

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF EVIL: A LOOK AT ABU GHRAIB

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ABSTRACT

In the spring of 2004, the military police assigned to guard the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, Iraq found themselves at the center of numerous investigations regarding the abuse, torture, rape, and murder of detainees in United States custody. Their behavior was influenced and encouraged by U.S. officials, including President George W. Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The Bush administration effectively created a reality for the military police that fostered increasingly violent and aggressive tendencies beyond what is expected or allowed in similar circumstances. Existing literature and conclusions from previous studies support the claim that social and situational forces can influence individuals to commit cruel and unusual acts while under the authority of a legitimated institution or figure. The obedience studies conducted by Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment provide empirical evidence of the social psychological theories of the social construction of reality, impression management, and the Thomas Theorem. I explore the story of Abu Ghraib through the lens of symbolic interactionism via the qualitative data collection process of content analysis. Government documents such as interrogation procedures defined by the U.S. Army and memorandums prepared, issued, and (sometimes) rescinded by government officials in the months leading up to the investigations regarding detainee treatment and interrogation at Abu Ghraib is included in the content analysis. Other materials included consist of the photographs, newspaper articles,

and documentaries that engulfed the media during and after the investigations, as well as the official expert investigation reports and detainee and eyewitness account depositions and interviews. A careful examination of the materials in the content analysis reveal a striking resemblance to the empirical studies listed above, supporting the claim that situational factors created a reality the guards considered to be real and (as the Thomas Theorem predicts) became real in its consequences.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the past, present, and future generations of brave men and women who proudly serve our country in all branches of the United States military. Their commitment, courage, loyalty and sacrifice deserve the utmost respect, endless appreciation, and highest admiration.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH TOPIC

In the spring of 2004, photographs from soldiers in Iraq surfaced revealing that United States military police serving as guards at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq abused, tortured, raped, and murdered detainees. This behavior can be understood sociologically as a consequence of the socially constructed reality manufactured by U.S. government officials. Utilizing the unobtrusive and qualitative research method of content analysis, I examine U.S. government documents and memoranda, investigation reports and detainee depositions in order to explain the behavior of the prison guards at Abu Ghraib through the social psychological lens of symbolic interactionism.

Empirical research has been conducted on the phenomenon of inhumane behavior as a result of obedience to authority in order to identify the factors influencing the behavior. Many researchers and social psychologists believe in the possibility of reaching a goal to isolate and eliminate these factors from certain situations as a way to prevent consequences such as mass murders and disproportionate psychological torture.

This content analysis is designed as an academic contribution to the existing literature. The theoretical literature review and included empirical studies support the previously published research. The results and implications of this study will

serve as a bridge leading to new research and contribute to our understanding of situated departures from commonplaces mores.

Research Questions

The first research question guiding this study is “What symbols were involved in constructing the reality that corrupted the military police at Abu Ghraib?” The research will seek to answer subsequent questions such as “What meanings did the symbols communicate?” These questions refer to observable symbols including language, weaponry, uniforms, and hierarchy of authority that were present in Iraq.

The second research question guiding this study is “What were the institutional forces responsible for the behavior of the guards at Abu Ghraib?” Other questions to be answered in the process include “How did the institutional forces further contribute to the construction of reality?” These questions refer to the chain of command that starts with the U.S. government and their policies and procedures, translates into military action which then determines the behavior of guards regarding the treatment of detainees.

These research questions will guide the qualitative content analysis, revealing the situational forces and symbols that defined the situation and constructed the reality that engulfed Abu Ghraib and influenced the behavior of the military police to act with disproportionate cruelty towards the detainees.

CHAPTER TWO

EMPIRICAL STUDIES AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Empirical Studies

Stanley Milgram's Studies on Obedience to Authority The first set of studies that bear historical background in the interest of social psychology is that of Stanley Milgram. In the early 1960s at Yale University, inspired by recent events during World War II such as the organized extermination of Jews during the Holocaust, Milgram decided to explore the factors involved in the phenomenon of obedience to authority (Milgram 1969). He believed that the "inhumane policies [of Nazi Germany] may have originated in the mind of a single person, but they could only have been carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of people obeyed orders" (Milgram 1969:1). This is the genesis of Milgram's experimental focus. He set out to investigate the necessary conditions for the compliance (or defiance) to authority, specifically in situations where obedience requires an action that directly opposes a moral imperative (Milgram 1969). He states his main research question, "How far will the participant comply with the experimenter's instructions before refusing to carry out the actions required of him?" (Milgram 1969:3). In subsequent studies prompted by the original experiment, Milgram controlled for various other situational factors to determine their effects on obedience.

The experiment consisted of recruiting 40 subjects who (after passing a battery of psychological tests to ensure only “normal” subjects were used) would become the “teacher” in what they thought was an experiment to test the effects of punishment on learning (Milgram 1969; Milgram 1963b). Upon arrival to the lab, the subject participated in a (rigged) drawing in which they were awarded the position of teacher while the accomplice always became the “learner.” The experimenter informed the subject that the learner would be hooked to an electric shock generator with a range of 15-450 volts (in increments of 15 for a total of 30 levels). Each time the learner provided an incorrect answer, the subject was instructed to push the corresponding button on the generator to administer a shock to the learner. The subject was told to increase the voltage one level (15 volts) for each wrong answer. For authenticity, the subject was given a 45-volt “sample shock.” The responses of the learner (correct answers, incorrect answers, and later, protests and screams) were pre-recorded for standardization. The experimenter communicated the importance of the experiment and repeated, “The experiment requires that you continue” if the subject showed signs of hesitation during the experiment (although the subjects were informed their participation was voluntary and they could stop at any time) (Milgram 1969). Data were collected regarding subjects’ obedience in terms of highest voltage administered before refusal to continue as well as their emotional and mental states as exhibited in an observable fashion (i.e., sweating, crying, nervous laughter, etc.).

In a survey conducted prior to the experiment, 40 psychiatrists estimated that, on average, one percent of United States citizens would administer a full (450-volt) electric shock (Zimbardo 2006). They considered such behavior to be characteristic of sadists, not average American citizens. Surprisingly, 26 out of the 40 subjects (65%) obeyed the experimenter to the end, administering shocks of 450 volts to now silent learners (Milgram 1963a; Milgram 1963b). The remaining 14 subjects (35%) who refused to continue did so between 300 and 330 volts. None of the subjects refused to participate at all (Milgram 1963a).

The results indicate that authority (or presumed authority) has a strong effect on a person's willingness to obey (Milgram 1969). Even more, the subjects obeyed despite the fact that they were intentionally inflicting pain on another human being. Milgram's studies on obedience to authority uncovered the "extreme pliability of human nature" (Zimbardo 2006:133). This study and the experiments that followed serve as evidence that normal, average, everyday American citizens are capable of deliberate, harmful actions toward others.

Replication of Milgram's Studies on Obedience to Authority In 2007, Dr. Jerry Burger of Santa Clara University joined ABC News' *Primetime* to recreate Milgram's studies on obedience to authority (Burger 2007). The goal was to find out if people today would behave in the same ways as Milgram's subjects did in the 1960s. Many aspects of the experiment were performed in exactly the same way as the initial experiments nearly 50 years prior. The set of words used in the test of the effects of

punishment on learning, the lab coat worn by the experimenter, and the dialogue scripted to the role of experimenter were left unchanged.

The alterations in the design of the experiment were necessary in order to pass the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and to maintain higher standards of protection for the subjects (Burger 2007). The biggest change in experimental design was possibly the maximum voltage of 150, as opposed to Milgram's 450-volt maximum. Burger perceived this as an important threshold in Milgram's experiment. Because approximately 80% of Milgram's participants who continued past the 150-volt mark also continued on to the highest possible voltage of 450, Burger believed that knowing how individuals responded up to the 150-volt shock would allow the experimenters to reasonably estimate what their subjects would do if they had been allowed to continue with a more intense shock. Other changes included administering a sample shock (to the participant) in the amount of 15 volts (rather than 45 volts in Milgram's experiment); minimal elapsed time between the conclusion of the experiment and revealing to the participant that the learner was a hired accomplice; and the use of a clinical psychologist as the experimenter who was required to discontinue the session immediately if the participant exhibited any signs of extreme stress or anxiety. These changes (among others) were sufficient for the replication experiment to pass the IRB guidelines.

Burger concluded that people today would obey the experimenter at about the same rate as Milgram's subjects did in the 1960s (Burger 2007). Both Milgram

and Burger used an extensive screening process to find only the most psychologically normal of subjects. The results provide evidence that *anyone* is capable of performing such unthinkable acts- not just psychologically predisposed individuals.

Philip Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment Less than ten years after Milgram completed his studies on obedience, Philip Zimbardo created an experiment to investigate the behavior of prisoners by examining how they adapt to the alien environment of incarceration, in which they lose their privacy, independence, rights, and liberty (Zimbardo, et. al. 1975). Zimbardo and his staff began with a screening process to select only the most normal subjects (Zimbardo 2006). The chosen individuals were randomly assigned to the position of prisoner or guard (Zimbardo 2007). Guards were given uniforms, billy clubs, whistles, handcuffs, and keys (Zimbardo, et. al. 1975). They were allowed to create a set of rules for their prisoners to follow and were told to maintain order and prevent prisoners from escaping. The prisoners were arrested by an accomplice police officer, formally booked, issued identification numbers, given smocks to wear and chains were placed on their ankles. They were told only to refer to themselves and each other by their I.D. numbers and to the guards as "Mr. Correctional Officer" (Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney 2000; Zimbardo 2007). Extreme measures were taken to give the impression that the prisoners were actually in prison, such as solitary

confinement and scheduled and monitored visitation from friends and family (Zimbardo 2007).

The experiment was scheduled to run for two weeks, but was halted after only six days due to the extreme psychological and physical abuse and the effects on the prisoners and the guards (Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney 2000; Zimbardo 2007). “Too many normal young men were behaving pathologically as powerless prisoners or sadistic, all-powerful guards” (Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney 2000:202). Although the subjects started the week with little differences between them, by the end of the sixth day, there were no similarities. The guards ranged from “good guards,” who were quiet and non-abusive, yet enforced rules by the book, to the “tough guys,” who were considered to be fully sadistic (Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney 2000:202-3). Zimbardo’s Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE) illustrates that situations have more power over human action than is generally recognized (Zimbardo 2004a).

These experiments have become a central focus of many social psychologists, exemplifying the extreme measures to which people will go if they are acting under the command of a perceived legitimate authority or in consistency with a situation they define as real. Much of the observed behavior can be explained through the sociological social psychological theories of the social construction of reality, impression management, and the Thomas Theorem. The theoretical background is

outlined below, including concrete examples and illustrations from Milgram's studies on obedience and Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment.

The Social Construction of Reality

The subject of social psychology has been an area of interest for both sociologists and psychologists for many years. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann are widely respected theorists in the field of social psychology. In 1966, their book *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* emerged as a conceptual framework describing the way in which individuals see, interpret, and experience the world around them (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Rohall, Milkie and Lucas 2007). Berger and Luckmann state "The world of everyday life is not only taken for granted as reality... it is a world that originates in [human] thoughts and actions, and is maintained as real by these" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:19-20). According to their theory on the social construction of reality, each person interprets what they see in a different way, forming an opinion or reaction based on the meaning or value they attach to an object, symbol, person, or interaction (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Rohall, Milkie and Lucas 2007). This interpretation is what defines their situation. Individual interpretations are the beginning of defining a situation and, hence, of reality construction. Through interaction, participants in a situation create a shared reality, complete with mechanisms of legitimacy. This shared reality is the basis for the operative definition of the situation.

