wall Street Journal* news articles continued to focus on military solutions for correcting the environment at Abu Ghraib that enabled the prisoner abuses to occur. The *Wall Street Journal*'s most frequently cited subcategory was that changes were needed to the military's policies and organizational structure. This perspective was a key focus of the *Wall Street Journal* as half (5 out of 10) of their news articles voiced this concept. Significantly, as noted, no *Wall Street Journal* news articles wrote that prisoner abuses were contrary to American values and democratic ideals. This result also underpins the *Wall Street Journal*'s focus on empirical rather than moralistic problems and solutions associated with the prisoner abuses.

Notably, compared to the other two newspapers, the *USA Today* more frequently mentioned the potential double standards of acceptable behavior between the U.S. and the Middle East, and the overreaction by the media and public sentiment to the photographs. It is significant that *USA Today* was the only newspaper to mention the behavioral double standards in its top two cited subcategories, engendering an alternative perspective - that significant problems existed in addition to placing blame on the behavior of Americans or

the U.S. military. *USA Today*'s position identified that Iraqis have also acted unethically and abusively, but their behavior had not been scrutinized to the same degree as the U.S. military had been for the abuses at Abu Ghraib.

Letters to the editor and editorials from all three newspapers seldom mentioned empirical blame for the occurrence of abuses at Abu Ghraib. Only 5 out of 42 (12%) editorials and 1 out of 44 (2%) letters to the editor mention empirical blame. In comparison, 42 out of 165 (25%) news articles discussed empirical blame. The overall results show that letters to the editor were concerned with three main aspects, the first of which is concern with moral issues, such as a focus on the abuses being contrary to American values and concepts of human decency. Second, the articles debate where to place and who to blame morally for the abuses – either MPOs or their superiors. Third, they included discussions on general moral solutions for correcting the situation created by the abuses, such as demonstrating democratic values or accepting responsibility for the abuses.

Significantly, during the two weeks analyzed in this study, the question of actual or empirical responsibility was still highly uncertain. (Indeed, that debate continues today to some extent, despite – or perhaps because – of even more information that is now available.) Although the majority of the articles suggested that the MPOs were following orders from their superiors, moral blame for the abuses was evenly split between the MP being called on to take responsibility for their individual actions, and their superior officers.

Furthermore, these results do not fully support Mestrovic's perspective of who should have accepted blame for the Abu Ghraib abuses. Mestrovic (2007) argues that

military officers are responsible for the actions of the lower-level soldiers under their command. In the case of Abu Ghraib, he believes that the lower-level Military Police became scapegoats of the Bush administration, and that the MPOs' superior officers should have assumed responsibility for the abuses (Mestrovic, 2007). The results of this study do not fully support Mestrovic's argument, as the articles in all three newspapers equally cite the MPs and their superiors as being morally responsible for the abuses.

In contrast, Brody (2005) specifically blames the Bush administration for the prisoner abuses. He argues that the Bush administration intentionally circumvented the human rights specified in the Geneva Conventions and utilized aggressive interrogation techniques, both of which directly led to the prisoner abuses (Brody, 2005, pp.146-149). However, the results of this study do not support Brody's direct blame of the Bush administration either. Although blaming the Bush administration was cited, it was not as frequently mentioned as blaming the MPOs or their superior officers. Although the aspects Brody mentions as causing abuse – violating international law and the MPOs superiors encouraging abusive techniques to “soften up” prisoners before interrogation – were subcategories of identified problems, neither were prominently cited by newspapers analyzed in this study.

Pokempner (2005) also blames the Bush administration for the prisoner abuses, arguing that the “most striking feature” of the Abu Ghraib abuses was the “relative lack of consequence” to the administration (p. 168). However, like the aspects mentioned by Brody, blame for the Bush administration, and Rumsfeld specifically, was not predominately mentioned in the articles.

An additional pattern was an increase in political division among the newspapers as the story developed. Partisan positions became increasingly evident in the editorials and letters to the editors as well as in some news articles. Examples of this tendency include the different perspectives presented in the reporting on Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's testimony in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee, as well as reported reactions to the classified Congressional viewing of the photographs. This increase in political commentary clearly increased the amount of unbalanced news coverage.

Despite the growing political polarization of the coverage, it is very interesting to note that the Senators who received the most media attention were mostly Republicans. (The exception was Senator John Kerry, who was often described as President Bush's "democratic challenger" for the November 2004 presidential elections. Kerry's perspective regarding how to proceed with the occupation of Iraq, were the focuses of articles in all three newspapers.) The most frequently mentioned Republican Senators were John McCain (R-AZ), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Jim Inhofe (R-OK). Despite their shared political affiliation, the articles point to the different reactions of the Senators to the prisoner abuse disclosure.