Thus, their reality is socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann 1966). During interaction, people exchange symbols to make inferences about who they are, how to act, and distinguishing right from wrong within a given context (Charon 1998). Symbols such as spoken language, physical surroundings, dress, or body language relay information about the outside world and determine a person's behavior by giving clues as to what is appropriate and acceptable. Appearance is used as a mode of communication in interactions between people; it informs others of what can be expected. Language contains symbols that provide context clues regarding the current situation or relationship between two or more people (Rohall, Milkie and Lucas 2007). This process is not only one-way, however. It is important to point out that upon recognizing the affect of symbols and interpreted interactions on one's own behavior, one can intentionally alter his behavior in order to influence the perceptions and opinions others make of him.

Milgram and Zimbardo on Social Construction of Reality Milgram's experiment involved a manufactured reality that the subjects stepped into upon entering the laboratory (Milgram 1963a). The artificial reality was easily acceptable and did not warrant questioning because they were told the experiment was designed to explore the effects of punishment on learning, assumed to be a good cause. The subjects believed they were a critical component in an experiment that could potentially improve the lives of others. Their constructed reality allowed the subjects to feel as if they were doing good by doing harm.

The Stanford Prison Experiment also provides an example of individuals acting within a reality constructed through symbols in appearance, language, and physical setting. The symbols of appearance included guard uniforms, billy clubs, reflective sunglasses, as well as smocks and stocking caps for prisoners (Zimbardo, et. al. 1975). Language symbols included the replacement of names by I.D. numbers, the phrase “Mr. Correctional Officer,” and general verbal degradation. The setting provided symbols such as prison bars on cells, “The Hole” for solitary confinement, and the lack of sunlight in the basement of the psychology department. Individually, these symbols seem simple, but together they made the situation remarkably similar to that of a real prison by communicating the meaning of deindividuation and loss of independence (Zimbardo 2004a). In this context, Zimbardo’s experiment demonstrates that a set of socially agreed upon rules and norms can emerge from a set of symbols and construct a reality (Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney 2000).

Impression Management Erving Goffman, an esteemed social psychologist, claims that through appearances and manners, people can manage others’ impressions of them, influence how they define the situation, and affect their behavior (Charon 1998). This behavior is classified as a performance because it is the expression of a self-proclaimed label, which defines the situation for the audience (Goffman 1959). The term “self label” is synonymous with “identity” and acts as a script, outlining one’s presentation of their self to others (Charon 1998). The performance or expression of identity is employed to convince others that one

is who and what he wants others to consider him to be. Others are convinced of one's identity through negotiations that take place during interaction. The negotiation is referred to as impression management (Goffman 1959).

This is supported by claims made by Berger and Luckmann as well as George Herbert Mead, who claim that a person's sense of self and identity are created, maintained, and sometimes redefined through social relations and processes between the individual and society along with the internalization of the norms and values posed by a society (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Manning 2005). More specifically, it is the internalization of the attitudes of others. As Berger and Luckmann explain, a person "becomes what he is addressed as" by those around him (1966:132). They unpack this by saying that every assigned label "implies a nomenclature, which in turn implies a designated social location. To be given an identity involves being assigned a specific place in the world" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:132). The above social psychological processes of impression management and the social construction of reality work in conjunction to create a reality, in which each person operates and exists. Perhaps this is best explained by the quote: (Charon 1998:167)

When we interact, we know that what we say and do makes a difference to others, that others do indeed figure us out and act toward us accordingly, therefore we make efforts to give off acts that influence others to think of us in the way that we want; in a real sense interaction is a stage where we all act out parts that we choose to present to others.

Milgram and Zimbardo on Impression Management In Milgram's

obedience studies, the experimenter participated in impression management each time the subject exhibited signs of hesitation in his unwavering response that "the experiment requires that you continue" (Milgram 1969). This relayed to the subject that the experiment was progressing as it should and that things were normal, giving permission to continue. Likewise, each time the subject defied their moral instinct to stop administering shocks and continued to inflict pain on another human being, he communicated to the experimenter that he was a good, dependable, and loyal subject.

The Stanford Prison Experiment displays impression management in the form of prisoners and guards, each acting as his role requires—forcing the other to act according to his own role (Zimbardo 2007; Zimbardo, et. al. 1975). Guards cannot be guards without prisoners to watch and prisoners aren't imprisoned without guards holding them captive. As the following quote illustrates, the prisoners and guards participated in a social exchange that resulted in extremely successful impression management (Zimbardo, et. al. 1975:66)

As the guards became more aggressive, prisoners became more passive; assertion by the guards led to dependency in the prisoners; self-aggrandizement was met with self-deprecation, authority with helplessness, and the counterpart of the guards' sense of mastery and control was the depression and hopelessness witnessed in the prisoners.

Thomas Theorem

A socially constructed reality is a vehicle for the actions of a person. As W.I. and Dorothy Thomas define it, the Thomas Theorem states, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Charon 1998:138). People define their situations, and in turn, define their circumstances. They then act according to those definitions. Regardless of what the true reality may be, the reality created through defining the situation is more important with regard to action. A relevant example provided in the text of Charon's book on symbolic interactionism states, "...it does not matter if you are a scoundrel or not; what matters is that I see you as a scoundrel and I act toward you as if you were one. And you in turn may not be a scoundrel, but you may accept my definition of you as one and then proceed to act that way" (1998:138). Individuals will behave in ways they consider to be proper and appropriate to the situation, often judged by their perception of others' actions (Tyler 1990; Sykes and Matza 1957).

Obedience Individuals are asked to accept the performer's presentation of their self and that the implied consequences are as they appear to be (Goffman 1959).

Obedience to authority is defined as acting consistently with an authorized rule, command, or instruction (Lutsky 1995). Obedience is encouraged both legally and morally from birth through socialization (Milgram 1969; Berger and Luckmann 1966). Therefore submission to authority is a powerful and forceful condition in humans (Milgram 1969; Kelman and Hamilton 1989). When the constructed reality

takes the form of a legitimate authority, people will alter their behavior and/or attitudes in order to follow the directives of the authority (Manning 2005). An authority system consists of two or more people who share the belief that one of them has the right to make demands of the other (Milgram 1969; Blass 1999). Authority systems require subjects who are not in command of themselves (Szasz 1975). If an individual believes their circumstances have placed them in a position of subordination to an authority in a legal framework, he assumes the orders made by the authority figure are legal as well (Kelman and Hamilton 1989). Both the authority and the subject believe that those in positions of authority are entitled to make demands of their subjects and that subjects are obligated to do as they are told. This reiterates the fact that the definition of the other will influence one's definition of his/her self (Charon 1998).

The Agentic State To take this a step further, once a person enters into a reality in which they are subordinate to an authority figure, that subordinate is considered to be an agent for executing the desires of someone else, and therefore not responsible for his own actions (Milgram 1969; Blass 1999; Collins and Ma 2000). This is referred to as the agentic state, which Milgram defines as the mental state that enhances the likelihood of obedience. Transformation into the agentic state requires that the person perceive the authority to be legitimate and in a position of control. Entering into the agentic state reduces the amount of accountability felt by the subject. Because of this, obedient subjects do not focus their morals on the task

at hand, but shift their focus to their success in meeting the expectations of the authority (Milgram 1969).

Once the agentic state is achieved, individuals are more likely to follow orders that involve causing harm to others because of the perceived permission to suspend their moral values in order to appease the authority (Zimbardo 2004b). This has also been described as dismissing the applicability of one's morals in the context of the situation (Tyler 1990). Obedient subjects no longer see themselves as responsible for their own actions; they attribute everything to the authority figure to which they answer (Milgram 1969; Blass 1999; Collins and Ma 2000). As this behavior is repeated, the boundaries between self-identity and situational role and between reality and delusion become progressively permeable (Zimbardo, et. al. 1975). Eventually, the role being filled becomes second nature and encroaches on an individual's personality (Goffman 1959). This internalization of characteristics completes the cycle from disbelief to belief.

Milgram and Zimbardo on the Thomas Theorem Milgram's studies on obedience revealed that there was a relationship between a sincerely accepted belief and the transformation of that belief into a behavior (Milgram 1964b). The agentic state is observed in Milgram's experiment as the subjects are ascribed less responsibility as the experimenter urges them to continue (Blass 1990). Milgram proposed that people find comfort in obeying authority (because obedience to authority is engrained in human behavior from birth through socialization) and over time, this

process binds the subject to the authority and the act itself (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros 1986).

The Stanford Prison Experiment demonstrates the transformation from disbelief to belief and the permeability of the boundaries between actual and constructed reality in terms of behavior. Over the course of the week, the guards became increasingly aggressive and the prisoners resigned themselves to their fate, behaving in ways that justified the treatment from the guards (Zimbardo, et. al. 1975; Zimbardo, Maslach, and Haney 2000). This phenomenon is illustrated in the way the experiment ended for Prisoner 819, who internalized the role assigned to him and, upon termination of the experiment, had to be convinced that he wasn't a prisoner at all and that the others were also behaving according to randomly prescribed roles.

Legitimacy of the Situation

The legitimacy of a situation also has a part in the role of the construction of reality and the consequences of that reality. Authority, according to Max Weber, is the perceived right to command and thus a duty to obey (Weber 1954). Authority is a resource for power, that is, the power to successfully obtain one's will in the control of others. A legitimate authority can define reality for the subject, based on the authority's position in a social structure (Milgram 1969; Blass 1999). Obedient subjects will follow orders (even harmful ones) because they believe in and subscribe to the definition of the situation as defined by the authority (Milgram

1969; Blass 1999; Saltzman 2000). Individuals tend to do as they are asked, irrespective of the content of the order as long as they believe the command comes from a legitimate authority (Milgram 1965). A legitimated authority system often takes the form of an institution, providing a context for the effectiveness of commands. First, if a subject accepts the authority's right to make demands, the authority becomes legitimated (Kelman and Hamilton 1989). This establishment of an authority relationship, we must remember, can, and most typically does take place before any questionable commands are issued. Legitimate authority generates an obligation to follow the rules (Weber 1954). Thus, the legitimation produces and maintains the authority system. Without an already legitimated authority system, commands that are harmful or destructive in nature are not perceived as legitimate (Milgram 1965).

Crimes of obedience occur in response to an authority's order that would, under other circumstances, be considered illegal or defy a moral imperative (Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Tyler 1990). Berger and Luckmann provide support for the power of social forces when they propose, "all men, once socialized, are potential 'traitors to themselves'" (Berger and Luckmann 1966:170). When obedience and moral values are placed in opposition to one another, one can ignore the moral code as the agentic state removes perceived responsibility for the immoral act, allowing obedience to triumph. This explains how ordinary individuals can become agents in a destructive process or be led to harm others (Milgram 1969; Tyler 1990; Blass

1999). In this way, anyone can be transformed from a creature formerly alien to unusual nature into an agent for inhumane acts (Zimbardo 2004b).

Milgram and Zimbardo on Legitimacy of the Situation Milgram's obedience studies exemplified ecological validity and was legitimated by the setting in which it was held- a laboratory on the campus of Yale University (as proven by the subsequent studies) (Milgram 1963a; Milgram 1964a). The presence of a highly reputable university gave the subjects confidence in the experiment and the psychologists running the study, making the experimenter a legitimate authority (Milgram 1963b, Blass 1999). The 45-volt sample shock administered to the subject for authenticity purposes also provided evidence of the legitimacy of the situation. The subject felt the shock for himself, and therefore believed the machine was real and that the learner was indeed hooked to the shock generator as the experimenter stated. In a review of Milgram's experiments, Zimbardo notes that obedience requires participation in the myth-making that creates authority, which is legitimated by submission and obedience (Zimbardo 1974).

The combination of dress, setting, lingual, and physical symbols interlock to create a sense of confidence in the constructed reality. This illusion of imprisonment merged with reality for each of the subjects- whether prisoner or guard. The uniforms, I.D. numbers, and acceptance of roles resulting in exaggerated behaviors from the guards and prisoners acted to legitimate the situation.

The Social Psychology of Human Evil

“Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely,” Lord Acton stated in the late 1800s (Winter 2006:159). This quote predicts the course of events that often follows the realization of the authority-subject relationship that is built through impression management in a legitimated reality constructed by the participants. Historically, the powers or legitimate authority to corrupt individuals has been shown on a mass scale within the complex state organization designed for the extermination of Jews during World War II. In the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, author Hannah Arendt reveals that the horrific acts and consequences of Nazi soldiers were not a manifestation of a biological disposition toward cruel and unusual behavior, but a matter of “faithful bureaucrats slavishly following orders” (Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros 1986:223). It is the charismatic power of leaders like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Ho Chi Minh and Saddam Hussein that is found at the center of some of the most revolting and atrocious acts carried out by subordinates in allegiance to authority. As C.P. Snow states, “When you think of the long and gloomy history of man, you will find more hideous crimes have been committed in the name of obedience than have ever been committed in the name of rebellion” (Milgram 1963b:98).

The concept of evil in the context of obedience is defined as “intentionally behaving – or causing others to act – in ways that demean, dehumanize, harm, destroy, or kill innocent people” (Zimbardo 2006:129). Dehumanization is the

practice of denying another inclusion in the moral hierarchy of human beings by referring to them as animals or not completely human, thus objectifying them (Reinmann and Zimbardo 2011). Through verbal and non-verbal communication, individuals or groups are classified as “other” and deemed unworthy of being treated as equals, blurring the perception of them and effectively blocking out the existence of similarities.

Once others are considered to be unequal and less than human, moral values are dismissed, allowing the legitimation of inflicting pain onto or murdering those in the group (Tyler 1990). In this way, those who are dehumanized are placed on the same moral hierarchy as the animals usually reserved for hunting or slaughter, thus allowing the “hunter” to believe the victims deserve to be harmed- that it is proper and appropriate for the situation (Staub 1989). A reality is constructed and participants behave according to the expectations of the reality. As Milgram states, “systematic devaluation of the victim provides a measure of psychological justification for brutal treatment of the victim and has been the constant accompaniment of massacres, pogroms, and wars” (Milgram 1969:9).

Dehumanization is found at the center of the Stanford Prison Experiment, allowing the guards to act in ways that are normally disallowed in human relationships. The prisoners are assigned I.D. numbers, forced to wear smocks without underwear, made to use the latrines under supervision, and generally robbed of any and all privacy and independence (Zimbardo 2007; Zimbardo, et. al.

1975). These symbols communicate a reality to the guards and a belief that the prisoners are insignificant and less than human- legitimating the psychological and physical abuse.

Another element critical in the existence and manifestation of immorality is that of deindividuation (Reinmann and Zimbardo 2011). While dehumanization changes the way victims are perceived, deindividuation changes the way humans in positions of authority see themselves. This process is another piece in the construction of a reality as communicated through symbols. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, the guards wore uniforms. Although the uniforms served the main purpose of distinguishing guards from prisoners, the fact that each guard was indistinguishable from the next played a role in the deindividuation process. Their demand to be referred to as “Mr. Correctional Officer” removed another piece of individuality and further impeded the differentiation of one guard from another. Deindividuation disguises the underlying personal identity and therefore creates a sense of anonymity. The reflective sunglasses worn by the guards during the SPE also enhanced the anonymity by disabling eye contact (Zimbardo 2007).

Once anonymity is achieved, perceived personal accountability is removed (Zimbardo 2006; Reinmann and Zimbardo 2011). If one believes he is no longer accountable, he believes responsibility lies elsewhere. In the absence of accountability and responsibility, moral values are broken down and disregarded (Staub 1989). As with dehumanization, the suspension of morals generated through

deindividuation increases an individual's propensity to follow orders to act in an immoral or inhumane manner (Reinmann and Zimbardo 2011; Zimbardo 2006). The diffusion of responsibility and perception of anonymity through deindividuation and dehumanization are necessary ingredients for and are found at the epicenter of human wickedness (Reinmann and Zimbardo 2011; Zimbardo 2004b; Zimbardo 2006).

Empirical studies conducted by Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo, as well as numerous historical events in times of war, have determined that human beings can easily be inclined to commit acts malicious in nature and large in quantity under the command of an authority. This supports the claim made by Milgram, Zimbardo, and various other social psychologists that cruel and unusual behavior is not necessarily biologically engrained in select individuals or limited to a small portion of the population (Milgram 1969). Rather, it is the result of a constructed reality, which individuals perceive to be real. As the Thomas Theorem states, situations that are believed to be real will be real in their consequences (Rohall, Milkie, and Lucas 2007). This is evident in the fact that Milgram's subjects administered fatal amounts of painful electric shocks, Zimbardo's guards grew increasingly abusive and confused their role as guard with that of their true identity, and thousands of soldiers from various countries carry out orders to harm, kill, destroy, or eliminate certain elements of the target population. It is a fallacy to believe that inhumane behavior can originate only in certain, predisposed individuals (Haritos-Fatouros 1988). As

Russian novelist and victim of the Soviet KGB, Alexander Solzhenitsyn states, “the line between good and evil lies in the center of every human heart” (Zimbardo 2006:132). As events such as the Holocaust and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center have revealed, any human is capable of immorality. Zimbardo states “we are not born with tendencies toward good or evil but with mental templates to do either, more gloriously than ever before, or more devastatingly than ever before” (Zimbardo 2006:132).

Torture A special type of evil, torture is another form of psychological and physical manipulation humans are capable of inflicting on others when under the instruction or command of an authority.¹ The following is the definition of torture, as defined by the Convention Against Torture,² which is reflected in U.S. law under 18 U.S.C 2340-2340a (Convention Against Torture 1984; U.S. Code 1994),

For the purposes of this Convention, the term "torture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official

¹ Psychological torture in the context of war emerged at the beginning of the Cold War as a new way to extract information from detainees (McCoy 2008).

² The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is a treaty within the United Nations as an instrument to disallow torture around the globe (Convention Against Torture 1984). It was ratified by the United States in 1994.

capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions.

It can also be defined in terms of the manifest practices such as induced anxiety, humiliation, and sensory overload and deprivation (Ojeda 2008; McCoy 2008).

The behavior of torturers is often produced and maintained by obedience to authority (Haritos-Fatouros 1988). Zimbardo proposes that the appeal lies in the sense of control, power, and dominance rather than pleasure found in the act of inflicting pain, distress, or ongoing abuse of others (Zimbardo 2006). Repeated occurrences of this type of behavior increase the ease with which an individual commits these acts (Staub 1989). Zimbardo speaks of the guards in the Stanford Prison Experiment, who “gradually numbed their sensitivity to what they were doing and they were rewarded by the power they had over the prisoners” (Gibson and Haritos-Fatouros 1986:227-8).

The practice of torture became institutionalized in 1963, when the CIA developed the *KUBARK Counterintelligence Interrogation Manual* (Ojeda 2008). This was revised and released again as the *Human Resource Exploitation Training Manual* (HRETM) in 1983. In these manuals, psychological torture techniques are named, defined, and described. Originally undisclosed to the public, in 1997, the *Baltimore Sun* brought the manuals to light as a result of the Freedom of Information Act. The psychological approach to torture relies on a combination and cycle of sensory deprivation and overload in an organized attack on human perception “via

seemingly banal, even benign procedures” (McCoy 2008:41). The most common torture techniques (sensory deprivation, stress positions, and sexual humiliation) are used in order to force the victims to feel responsible for their own pain and suffering (Hodge and Cooper 2004). The idea behind these techniques is that the responsibility is taken out of the hands of the guards and placed in the hands of the detainees. The detainee (victim) is in control of how long he must endure the pain because (presumably) the sooner information is shared, the sooner the guards will stop the procedure. In other words, the detainees are perceived to be in control of the duration and intensity of their own misery. Sensory disorientation and self-inflicted pain make the detainees assume responsibility for their own suffering, and are expected to give in more easily to torturers (McCoy 2008). The psychological techniques used in the interrogation of detainees, as outlined in the KUBARK and HRETM manuals, are considered by the International Red Cross to be “tantamount to torture” (McCoy 2008:40).

CHAPTER THREE

TREATMENT OF PRISONERS AT ABU GHRAIB

Similar to the sequence of events in the Stanford Prison Experiment, the Nazis in World War II and the U.S. military police in Iraq were transformed from reserved and detached soldiers in a non-ordinary and persuasive reality into proud and boastful killers and torturers as the legitimacy of the situation and internalization of the roles assigned to them chipped away at their resistance to brutal inhumanity (Zimbardo 2006). This thesis seeks to understand this process in social psychological terms. This chapter provides a brief overview of the story of Abu Ghraib and introduces the application of social psychological theories.

In the fall of 2003, there were approximately 7,000 detainees being held at Abu Ghraib and only 92 military police guarding the facility (Whitney 2004). Among the military police were Specialist (SPC) Charles Graner, Jr., Staff Sergeant (SSG) Ivan Frederick II, and Private First Class (PFC) Lynndie England, who (along with four other MP soldiers) were charged with assaulting, mistreating, and abusing prisoners³ - acts deemed illegal according to the laws of war set up by the Geneva Convention.⁴ Not

³ The Department of Defense charged the seven soldiers with aggravated assault, battery, maltreatment, and dereliction of duty. They were convicted in courts martial, sentenced to time in federal prison, and dishonorably discharged (Martin Frost).

⁴ The four Geneva Conventions ratified by the United States after World War II mandate that detainees be protected from humiliating, degrading, and cruel treatment and torture (Jaffer and Singh 2007).

only were these individuals physically, mentally, and sexually abusing the detainees, but they were doing so with the presence of a digital camera, documenting their “triumphs” and boastfully showcasing their handiwork (Danner 2004). Craig Whitney (2004:VII) describes the photography:

American soldiers, male and female, grinning and pointing at the genitals of naked, frightened Iraqi prisoners; an Iraqi man, unclothed and leashed like a dog, groveling on the floor in front of his female guard; a prisoner standing on a box with a sandbag over his head and wires attached to his body beneath a poncho. These were not enemy propaganda pictures; these showed real atrocities actually inflicted by Americans.

At Abu Ghraib, the detainees were robbed of any rights or independence; hooded and given smocks; forced to parade around in the nude, build human pyramids while naked, and masturbate in public; given insufficient and irregular meals; deprived of sleep; and ordered to stand in stress positions, all while being guarded with the threat of weaponry (Danner 2004; Soldz and Olson 2008). These techniques aim to inculcate a sense of helplessness in the detainees, purposefully intensifying their anxiety in order to encourage cooperation. The photography added an extra layer of shame and guilt for the prisoners, as they became aware that their humiliation would extend beyond the walls of Abu Ghraib, at a speed and manner they could not control. This is the very definition of psychological torture- to achieve the extraction of information by means of causing great emotional pain through the forced self-infliction of humiliation and extreme physical discomfort (McCoy 2008).

Obedience

Despite the fact that it is often used as an excuse employed by policies of national defense, the military police at Abu Ghraib cannot be blamed based on the assumption that they are just a few “bad apples” (Danner 2004; Jaffer and Singh 2007). Quite the contrary, their behavior can be traced up the chain of command, comprising undeniable and repeated relationships between authoritative government officials in Washington, D.C. and the soldiers at Abu Ghraib (Whitney 2004; Jaffer and Singh 2007). The truth behind the brutality at Abu Ghraib is that military intelligence personnel and military police were torturing the prisoners with the perceived consent, approval and encouragement from the United States government (Danner 2004; Whitney 2004; Jaffer and Singh 2007).