All three newspapers noted that Senator McCain was enraged by the abuses, stating further that it was "egregious" that Rumsfeld failed to inform Congress of the abuses earlier (Fields et. al., 2004, p. A4). Not only was Senator McCain critical of Secretary Rumsfeld, he was also critical of the administration's handling of the abuse investigation. He argued that "As Americans turned away from the Vietnam War, they



may turn away from [Iraq] unless this issues is quickly resolved with full disclosure immediately” (“Mr. Rumsfeld’s Defense,” 2004).

Senator Lindsey Graham was also frequently quoted in all three newspapers for his irate reaction to the photographs and Rumsfeld’s failure to inform Congress. Outside of a classified senate hearing on the remaining Abu Ghraib photographs undisclosed to the public, Senator Graham asserted, “We’re not just talking about giving people a humiliating experience – we’re talking about rape and murder and some very serious charges” (Shanker & Schmitt, 2004). However, despite his anger that Congress had not been informed of the abuses earlier, he defended Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld when he stated that “removing a defense secretary in the middle of a war ‘may send the wrong signal to our enemy and empower them’ and implored Democrats calling for Mr. Rumsfeld’s resignation to slow down” (Bumiller, 2004).

In contrast, a third Republican Senator frequently mentioned in the articles is Senator Jim Inhofe, who emphasized that he was more “outraged by the outrage” than by the abusive treatment of the prisoners (“The Abu Ghraib Spin,” 2004). Senator Inhofe called the detainees at Abu Ghraib “murderers, they’re terrorists, they’re insurgents. Many of them probably have American blood on their hands. And here we’re so concerned about the treatment of those individuals” (Shapiro, 2004, p. A.04). Senator Inhofe’s sentiment that the U.S. overreacted to the abuse of our enemies was widely reported in the media. In a similar vein, when referring to interrogation tactics, Senator Inhofe stated, “You’ve just got to be tough, and you’ve go to try to get the information out. If you don’t get the information out, more Americans can be killed. And then you’ll really hear squealing about it” (Shapiro, 2004, p. A.04).

The increased frequency of partisan commentary within the articles is also significant due to the rising criticism of the Bush administration. Importantly, all three newspapers specifically mentioned that President Bush's "bad apple" theory blaming the MPO's for their actions was inconsistent with the Taguba report. Despite this critique of President Bush's explanation, the newspapers did not identify responsibility for the abuses during the two-week timeframe.

It is significant that all three newspapers criticize the Bush administration, as this finding disagrees with W. Lance Bennett's conclusion that the Bush administration had a "near monopoly" of media coverage on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses (Bennett et al., 2007, p. 90). Bennett's study examined how national news coverage defined the incidents at Abu Ghraib, testing whether the media defined the abuses in relation to the Bush administration's account of what happened, or in relation to other reports and news sources. Methodologically this study differs from Bennett's, as his study analyzed the specific words used to define the abuses, where as my study examines the entire qualitative content of each article. For example, rather than examining articles for the explanations offered for the occurrence of the abuse, Bennett's study narrowly examined whether specific words, such as "mistreatment" versus "torture" were used to explain what happened at Abu Ghraib (Bennett et. al., 2007, p. 90). Nonetheless, the results of this study illustrate that all three newspapers specifically mention that the Bush administration's explanation of the prisoner abuses was inconsistent with evidence described in the military's reports on Abu Ghraib. Thus, in my study, the Bush administration did not have a monopoly on how the media described what happened at Abu Ghraib.

Furthermore, this study's findings support Cziesche's (2007) study, which concluded that the Bush administration's ability to maintain a single-sided press media frame diminished due to the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses. The extensive media coverage discussing the problems and consequences associated with Abu Ghraib evidently detracted from the Bush administration's ability to positively frame the occupation of Iraq and the War on Terror.

In contrast to confirming Cziesche's study, my study is not consistent with McChesney's claims. As previously mentioned, the "common carrier" role of the media occurs when journalists base their stories on explanations given by public officials. McChesney (2006) argues that the press failed to act independently on its coverage of the war in Iraq, thus acting as a common carrier. While this may be true for initial coverage the Iraq War overall, the coverage of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses during the timeframe for this study do not confirm McChesney's assessment. The coverage of the prisoner abuses irreparably damaged the Bush administrations primary media frame related to Iraq and the War on Terror. In this regard, the media instead, effectively served its role of helping to set the national agenda.