The soldiers were obedient in their actions because they subscribed to the legitimacy of the authority to which they answered (Zimbardo 2007). The military is a source of great authority over soldiers. The legitimation of the authority of the military appears after the individual is through basic training and is immersed in a situation that carries its own momentum. Military training includes an intense initiation process, which acts to increase emotional attachment to the group and country to which a soldier has sworn allegiance (Haritos-Fatouros 1988). Basic training is a process that takes place over the course of months, in which individuals are spatially separated from the rest of the real world (Milgram 1969). This guarantees the absence of competing authorities in order to assure full attention

and obedience. Also during basic training, the definition of the enemy is communicated to the recruits as deserving of the punishment in store. The dehumanization of the victims starts in basic training and is a common element in circumstances of war (Kelman and Hamilton 1989).

This phenomenon is strikingly similar to the course of events in Milgram's obedience studies and the Stanford Prison Experiment. Milgram (as a legitimated authority) persuaded the subjects to believe that it was acceptable and necessary to continue the experiment, despite obvious cries of pain from the learner. Zimbardo and his staff (who were believed to also be legitimate authorities) allowed the guards the freedom to create their own rules for prisoners to follow and provided them with billy clubs and a space for solitary confinement, implying the approval of the use of the rules, weapons and facility. Although there were rules against physically injuring the mock prisoners, the psychologists leading the experiment did not stop the guards from asserting their authority in whatever manner necessary- thus, providing a basis for the guards to assume their actions were permitted. The fact that physical force proved to be a successful tactic in eliciting prisoner cooperation only provided encouragement. *The Agentic State* In military situations, the expected behavior is obedience to authority (Kelman and Hamilton 1989). The sense of authority is so strong that it is not typically questioned when immoral or normally illegal orders are given. Regardless of the situation, "good" soldiers will do as they are told (Milgram 1964a). Immoral acts of violence are made

easier and within reach of the imagination through the desensitization to violence and vicious behavior (Haritos-Fatouros 1988).

Soldiers are ordered to kill, bomb, and harm others because it is perceived to be a just cause. They are instructed to do so by the authority of their country, and thus assume that the President himself – their Commander in Chief – at the very least approves of what they are being asked to do (Milgram 1969). A soldier believes he is no longer being judged based on the same moral character as he would be judged at home. As an instrumental agent in the “good cause” of the war, a soldier’s competence, patriotism, and courage are measured based on his performance as a soldier. He is judged on how well he can follow orders or how well he performs on a mission. It is easy to see how this can quickly become a corrupt mindset in which the recruits derive their sense of pride in committing acts of brutality.

The perceived consent of the U.S. officials regarding the mistreatment of detainees is due in large part to the confusion that ensued as a result of the inconsistent and shifting policies and guidelines coming down from the White House regarding the treatment and interrogation of detainees (Whitney 2004). As mentioned earlier, the act of torture is disallowed according to the United Nations’ Convention Against Torture and 18 U.S.C 2340-2340A (Convention Against Torture 1984; U.S. Code 1994). In August of 2002, Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee issued a Memorandum to Alberto R. Gonzales, Counsel to the President. This

memorandum revisits the statute that became effective in the United States in 1994 in order to examine the details of the definition of torture and under what conditions it is permissible (Bybee 2002). According to the memo, “torture” only exists in extreme cases of physical pain that results in impairment of bodily function, organ failure, or death; and in extreme cases of psychological harm as a result of prolonged (lasting for months or years) mental suffering. Furthermore, Bybee’s memo states that prosecution for violation of 18 U.S.C 2340- 2340A may be prohibited if enforcement of the statute obstructs the authority of the President regarding the conduct of war. Bybee’s closing statement to this memorandum reads (2002:46):

Further, we conclude that under the circumstances of the current war against al Qaeda and it’s allies, application of Section 2340A to interrogations undertaken pursuant to the President’s Commander-in-Chief powers may be unconstitutional. Finally, even if an interrogation method might violate Section 2340A, necessity or self-defense could provide justifications that would eliminate any criminal liability.

Although this memorandum is just one of the three documents that are referred to as the “Torture Memos⁵,” it is clear that established government policies

⁵ The Torture Memos consist of three documents (each dated August 1, 2002) at the center of much investigation regarding the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib. Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee drafted two of the documents: “Standards of Conduct for Interrogation under 18 U.S.C. Sections 2340-2340A” and “Interrogation of al Qaeda.” The third document is an untitled letter from Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo to Alberto Gonzales, then the Counsel to the President. These documents were used to advise the U.S. Department of Defense on torture and coercion using stress positions, sleep deprivation, and other forms of psychological torment (Jaffer and Singh 2007).

were questioned, changed, made obsolete, rendered ambiguous, portrayed as flexible, and considered to be inapplicable to the current situation. In the absence of the restrictions put in place by 18 U.S.C 2340A, the inhumane and degrading acts committed by the guards at Abu Ghraib are within reach and perceived to be permissive.

In 2001 and 2002, President Bush and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld decided that any member of the Taliban or Al Qaeda captured in Afghanistan were not to be considered (or treated with the same protections) as detainees as defined by the Geneva Convention (Whitney 2004; Jaffer and Singh 2007). Instead, they were “unlawful combatants” and it was a military necessity to proceed with rules prescribed by the administration alone (Danner 2004). In other words, the international definitions of law didn’t apply to certain (valuable) individuals. Over the next few months, numerous other memorandums were issued and rescinded, changing the guidelines and making exceptions to the laws protecting detainees (Whitney 2004; Jaffer and Singh 2007). These many shifts in detainee treatment policy created a highly ambiguous legal atmosphere, but one in which it was certain that previously established national and international guidelines were no longer perceived to apply.

At least three separate detainment and interrogation facilities were running simultaneously (Abu Ghraib in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and Bagram Air Force Base in Afghanistan) (Whitney 2004). To make detainee treatment policy more

uncertain, each facility was given its own set of rules, exceptions, guidelines, and policies. The inconsistency in regulations was compounded by the fact that military and government officials were shifted and exchanged from one facility to another. Military police at Abu Ghraib saw the lines of authority between themselves, military intelligence, and CIA civilians as blurred and flexible (Zimbardo 2007). In essence, the guards believed that all of the normal policies were no longer applicable to the current situation and assumed an “anything goes” attitude. The chaos and lack of restriction created by this disorganization led to the belief that additional and increasingly violent techniques were condoned and encouraged.

It is suspected that torture has a seductive quality for both the direct perpetrators and those in positions of power who command them (McCoy 2008). In this sense, the torture tactics that were set in motion specifically for Abu Ghraib have been referred to as a cancer that has metastasized inside the U.S. intelligence community (Hodge and Cooper 2004).

The same corruption by power can be seen in the obedience studies and the Stanford Prison Experiment. The subjects in Milgram’s study and the guards in Zimbardo’s prison were led to believe that the normal rules on how to treat others didn’t apply to their situation. The absence of sanctions and punishment for crossing the line into immorality further encouraged the behavior.

In a subsequent investigation of the abuses in Abu Ghraib, Major General George Fay found that the environment created by inadequate leadership and poor

supervision “provided the opportunity for such abuse to occur and to continue undiscovered by higher authority for a long period of time” (Whitney 2004:XV). This general’s interpretation of the conditions at Abu Ghraib appears as a self-serving means to detach the cruel behaviors of some personnel from the full chain of command, the environment of changing guidelines, the created ambiguity of “torture” and the encouragement to engage in extraordinary detainee-treatment behaviors, thus supporting the “few bad apples” definition. General Fay’s investigation, furthermore, fails to mention that military police personnel were instructed to “...set favorable conditions for subsequent interviews” (Taguba 2004:11). These instructions were given within the torture guidelines imported from Guantanamo Bay prison by a direct chain of command, starting with Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and extending to Major General (MG) Miller, Lieutenant General (LTG) Sanchez, Captain (CPT) Wood, and eventually to SPC Graner and PFC Lynndie England.

Constructed Reality

This thesis explains that the transformation of military police into violent, abusive torturers can be attributed to the situational factors and symbols, which defined the reality for the men and women in the U.S. military. In their constructed reality, they were under the command of a legitimate authority, that made legitimate and justified demands (as were the subjects in Milgram’s study and the guards in the Stanford Prison Experiment). Due to their belief in and trust of the

authority and its requests, the U.S. soldiers and military police at Abu Ghraib were obedient in their actions by carrying out the harm, torture, abuse, and killing of other human beings. Within the detention center and at the level of the guards, the situated actions were understood as highly legitimate because it was located within the context of the military – a universally accepted and legitimate hierarchy of command. Additionally, CIA operatives issued prisoner-handling instructions to the military police guards. Remember, too, the entire military action in Iraq was in the context of the horror of 9/11, the often-mentioned “War on Terror,” and the new, official guidelines for detainees. The legitimacy of the situation translated into the legitimacy of the commands and orders from military superiors, enabling the military police to act with confidence that they were being good soldiers by honoring their allegiance. Indeed, the guards’ use of photography indicates no sense of the illegitimate or of “something illicit to hide”. Also, the impression management in which the military police participated allowed them to assert their positions as guards by using their perceived power to exert control and dominance of the detainees through intimidation, sexual harassment, and psychological torture. This in turn was aided by the dehumanization of the detainees. These social psychological processes are explained in detail in later chapters.

Parallels between the Stanford Prison Experiment and Abu Ghraib The critical parallels connecting the Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE), Milgram’s studies on obedience, and the abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib provide a contextual

foundation for this study. The conclusions derived from the SPE and obedience studies are particularly similar to the findings outlined in the investigation reports from Abu Ghraib. In both the studies on obedience and the SPE, social psychologists found that human nature is not necessarily courteous and gentle. Both experiments concluded with the findings that individuals under the encouragement of a legitimated authority would do as they are asked, regardless of the morality of the task. The individual shifts his focus from satisfying a typical, commonplace moral imperative to the central importance of pleasing the authority figure. To this end, the individual evaluates himself according to how well he performed the task instead of how well he behaved on the everyday societal moral spectrum. This transformation of priorities is due to the internalization of the socially constructed reality in which the person operates and interacts with the world. This reality is built using symbols, language, setting, and perceived approval from the legitimate authority.

The same is true for the military police at Abu Ghraib. The expertise of Philip Zimbardo was requested during an investigation of the detention center (Zimbardo 2006). In his report, Zimbardo states that he noticed no differences in the social psychological processes at work in the SPE and within Abu Ghraib. He lists: dehumanization, moral disengagement, passive bystanders, power differentials, enforced nudity, sexual humiliation, and the worst abuses occurring during the night shift as parallels between the two realities. Another source titled "Power Turns

Soldiers into ‘Bad Apples’” finds even more similarities between the SPE and Abu Ghraib such as hooding, use of chains, the denial of adequate food and sleep, and solitary confinement (Zimbardo 2004b).

Their reality was socially constructed through the use of symbols, language, setting, interactions and perceived approval from the United States government. The theories of impression management and the social construction of reality articulate the social psychological processes at work in this transformation. The actions and behavior of the guards at Abu Ghraib were the consequences of the socially defined reality, as the Thomas Theorem formulates.

Separation of Guilt and Blame There must be recognition that there is a difference between guilt and blame (Zimbardo 2004b). Those individuals who directly committed the acts of violence or behaved inhumanely are in a different position on this scale than those who issued the directive to action. Perhaps the following quote is sufficient to explain this difference: “We must not permit the authorities to deflect the blame and responsibility from themselves by pointing fingers at those soldiers who went into the administration’s preemptive war as proud Americans and return as disgraced prison guards” (Zimbardo 2004b:371).

This thesis explains the social psychological processes responsible for the transformation of the prison guards through a content analysis of the laws, memoranda, investigation reports, and photographic representation of events at Abu Ghraib.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research methodology. A specific type of qualitative data collection is nonreactive research, also called unobtrusive research (Strand and Weiss 2005). In this type of data collection, documents, artifacts, and photographs are the direct units of analysis- not individual humans. Since the research design does not use human beings as the direct unit of analysis, many of the ethical concerns regarding subject privacy and confidentiality, as well as risk of psychological and physical harm to participants are inapplicable.

Content analyses allow the researcher to analyze social reality in a scientifically subjective manner (Zhang and Wildemuth). Qualitative content analysis uncovers themes, categories, and patterns in the social world. It does not employ statistical analysis or distributional “significance” as does quantitative data analysis. Content analysis is the “systematic description and analysis of any sort of recorded information” (McIntyre 2005:196). It examines visual, written and/or spoken text (Strand and Weiss 2005). For example, conversations, television shows, movies, photographs, and advertisements are all appropriate sources of data for a content analysis (McIntyre 2005; Strand and Weiss 2005).

Due to the unique nature of this research study, the content analysis requires that the data be analyzed in reverse chronological order. Unlike the typical research

study, the product of social psychological processes is already known. This means that the content analysis must focus on explaining and interpreting the social psychology that influenced the behaviors previously known to exist. In April of 2004, the photographic representations of abuse and torture at Abu Ghraib were made public, answering the question of “What happened?” The goal of this content analysis is to discover “How did it happen?” Starting with the photographs and retracing the events and policy changes leading up to the abuse unveils the social psychological processes responsible for the behavior of the MP guards at Abu Ghraib. Documents were selected for analysis based on their relevance and significance to the sociological story of Abu Ghraib. The photographs released by the media in 2004 provided a starting point in the research process. Those that demonstrated the best representation of the abuses are included in the content analysis. These photos were often displayed in news articles that also discussed the investigation reports. Three specific reports (listed in Chapter Five) were chosen based on their content and area of focus. The official investigation reports told of the memoranda and other activity (such as relocation of government and military officials and troops from one theater of operation to another) that set the tone for policies pertaining to detainee treatment. Memos were chosen based on the author, recipient, and content of the message. The memoranda designed to alter and undermine existing laws and treaties led to the analysis of original U.S. and international policies regarding the treatment of detainees in times of war,

specifically those mentioned in the selected memoranda. The selected investigation reports, memoranda, and policies were obtained through the resources in the university library. Fortunately, the documents needed for the content analysis were organized and found in books prepared by others who also seek to tell the story of Abu Ghraib. The memoranda and investigation reports were previously compiled into comprehensive books, making the search for and obtainment of these items extremely simple.

To begin, I gathered the publicized photographs that best captured the abuses and torture of detainees and the results from the official investigations of Abu Ghraib. The pictures display irrefutable evidence of disproportionate force and unauthorized interrogation techniques, while the investigation reports provide documentation and personal accounts of abuse and torture. These illustrative representations of the torture and abuse provide a starting point for the content analysis. In order to accurately focus the remainder of the content analysis (searching to answer the question “How?”), it is important to be familiar with the specifics of “What?”

Next, I analyze the various memoranda, letters, emails, policies, and authorizations issued and passed between every level of the U.S. government and military hierarchy. These documents discuss, interpret, and declare changes to the laws and policies as they apply to the Global War on Terror and the individuals detained in the name of military intelligence. The memoranda and investigation

reports convey underlying factors contributing to the environment that spawned physical and sexual abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib.

I understand the context of the memoranda by gathering, reading, and analyzing the laws, policies, treaties, and military guidelines that pertain to the treatment of detainees in United States' custody during times of war. This consists of documents such as the Geneva Conventions, the War Crimes Act, US Code 2340-2340A, and Army Field Manual 34-52.

The official reports from investigations conducted by Major General Antonio M. Taguba on the 800th Military Police Brigade, Major General George R. Fay and Lieutenant General Anthony R. Jones on the activities of military intelligence at Abu Ghraib, and former secretary of defense James R. Schlesinger on the investigations of detention operations led by the Department of Defense uncovers a chain of command – and hence, a chain of authority – starting in Washington, D.C with government officials and ending with military police guarding Abu Ghraib. Also, a document published by a medically based human rights organization titled “Broken Laws, Broken Lives” confirms the events of torture in the form of physical or sexual abuse.

Through scrupulous investigation of U.S. government documents regarding the Department of Defense interrogation tactics and policies regarding the treatment of detainees, the institutional forces that created the atmosphere responsible for the behavior of the military police guards and military intelligence

personnel become clear. Careful examination of the investigation reports from government and military officials begins to shed light on the state of affairs at Abu Ghraib leading up to April 2004. A comparison of the atmosphere and activities from Abu Ghraib prison and the Stanford Prison Experiment searches for parallels in the constructed realities and resulting consequences at both facilities. And lastly, an expert analysis of Abu Ghraib conducted by Dr. Zimbardo himself supports the argument that the abuses were not the fault of the low-ranking guards, but a product of the environment created by the policies set forth by the higher authorities and government officials. The SPE found that any normal, functioning human being could be transformed into an agent for brutal inhumanity. This content analysis is an attempt to determine the similarities between the Stanford Prison Experiment and Abu Ghraib. Doing so uncovers the fact that the reality constructed by U.S. government and military officials is at the root of the problems that arose at Abu Ghraib.

Data collected from each document were recorded individually on index cards and sorted into categories based on similarities in content and characteristics. Each individual piece of information taken from a document (consisting of individual sentences, paragraphs, or general ideas) constitutes one item of data. Data collected through content analysis calls for the creation of a classification scheme (see Appendix A) with categories into which the data will be sorted (Zhang and Wildemuth). The classification scheme must have titled categories and rules

governing the coding and classification process. Through a process of inductive reasoning, the documents analyzed produce a set of categories. Once the materials are collected, the data are examined cumulatively. Using the contrast comparative method, each piece of documentation is compared to the rest and placed into categories according to how the content of the items differ from one another. Using this comparative approach, similar pieces are grouped together and each group will be given a classification title. Once the initial groups are identified, the guidelines as to what type of document belongs in that group became increasingly evident. (Documents portraying policy information are obviously not suited for the category containing situational symbols, for example). Things such as uniforms, prison dress and undress, weapons, and language populate the symbols category. These symbols serve as signifiers that help construct the reality shared by the guards. The interrogation tactics, guidelines on detainee treatment, memoranda issued by the president and his staff, and exceptions to the Geneva Convention made by government officials are examples of items filling out the category of institutional policies that affected the reality constructed. Through careful investigation and thorough examination, the data gathered cumulatively reveal the underlying language, messages, and symbols. A comprehensive look at multiple sources of data outlines the symbols, values, and beliefs that constructed the reality that engulfed the individuals at Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq.

A thorough search of documents to be included is conducted. Materials must be intentionally selected or excluded based on the reliability and professionalism of the source. Documents issued by the U.S. government, the U.S. military, official investigation reports, detainee interview depositions, and actual photographic evidence are among the items intentionally selected for analysis.

This unobtrusive, qualitative content analysis reveals characteristics of the reality that consumed the lives of those who populated the physical space of Abu Ghraib. The behaviors and crimes of obedience that resulted from the constructed reality are understood in terms of situational factors and societal pressures instead of biological predispositions.

Limitations The first limitation of this type of data collection is that the categories into which data are sorted do not necessarily previously exist. The classification of information must be determined and categorized at the discretion of the researcher through a process of inductive reasoning, as described above.

Second, a major concern for this type of data collection process is that, in many cases, it is impossible to conduct a comprehensive analysis due to the wide variety of articles and artifacts that are suitable for content analysis (Zhang and Wildemuth). It is not realistic to assume that 100% of the material available for analysis will be included, particularly with an event as largely reported and documented as the coverage on the happenings at Abu Ghraib. For this reason, the documents included will be chosen intentionally based on their source. Materials

published or authored by reputable, dependable sources are appropriate to include in the content analysis.

Third, also worth noting is that although appropriate measures will be taken to prevent such discrepancies, information previously recorded for non-research purposes is not guaranteed to be a representative or exhaustive collection of information on the original event(s).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Most research projects ask “What if?” But, because the outcome was already known, it was necessary to conduct research in terms of answering the question “Why?” In this chapter, all of the laws, regulations, memoranda, policies, events, and reports are analyzed for relevant content and presented in chronological order. Cumulatively, these documents portray the “big picture” of Abu Ghraib. The memoranda, photographs, and investigation reports tell the story.

First, photographs were grouped together with direct detainee reports and a physician-documented confirmation of abuse and torture to create a compilation of cruel acts committed at Abu Ghraib. Second, the memoranda were grouped together as they related to the creation and perpetuation of the atmosphere at Abu Ghraib. Third, the original federal laws and multi-national treaties were included as a background for the standard code of conduct during times of war. And finally, the consequences of various memoranda and policies, and policy changes revealed a set of contributing factors that supported and encouraged the behavior of the guards at Abu Ghraib. The classification system can be found in Appendix A.

In order to begin the content analysis, it was necessary to start at the end, researching the most recent category first: photographs and investigation reports. They specify exactly what abuses, torture, and criminal acts were committed at Abu

Ghraib. These acts of abuse and torture are corroborated by the physicians report published in 2008. The investigation reports then pointed to the memoranda, revealing exactly who suggested, recommended, and/or approved certain interrogation tactics. These memoranda, combined in a timeline (see Appendix B) with other relevant turns of events, outline the processes leading up to the exposure of photographed physical and sexual abuse and torture. Third, the memoranda led to the original laws, treaties, policies, and regulations to which the United States must adhere. The final category of contributing factors birthed four sub-categories. These sub-categories are: (1) leadership, communication, and supervision, (2) training and resources, (3) job descriptions and jurisdictions, and (4) shifting of people and policies. These sub-categories are discussed at length in this chapter. These documents are also discussed in detail below. In the interest of simplicity, the content analysis data are presented in chronological order, although the research was conducted in reverse order.

Laws, Policies, and Treaties on Torture

Five documents in particular were addressed, interpreted, or discussed at length in the memoranda mentioned in Chapter Three and covered in detail in the next section. It is important to identify the original standards of conduct according to the U.S. government in order to fully understand the context of the memoranda and the extent to which the situation at Abu Ghraib became largely corrupt. The five legal documents included in the content analysis are: the 18 U.S.C Sections 2340

and 2340A (U.S. Torture Statute), the Convention Against Torture, the Geneva Convention, the War Crimes Act, and Army Field Manual 34-52: Intelligence Interrogation. Below, Table 5.1 shows a summary of the names, dates of authorization, purpose, and application of each document.

Table 5.1 Legal Documents Pertaining to Torture

Name	Date	Application
18 U.S.C. Section 2340-2340A U.S. Torture Statute	1994	Section 2340A deems both “torture” and “conspiracy to commit torture” as punishable by prison sentence or death. Section 2340 explicitly defines the term “torture” and further explains what is meant by the phrase “severe mental pain or suffering” as it relates to torture.
Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	1987	United Nations international human rights policy to prevent torture in countries across the globe.
Geneva Conventions	1949	Define the basic rights of civil and military prisoners during times of war.
War Crimes Act	1996	Defines “war crimes” as a grave violation of the Geneva Convention or any other convention pertaining to wartime laws to which the United States is a member/party.
Army Field Manual 34-52 Intelligence Interrogation	1987 1992	Instructs military interrogators on techniques and guidelines for effective and lawful interrogations.

The U.S. Torture Statute defines torture as “an act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering... upon another person within his custody or physical control” (U.S. Code 1994:np). As an added measure, the phrase “severe mental pain or suffering” is defined as

...the prolonged mental harm caused by or resulting from - (A) the intentional infliction or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering;(B) the administration or application, or threatened administration or application, of mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or the personality;(C) the threat of imminent death; or(D) the threat that another person will imminently be subjected to death, severe physical pain or suffering, or the administration or application of mind-altering substances or other procedures calculated to disrupt profoundly the senses or personality (U.S. Code 1994:np).