In answer to the research questions, the results from this study serve to identify: the problems associated with the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses; responsible parties for their occurrence; actions required to correct the situation; and lastly, consequences resulting from the incident. In conclusion, it is evident from the results of the content analysis that articles identify the Pentagon and military reacting too slowly as the most frequently identified problem. However, it remains unclear who was responsible for what happened at Abu Ghraib, as moral responsibility were evenly spilt between the Military Police and

their superior officers. Although several suggestions were identified to correct the situation at Abu Ghraib, the most widely cited answer was to demonstrate American values and democratic ideals – to show the Iraqis that while the U.S. was wrong to abuse prisoners, the U.S. government and military fully acknowledge their responsibility for the situation and will hold accountable those found responsible.

Furthermore, the articles frequently mentioned that the organizational structure of the military at Abu Ghraib needs to be reformed, in addition to there needing to be sweeping changes in policy –particularly with regard to accepted interrogation tactics in Iraq. Lastly, two of the most commonly mentioned consequences of this incident are the resulting negative image of the United States and the subsequent anger of Arabs in the Middle East, and also, that the abuses tainted the war effort and the image of the U.S. military. These overall conclusions define the immediate reaction of the media to the sudden disclosure of the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib.

#### Opportunities for Further Research

The focus of this study was to analyze the reaction of print media to the disclosure of information on the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses during a two-week timeframe immediately following the airing of the photographs on *60 Minutes II*. However, several other aspects of the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuses warrant consideration. Further research could be conducted in order to analyze the media's overall reaction to Abu Ghraib. It would be interesting to compare how the media's reaction may have changed over time, as several aspects of the prisoner abuses were not developed during the two-week timeframe of this study. For example, two additional military reports on Abu Ghraib, the

Schlesinger and Fay reports, were completed in late August, 2004, which may have influenced the media's subsequent reporting on Abu Ghraib.

Five years after the disclosure of evidence on the Abu Ghraib, the media is once again discussing the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse photographs. Initially, the government made an agreement with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to release the remaining photographs that were taken at Abu Ghraib and other prisons. However, on May 13, 2009, President Obama announced that he would prevent their release.

President Obama's announcement reversed his initial decision to release the photographs, and came after he received warnings from top Pentagon officials that the photographs would "further inflame anti-American opinion' and endanger troops in two war zones" (Zeleny & Shanker, 2009). Similarly, President Obama asserts:

The publication of these photos would not add any additional benefit to our understanding of what was carried out in the past by a small number of individuals... In fact, the most direct consequence of releasing them, I believe, would be to further inflame anti-American opinion and to put our troops in greater danger. (Zeleny & Shanker, 2009)

The endangerment of U.S. troops in Iraq, and anti-American sentiment were also consequences considered by the media in 2004, immediately following the disclosure of information on the Abu Ghraib abuses. Additional study of interest could be comparing the media's reaction to the initial disclosure of evidence on Abu Ghraib, with today's discussion of whether or not to release more of the prisoner abuse photographs. Further research could also analyze if there were any long-lasting consequences to the War on Terror and other initiatives of U.S. foreign policy as a result of the prisoner abuses.

Additionally, a *New York Times* editorial from July 25, 2009 discussed the affect the photographs had on the Iraqi detainees, who are pictured in the photographs. This

editorial, written by William Quinn, an Army interrogator who served at Abu Ghraib less than a year after the disclosure of the prisoner abuses, praises President Obama's decision not to release the remaining photographs. Quinn argues that this decision "would help protect those detainees' [in the photographs] basic rights to dignity and privacy" (Quinn, 2009). Through discussion with insurgents detained at Abu Ghraib, Quinn learned that they were not "particularly shocked or angered about the abuse itself, which they regarded as normal for prisons in Iraq" having lived under Saddam Hussein (Quinn, 2009). However, what appalled the insurgents "was the dissemination of the pictures throughout the world" (Quinn, 2009).

Consideration of the dignity and the right of privacy for the photographed Iraqis was largely disregarded during the timeframe of this study, and was only considered by one article. That article, a *New York Times* letter to the editor submitted from Cairo, stated that if the photographs were going to be displayed worldwide, the faces in the photographs should be blurred in order to preserve any remaining dignity of these photographed Iraqi detainees (Miller, 2004). It is also significant that the only article to consider the Iraqis in the photographs did not come from a news article written by an American, but a letter to the editor submitted by a reader in Cairo. The nationality of the author is unknown, but it is evident that this person had a different perspective of the prisoner abuses than most Americans.

While some Americans stated that the U.S. government should release the remaining photographs in order to disclose the full extent of the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the mistakes of the U.S. military, releasing the photos would only further humiliate and anger the Iraqis, and probably a much broader Middle East population, who value the

privacy and dignity of their people. This debate illustrates a significant cultural misunderstanding or insensitivity with respect to the intentions for releasing additional photographs. Further research assessing the Iraqi perspective on the prisoner abuse photographs could enrich the overall understanding of how their release was perceived outside of the U.S. – particularly in the Middle East.

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