The Code also determines that those who are found guilty of committing the act of torture may be punished by up to twenty years in prison. In the event that torture results in the death of the detainee, maximum punishment is life in prison or the death penalty. Regarding the *conspiracy* of intent to torture, the U.S. Code determines that individuals are held to the same penalties as prescribed above, with an exception to the death penalty.

The Convention Against Torture provided the first internationally agreed-upon definition of torture (Garcia 2008). The Congressional Research Services' Report for Congress on the Convention Against Torture states that torture is defined as

any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions (Garcia 2008:2).

The Convention Against Torture was the stimulus for the creation of 18 U.S.C Sections 2340 and 2340A. In particular, this document establishes that, in order to constitute torture, the act must be an intentional infliction of *severe* mental or physical suffering. Under the stipulations of the Convention Against Torture, the government is obligated to prevent the torture of individuals via administrative, legislative, and judicial measures.

The Geneva Convention was spurred into existence after World War II (Geneva Conventions 1955). It consists of four separate treaties and three protocols, which define the basic rights of military and civil prisoners during times of war. Convention Number III speaks directly to the treatment of prisoners of war. The food, clothing, shelter, medical care, sanitary conditions, captivity, and sanctions are outlined and explained in detail. The War Crimes Act of 1996 declared that any member of the Armed Forces of the United States would be imprisoned or forced to pay a fine for violating the Geneva (or any other) Conventions against torture (U.S. Code 1996).

The 1987 and 1992 versions of Army Field Manual 34-52 were consulted during the detention of individuals in Iraq. These documents contain information for military investigators, offering guidance, regulation, and instruction on various techniques, tactics, and guidelines for effective and lawful interrogations of detainees. The techniques outlined in the field manual for intelligence

interrogations were bypassed and disregarded for military operations, at first with regard to Guantanamo Bay. Various members of the U.S. government and military chains of command created loopholes in the laws and policies specifically for use at Guantanamo Bay. MG Miller spread these loopholes and policy exceptions to Abu Ghraib when he brought the guidelines used at Guantanamo to Iraq during his visit in 2003. This set the tone for the perceived permission for the torture and abuse of prisoners.

Memoranda

The memos that traveled from Washington, D.C. to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, Bagram in Afghanistan, and Abu Ghraib Prison in Iraq shed light on the fact that even an indirect contribution to the environment can become the origin of a major catalyst for disaster. Beginning in January of 2002, the memoranda included in the content analysis are summarized in Table 5.2, below. For further explanation on each author or recipient, see Appendix C.

Table 5.2 Summary of Memoranda

Date	To/From	Summary of Content
Jan. 9, 2002	Yoo/Haynes	Advisory that the Geneva Conventions do not protect members of al Qaeda or the Taliban.
Jan. 19, 2002	Rumsfeld/JCS	Geneva Conventions do not apply to al Qaeda or the Taliban, nor are they entitled to protections of prisoners of war. Follow Geneva to the extent appropriate.
Jan. 25, 2002	Gonzales/Bush	Decides Powell's reservations/warnings are unpersuasive. Advises that the decision to consider members of al Qaeda and the Taliban as unlawful combatants stands as is.
Feb. 1, 2002	Ashcroft/Bush	Argues for the decision on al Qaeda and the Taliban to remain: they are not protected by Geneva.
Feb. 7, 2002	Bush/Admin.	Final decision to disallow prisoner of war protections to al Qaeda and the Taliban.
Aug. 1, 2002	Bybee/Gonzales	Finds a loophole in the Torture Convention that it outlaws only the most extreme acts.
Aug. 1, 2002	Yoo/Gonzales	Determines that the Torture Statute is only violated if it is the intent of the defendant to cause severe pain or suffering.
Dec. 2, 2002	Rumsfeld/Haynes	Approval to use Category I, II, and some of Category III techniques in interrogations (see Table 5.3).
Jan. 15, 2003	Rumsfeld/SOUTH	Rescindment of Dec. 2, 2002 approval.
Mar. 6, 2003	Rumsfeld	Working Group agrees to disqualify the Taliban from prisoner of war protections. Decides other prisoners at Guantanamo Bay are not protected by Geneva.
Apr. 16, 2003	Rumsfeld/SOUTH	Approval of most Category I and some Category II techniques (see Table 5.3). Others are allowed only with approval from Secretary of Defense.
Sep. 14, 2003	Sanchez/SOUTH	LTG Sanchez creates interrogation manual modeled after the April 16 manual originally constructed for use at Guantanamo.

The January 9, 2002 memo from John Yoo, the Deputy Assistant Attorney

General and Robert Delahunty, Special Counsel to William J. Haynes II, General

Counsel in the Department of Defense concluded that “neither the Geneva Conventions nor the WCA [War Crimes Act] regulate the detention of al Qaeda prisoners captured during the Afghanistan conflict” (Yoo and Delahunty 2002:39). It also stated that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to members of the Taliban militia.

The memorandum Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on January 19, 2002 was a request to inform the Combatant Commanders of the determination that any member of the al Qaeda or the Taliban in U.S. custody were not entitled to the protections of prisoner of war status with regard to the Geneva Conventions (Rumsfeld 2002). The document from January 25, 2002 is an advisory reply provided by Counsel to the President Alberto Gonzales to President Bush. It is a response to the request made by Secretary of State Colin Powell, asking for reconsideration regarding the decision to prevent members of al Qaeda and the Taliban from being protected by the Geneva Convention (Ashcroft 2002). According to Gonzales, the requests and warning signs reported by the Secretary of State are unpersuasive (Gonzales 2002).

On February 7, 2002, President Bush released a memorandum for the Vice President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Attorney General (as well as a few other highly-ranked government officials) (Bush 2002). It was the final word from President Bush that the Taliban are to be classified as

“unlawful combatants,” and members of al Qaeda do not qualify as prisoners of war. Therefore, the Geneva Conventions do not apply.

The August 1, 2002 memorandum from Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee to Alberto Gonzales, Counsel to the President is one of the three documents referred to earlier as the “Torture Memos.” This particular document locates and justifies loopholes in the U.S. Torture Statute found in 18 U.S.C. 2340 and 2340A. First, Bybee declares that the text of the treaty states that criminal penalties are only applicable in the most extreme cases or acts of torture (Bybee 2002). The memo states “We conclude that the treaty’s text prohibits only the most extreme acts by reserving criminal penalties solely for torture and declining to require such penalties for ‘cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment’” (Bybee 2002:172). It goes on to say that “while many of these techniques may amount to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, they do not produce pain or suffering of the necessary intensity to meet the definition of torture” (Bybee 2002:173). Then, Bybee states “...under the current circumstances certain justification defenses might be available that would potentially eliminate criminal liability” (Bybee 2002:173). The concluding statement of the document reads “...application of Section 2340A to interrogations undertaken pursuant to the President’s Commander-In-Chief powers may be unconstitutional” within the current situation in the war against al Qaeda and “even if an interrogation method might violate Section 2340A, necessity or self-defense

could provide justifications that would eliminate any criminal liability” (Bybee 2002:214).

Another piece of the Torture Memos, the document from John Yoo, Deputy Assistant Attorney General to Alberto Gonzales (also sent on August 1, 2002), determined the U.S. Torture Statute (U.S. Code 2340A) requires that, in order for an act to be considered a violation of the statute, there must be *specific intent* to cause severe pain or suffering (Yoo 2002).

On December 2, 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld signed, in approval, of the November 27 memo from William Haynes, General Counsel. This approval gave permission to discretionarily use Category I and Category II techniques as well as one tactic listed in Category III during interrogations at Guantanamo Bay. Below his signature, in hand-written letters, the memo reads, “However, I stand for 8-10 hours a day. Why is standing limited to four hours?” (Rumsfeld and Haynes 2002:237). This document was rescinded on January 15, 2003, when Secretary Rumsfeld determined that, until further notice, any interrogation technique needed direct permission and justification (Rumsfeld 2003a). He also stated that he ordered a working group to provide further guidance on the legal policies and interrogation techniques. This working group recommended on March 6, 2003 that members of the Taliban militia remain disqualified as prisoners of war (Rumsfeld 2003b). It also determined that the Geneva Conventions did not apply to any of the other prisoners at Guantanamo Bay.

On April 16, 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld issued a memorandum to the Commander of US Southern Command outlining twenty-four interrogation techniques and applicable safeguards (Rumsfeld 2003b). Among the techniques listed are: dietary manipulation, environmental manipulation, sleep adjustment, and isolation. In September, Lieutenant General Sanchez used this list of techniques to create a set of interrogation tactics for use at Abu Ghraib (Sanchez 2003). He failed to wait for approval from U.S. Southern Command and began to implement the procedures immediately. Approval came on October 12, with revisions and deletions of requested interrogation techniques (Sanchez 2003).

These memoranda set the tone for an environment in which the bending of rules was not only tolerated, but also condoned. It is important to understand the impact of the policy changes with regard to the detention centers affected. The intentional dismissal of laws and regulations designed to protect the human rights of detainees creates an environment of permissibility. A full list of authorized and unauthorized interrogation techniques can be found below.

Summary of Authorized and Unauthorized Interrogation Techniques Field

Manual 34-52 lists the following techniques and descriptions, all of which remained available for use throughout the time frame in question (Field Manual 1992).

- a. Direct questioning- asking straight forward questions
- b. Incentive/removal of incentive-offering reward/removing privilege
- c. Emotional love- play on love detainee has for person/group
- d. Emotional hate- play on hatred detainee has for person/group
- e. Fear up- harsh – significant increase in fear level of detainee

- f. Fear up- mild – moderate increase in fear level of detainee
- g. Reduced Fear – reducing fear level of detainee
- h. Pride and ego up – boosting detainee ego
- i. Pride and ego down – attacking or insulting detainee
- j. Futility – invoking feeling of futility in detainee
- k. We know all – convincing detainee that interrogator already knows the answers to the questions being asked.
- l. Establish your identity – forcing detainee to believe interrogator has mistaken him for someone else
- m. Repetition approach – continuously repeating the same question
- n. File and dossier – convincing detainee interrogator has damning and inaccurate file
- o. Rapid fire – asking questions so fast detainee has no chance to answer
- p. Silence – staring at detainee to cause discomfort
- q. Change of scene – increase or decrease in comfort of environment

A summary of additional interrogation techniques suggested on October 11, 2002 and approved by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld on December 2, can be found below (Rumsfeld 2002). These interrogation tactics were rescinded in the memo from Secretary Rumsfeld, dated January 15, 2003 (Rumsfeld 2003a).

Table 5.3 Summary of Requested and Approved Interrogation Techniques (from Secretary Rumsfeld's December 2, 2002 Memo)

TECHNIQUES	REQUESTED	APPROVED
Category I		
Yelling	✓	✓
Deception techniques (multiple interrogators, false interrogator identity, etc.)	✓	✓
Category II		
Stress positions (such as standing) for up to four hours	✓	✓
Falsified Documents	✓	✓
Isolation up to 30 days*	✓	✓
Change from normal interrogation environment	✓	✓
Light/sound deprivation	✓	✓
Hooding during transport and/or interrogation	✓	✓
20-hour interrogations	✓	✓
Removal of comfort items (including religious items)	✓	✓
MRE instead of hot meal	✓	✓
Removal of clothing	✓	✓
Forced grooming	✓	✓
Use of phobia (such as dogs) to induce stress	✓	✓
Category III		
Use of scenarios designed to make detainee feel that death or severe pain as consequence are imminent*	✓	
Exposure to cold weather or cold water*	✓	
Wet towel and dripping water to create feeling of suffocation*	✓	
Mild physical contact (poking, grabbing, pushing)*	✓	✓

*Required consent and may only be used with the most uncooperative detainees.

For a Timeline of Events, the compilation of memoranda dates and subjects, policy changes, transferal of individuals, and other important events, see Appendix B.

Events of Abuse and Torture

Exact and specific tales of torture and abuse were recounted in published photographs and in the investigation reports completed by MG Taguba, MG Fay, and

LTG Jones. Many of the photographs were released in the media, starting in 2004. The photographs composed for the content analysis are representative of the abuses and torture of detainees and were collected from edited books published for the purpose of circulating the investigation reports as well as websites devoted to publicizing the scandal. In 2008, an organization by the name of Physicians for Human Rights published a document titled “Broken Laws, Broken Lives: Medical Evidence of Torture by U.S. Personnel and Its Impact.” This document provides agreement and support from medical professionals that the detainees’ claims of torture and inhumane treatment are truthful and unfortunately accurate. Consulting this document in the content analysis strengthens the argument that the detainees were treated with harsher interrogation techniques than was lawful by international standards. The analysis of events of torture and abuse begins by listing the acts committed by military and contracted personnel.

Taguba Report The investigation report filed by MG Taguba lists the following acts of intentional abuse (Taguba 2004:416):

- a. (S) Punching, slapping, and kicking detainees; jumping on their naked feet;
- b. (S) Videotaping and photographing naked male and female detainees;
- c. (S) Forcibly arranging detainees in various sexually explicit positions for photographing;
- d. (S) Forcing detainees to remove their clothing and keeping them naked for several days at a time;
- e. (S) Forcing naked male detainees to wear women’s underwear;
- f. (S) Forcing groups of male detainees to masturbate themselves while being photographed and videotaped;

- g. (S) Arranging naked male detainees in a pile and then jumping on them;
- h. (S) Positioning a naked detainee on a MRE Box, with a sandbag on his head, and attaching wires to his fingers, toes, and penis to simulate electric torture;
- i. (S) Writing "I am a Rapist" (sic) on the leg of a detainee alleged to have forcibly raped a 15-year old fellow detainee, and then photographing him naked;
- j. (S) Placing a dog chain or strap around a naked detainee's neck and having a female Soldier pose for a picture;
- k. (S) A male MP guard having sex with a female detainee;
- l. (S) Using military working dogs (without muzzles) to intimidate and frighten detainees, and in at least one case biting and severely injuring a detainee;
- m. (S) Taking photographs of dead Iraqi detainees.

Furthermore, he found credible evidence of eight more acts of abuse

(Taguba 2004:417):

- a. (U) Breaking chemical lights and pouring the phosphoric liquid on detainees;
- b. (U) Threatening detainees with a charged 9mm pistol;
- c. (U) Pouring cold water on naked detainees;
- d. (U) Beating detainees with a broom handle and a chair;
- e. (U) Threatening male detainees with rape;
- f. (U) Allowing a military police guard to stitch the wound of a detainee who was injured after being slammed against the wall in his cell;
- g. (U) Sodomizing a detainee with a chemical light and perhaps a broomstick.
- h. (U) Using military working dogs to frighten and intimidate detainees with threats of attack, and in one instance actually biting a detainee.

Of the abuses listed here, it is understood that a line was crossed during detention and interrogation operations at Abu Ghraib. Compared to the list of approved interrogation techniques provided above (Table 5.3), there are very few

accounts that resemble an authorized technique. Both the Fay/Jones Report and the photographs included below echo these findings.

Fay/Jones Report The investigation report filed by MG Fay and LTG Jones includes incident reports from detainees and witnesses. Among the numerous accounts, the following acts of physical and sexual abuse toward detainees appeared at least once (Jones and Fay 2004):

- a. Rape of a detainee under age 18
- b. Female detainee physically restrained by one soldier and forcibly kissed by another before being forced to remove her shirt
- c. Beatings (with and without chairs and/or brooms)
- d. Choking and kicking until detainee rendered unconscious
- e. Denied clothing for extended periods of time
- f. Denied bedding (mattress, sheets, pillows, etc)
- g. Spat upon by soldiers
- h. Urinated on by soldiers
- i. Lacerations from being slammed into a concrete wall
- j. Put on a leash and forced to behave like a dog
- k. Forced to stand on cardboard boxes with wires attached to fingers and toes, with the threat of electrocution
- l. Faced with barking, un-muzzled dogs
- m. Sodomized and threatened with sodomy via a police stick
- n. Men handcuffed together and forced to masturbate
- o. Men handcuffed together and forced to simulate sex for photographs
- p. Men placed in a pile or pyramid while nude and hooded
- q. Catheterized and left for days with no bag while bleeding from wounds
- r. Forced to wear women's underwear as hoods/blindfolds

These incidents are included in the report as claims made by individuals detained or other eyewitness accounts. Many of these claims appear in multiple incident reports throughout the document. Also, incidents similar to many of these claims appear in the photographs below.

Photographs of Abuse The following thirty-three photographs depict the physical and sexual abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib Prison in Baghdad, Iraq. The pictures were taken between October and December 2003. Through these pictures, the claims and reports listed by MG Taguba, MG Fay, and LTG Jones are illustrated in ways that will never be forgotten. The photographs are meant to provide a small but significant insight into the environment and atmosphere of Abu Ghraib Prison.



Figure 5.1 (Danner 2004:221)



Figure 5.2 (Danner 2004:224)



Figure 5.3 (Danner 2004:219)



Figure 5.4 (Danner 2004:224)



Figure 5.5 (Danner 2004:223)



Figure 5.6 (Danner 2004:224)



Figure 5.7 (Danner 2004:221)



Figure 5.8 (Danner 2004:221)



Figure 5.9 (Danner 2004:223)



Figure 5.10 (Danner 2004:223)



Figure 5.11 (Danner 2004:220)



Figure 5.12 (Danner 2004:223)



Figure 5.13 (Abu Ghraib 2006)



Figure 5.14 (Abu Ghraib 2006)



Figure 5.15 (Abu Ghraib 2006)



Figure 5.16 (Abu Ghraib 2006)



Figure 5.17 (Danner 2004:221)



Figure 5.18 (Abu Ghraib 2009)



Figure 5.19 (Abu Ghraib 2009)



Figure 5.20 (Abu Ghraib 2009)



Figure 5.21 (Danner 2004:223)



Figure 5.22 (Abu Ghraib 2009)



Figure 5.23 (Abu Ghraib 2009)



Figure 5.24 (Danner 2004:217)



Figure 5.25 (Danner 2004:224)



Figure 5.26 (Danner 2004:224)



Figure 5.27 (Danner 2004:219)

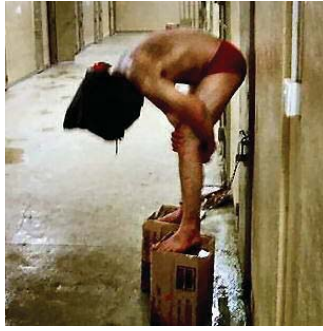


Figure 5.28 (Danner 2004:223)



Figure 5.29 (Danner 2004:220)



Figure 5.30 (Danner 2004:222)



Figure 5.31 (Danner 2004:222)



Figure 5.32 (Danner 2004:218)



Figure 5.33 (Abu Ghraib 2006)

Substantiation of Torture and Abuse The “Broken Laws, Broken Lives” report documents and examines the experiences and conditions of eleven men from various detention facilities during the War on Terror (Physicians 2008). Medical evidence corroborates the abuse and torture described by the detainees. Using standardized and internationally accepted protocols, the authors of that detailed

medical examination find that the acts committed by military and contracted individuals at Abu Ghraib and other detention centers constituted torture and ill treatment. The report states (Physicians 2008:9)

All of the abusive interrogation techniques and patterns of ill-treatment endured by these eleven men – including beatings and other forms of severe physical and sexual assault, isolation, sleep deprivation, forced nakedness, severe humiliation and degradation, and sensory deprivation, many of which were experienced over long periods of time and often in combination with other prohibited acts – constituted acts of torture as well as cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment under domestic criminal statutes and international human rights and humanitarian treaties, including the Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Convention, that were in effect at the time the acts were committed.

According to the physicians report, the beatings, sexual abuse and humiliation, isolation, sleep deprivation, and repetitive degradation were all part of a “regime of brutality at the facilities where the detainees were held” (Physicians 2008:1). It goes on to say (Physicians 2008:1):

This report demonstrates that the permissive environment created by implicit and explicit authorizations by senior U.S. officials to ‘take the gloves off’ encouraged forms of torture.... In an environment of moral disengagement that countenances authorized techniques designed to humiliate and dehumanize detainees, it is not surprising that other forms of human cruelty such as physical assault were practiced.

The above statement relates to the focus of this thesis by stating that the environment created at the detention centers, specifically Abu Ghraib, created the opportunity for and implementation of torture. In the next section of this chapter,

the content analysis navigates through the creation of this permissive environment and how it came into existence.

Factors Contributing to the Environment at Abu Ghraib

As stated earlier, there were four sub-categories, which were derived through inductive reasoning during the content analysis. The data collected could easily be grouped into similarly contributing factors affecting the atmosphere at Abu Ghraib Prison.

Supervision, Leadership, and Communication The first sub-category contains data regarding the lack of supervision, leadership, and effective communication in the higher levels of the chain of command. With concern for the leadership element, the Schlesinger Report and the Fay/Jones Report each found flaws in the organization and implementation of appropriate leadership with respect to both military police and military intelligence (Schlesinger 2004; Jones and Fay 2004). The Schlesinger Report finds that there were serious lapses in leadership for the MI and MP brigades “from junior non-commissioned officers to battalion and brigade levels” (Schlesinger 2004:928). With regard to the supervision element, MG Fay and LTG Jones reported that the commander and deputy commander (LTG Sanchez and MG Wojdakowski) “failed to ensure proper staff oversight of detention and interrogation operations” (Jones and Fay 2004:993). The Schlesinger Report confidently agreed with MG Fay and LTG Jones (Schlesinger 2004). The communication element of this sub-category is supported by both reports from

Schlesinger and MG Fay/LTG Jones (Schlesinger 2004; Jones and Fay 2004). The relationships between and among different parties (such as military police, military intelligence, and CIA contractors) at Abu Ghraib were dysfunctional. Communication between these parties was limited, thus complicating their relationships further. The confusion resulting from inadequate leadership, absent supervision, and lackluster communication constitutes one important piece of the atmosphere.

Whereas supervision may or may not have been close, nine further pieces of information must be remembered at this juncture. (1) This “weak supervision” interpretation of causal context merely served to insulate levels of command above the brigade from blame. (2) Within a wider interpretation of prisoner treatment, military police guards were instructed to “prepare” their prisoners for interrogation by CIA contractors and others. (3) The “Torture Memos” made it clear that previous limits on abuse no longer applied. (4) Those in the chain of command, above the level of actual perpetrators, were aware of the general U.S. post-9/11 atmosphere of outrage and revenge fanned by members of the administration, the widespread media discussion of torture as an approved procedure, and the mixing of personnel among detainee prison facilities, each with its own standards of detainee treatment. (5) In August of 2003, the Army Field manual 34-52 was bypassed by visiting MG Miller who said the Abu Ghraib prisoners were receiving too much respect and not enough harsh treatment. MG Miller provided to Abu Ghraib commanders, in writing, the techniques used at Guantanamo Bay that bypass and disregard FM 34-

52, along with the approval letter from Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld for enhanced interrogation techniques. (6) The theater commander for Iraq, LTG Sanchez, then authored and issued a version of this new policy specifically for Abu Ghraib. (7) Captain Wood simplified this new, harsh-treatment policy order and used it for training at Abu Ghraib. This training continued unabated until the scandal broke in April of 2004. (8) The mission of the military police guards was changed from guarding to assisting interrogation. (9) The effect of this change of mission, and in keeping with their orders, the process of interrogation began to include all detainee-guard relations throughout Tiers 1A and 1B at Abu Ghraib.

This is evidence of strong, direct leadership – no matter the forms and level of supervision. In other words, these official investigative reports are suitable for detailing abuses, but are not efficient means to assess responsibility or causal context.

Training and Resources The second sub-category contains data regarding the insufficient training and resources provided to the soldiers before they were stationed at Abu Ghraib. First, as the Schlesinger Report demonstrates, the units that deployed were not placed in specific locations due to their capabilities or previous training or experience (as per the standard deployment plan) (Schlesinger 2004). Instead, these troops were stationed based on strength and readiness. Because of this, the soldiers that arrived at Abu Ghraib were not familiar with the job descriptions, duties, and limitations specific to the prison. Schlesinger’s report

states that the military police units sent to Abu Ghraib for detention purposes were not given detention-specific training during their mobilization period. These issues were not resolved before new techniques were added to the routine. The report determines “As [the] interrogation techniques exceeded parameters of FM 34-52, no training had been developed. Absent training, the interrogators used their own initiative to implement new techniques” (Schlesinger 2004: 926). In contrast to this observation, Captain Wood at Abu Ghraib was using the guidelines issued from MG Miller and reissued by LTG Sanchez for training military police guards in the harsh and previously illegal prisoner handling techniques. These new guidelines and the training set conditions for the inhumane treatment of prisoners. In the case of Abu Ghraib, the rules were already bent by those high in the chain of command, and the soldiers were not faced with condemnation or consequences.

Aside from training, the military police guards at Abu Ghraib were far outnumbered. As discussed in Chapter Three, the detainee population outnumbered the guards in amounts to be measured in the thousands. The MP guards assigned to Tier 1A and 1B were given the highest-value detainees to detain, yet were not provided with an appropriate number of guards to do the job (Schlesinger 2004). Leaving the MP guards with thousands of prisoners and allowing them to create their own detention practices using only what they were newly given, the Zimbardo prison experiment would predict an escalation of deviance from humane standards.

Jurisdictions The third category contains data regarding the gaps in and crossover of job descriptions, job duties, and responsibilities taken on by various individuals. First, there seemed to be a misunderstanding of what military intelligence, military police, and the CIA contractors were supposed to do. Military police are qualified to guard the facility, keep detainees from escaping, and maintain detention operations. Military intelligence and the CIA contractors serve the purpose of conducting interrogations as a means of collecting important and valuable information from detainees. At Abu Ghraib, however, it was determined that military police were being asked by military intelligence and CIA contractors to participate in the interrogations (Hersh 2004; Schlesinger 2004; Jones and Fay 2004; Taguba 2004; Zimbardo 2007). Military police are not allowed to conduct interrogations or assist in the interrogation of any detainee beyond transport and security. It was while the MP guards were working in capacities not intended for their training that the abuses and torture occurred at the instruction of military intelligence and CIA contractors. The MP guards were being “good soldiers.”

The civilian contractors sent by the CIA were operating under a different set of policies than their military intelligence counterparts (Schlesinger 2004; Hersh 2004). They were authorized to conduct interrogations using techniques disallowed to the MI soldiers. To amplify the issue, there were no memoranda, handbooks, or written documentation of authorized techniques for the CIA contractors. The Schlesinger Report states, “No memorandum of understanding existed on

interrogation operations [for] the CIA and [their] detention practices contributed to a loss of accountability at Abu Ghraib” (Schlesinger 2004:942). Because of this gap in job description, it was widely believed that the techniques employed by CIA contractors were approved and encouraged by the government agency.

Contradicting and inconsistent policies regarding authorization of interrogation techniques further confused the soldiers at Abu Ghraib and led to MP and MI use of CIA techniques (Zimbardo 2007). The atmosphere of flexible policies and laws was compounded by apparently authoritative orders given to MP guards by CIA operatives and contractors outside the chain of command.

Shifting of People and Policies Many of the military officers present at Abu Ghraib were sent to Iraq from other theaters of operation, such as Guantanamo Bay and Bagram (Jones and Fay 2004). Their experiences conducting detention and interrogation operations at other facilities were used in their efforts to develop procedures for Abu Ghraib. The achievement of success in managing other facilities was rewarded with a transfer to Abu Ghraib, where their skills and abilities were much needed. This shift, coupled with an inability to distinguish between permitted techniques of interrogation from one theater of operation to another led to the operational conclusion that harsher treatment was a “natural progression” (Inquiry 2008).

It was not only the people that were shifted from Guantanamo Bay and Afghanistan to Iraq, but policies as well (Schlesinger 2004). Secretary Rumsfeld’s

approval memo from December 2, 2002 made available various improved interrogation techniques for use specifically at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The techniques outlined in this document traveled to Abu Ghraib and became standards for interrogation. Schlesinger explains the arrival of imported techniques by saying,

Interrogators and lists of techniques circulated from Guantanamo and Afghanistan to Iraq. During July and August 2003, the 519th Military Intelligence Company was sent [from Afghanistan] to the Abu Ghraib detention facility to conduct interrogation operations. Absent any explicit policy or guidance, other than FM 34-52, the officer in charge prepared draft interrogation guidelines that were a near copy of the Standard Operating Procedure created by Special Operating Forces. It is important to note that techniques effective under carefully controlled conditions at Guantanamo became far more problematic when they migrated and were not adequately safeguarded (Schlesinger 2004:911).

With no precautions, on the job training based on the permissibility of enhanced interrogation, mixed sources of supervision, and murky relations among detention jurisdictions with different standards, these inhumane treatment techniques evolved into the specific forms of physical and sexual abuses, acts of torture, and cruel, inhumane treatment perpetrated at Abu Ghraib.

The federal laws and international treaties on torture and inhumane treatment provided easily bypassed suggestions for officials at all levels who strongly desired to get the U.S. involved in torture. Strong, clear, urgent and repeated changes in the definition of military prisoners into non-national outlaws, the changes in and removal of treatment-limits, the euphemistic renaming torture to “enhanced interrogation” all create a causal context within which MP guards

became products of the deviant environment created at Abu Ghraib. The many memoranda from on high reveal a chronology of policy changes and loopholes that dissolved the force of existing laws and policy. These new definers of the situation became a powerful component in the re-construction of reality at Abu Ghraib. The described and photographed events of torture and inhumane treatment (later supported by medical professionals) illustrate soldiers confident they are doing the right thing to an enemy no longer to be perceived as human. The various investigations and subsequent reports circumscribe the responsibility for these unconscionable actions. Yet, they provide irrefutable evidence that the consequences of a malevolent environment materialized in a predictable way.

The content analysis revealed the following underlying elements responsible for the environment that was spawned: (1) There was strong, authoritative, directive leadership on interrogation policy and detainee treatment, but with mixed sources of supervision: the Chain of Command, military intelligence, the CIA, and CIA contractors. (2) There were multiple clear communications encouraging deviation from everyday morality, former legal limits and common definitions of humanity. These deviations created predictable but unintended specific outcomes. (3) There was a lack of prior mission-specific training combined with (CPT Wood's) concurrent on the job training in apparently approved, cruel and inhumane prisoner treatment parameters. (4) There were gaps in and crossovers of job duties and descriptions between military police, military intelligence, and CIA contractors; there was, in

short, a fundamental mission shift from guard to part of an interrogation team. (5) There was the rotation of personnel among detention centers with different treatment standards. (6) There was the apparently progressive change in interrogation and treatment policies that were perceived as an evolution toward harsher actions. In combination, these conditions furthered the re-construction of a prison reality on Tiers 1A and 1B into a dungeon-like interrogation reality (Zimbardo 2007).

The next chapter explains the social psychological interpretation of these contributing factors and compares Abu Ghraib to the Stanford Prison Experiment. The parallels between the two prisons reveal the startling discovery that Abu Ghraib was not a case of the MP soldiers being “bad apples,” but rather a poisonous environment that swayed average, moral individuals to commit extraordinarily cruel and inhumane acts of torture and abuse. The Schlesinger Report accurately described the phenomena as an “abnormality... [that] resided in the psychological [sociological] nature of the situation and not in those who passed through it” (Schlesinger 2004:970).

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter begins by revisiting the theoretical components of social psychology addressed in the literature review. The theories were applied to the studies conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s and Philip Zimbardo in the 1970s and will be applied to Abu Ghraib. Next, the Stanford Prison Experiment is explained in terms of the parallels it holds to the conditions and environment at Abu Ghraib. The activities of the guards in both prison situations participated in similar behaviors and existed in similarly constructed realities. This resemblance is used to determine that the individuals who directly committed the acts of abuse are not isolated cases of people with predispositions to evil, but instead are tangible evidence that constructed realities can produce predictable consequences. Finally, the research questions are answered with thorough conclusions based on information derived from the content-analytic data. The institutional forces and symbols responsible for constructing the reality that overcame each inhabitant of the prison are brought to light in a social psychological explanation of the evolution of Abu Ghraib.

Theoretical Review and Application

The key social psychological theories outlined in the literature review include the social construction of reality, the Thomas theorem, and the agentic state.

Dehumanization and deindividuation are included in the section explaining the social

psychology of human evil and are also integral parts of the social psychological processes at work in the analysis of Abu Ghraib.

The Social Construction of Reality The memoranda discussed in the previous chapter initiated the construction of a reality later inhabited by the military police guards, military intelligence personnel, and CIA operatives. The process began with the documents that encouraged and approved the decision to deny members of al Qaeda and the Taliban the protections given to prisoners of war. This exception to federal law and international treaty agreement prompted the belief that “the rules don’t apply” to certain valuable parties. Other memoranda concerned the abrogation of criminal liability of individuals who commit acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment provide encouragement for the decision to brutalize interrogation techniques for the purpose of obtaining valued information. Memos to and from Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld consisted of requests for and approval of additional and improved interrogation techniques. The decision to approve of increased methods of interrogation communicated to the military units that obtaining pertinent information from the detainees was more important than adhering to the laws and regulations regarding treatment of detainees in U.S. custody. Once these techniques were approved, there was little control over how they were utilized and where they were authorized to occur.

When military officers and units of soldiers were asked to transfer from one theater of operation to another, a uniformity of interrogation tactics was presumed

across detention locations. In the case of MG Miller, policy guidelines were purposely transferred from Guantanamo Bay to Abu Ghraib. The two detention centers operated in extremely different atmospheres and were not similar in many chain-of-command and supervisory respects: the historically distinct separation of guards and interrogators was fused. The use of the of these new interrogation techniques at Abu Ghraib without micro-level safeguards and in the absence of cautious implementation evolved a permissive atmosphere with no consequences for creative forms of (inhumane) detainee treatment. In effect and as a result, interrogation became a part of the totality of detention, and interrogation duties became duties for guards in the Tier 1A and Tier 1B living spaces of the detention facility.

The foundation of the reality for military personnel at Abu Ghraib was put into motion by the memoranda discussed above. These documents stated clearly that: (1) the detainees do not deserve the protections that come with being classified as a prisoner of war, (2) formerly inhumane behaviors can be legal under the new circumstances of international terrorism (“The War on Terror”) and therefore can be authorized (exempting participants from criminal liability), and (3) additional and intensified (“enhanced”) interrogation techniques are necessary to accomplish the goal of obtaining valuable information from the detainees.

There was no clear wall of separation between guarding duties and interrogation activities. In fact, it was quite the opposite. Untrained and merely *de*

facto interrogators had the 24-hour per day livelihood responsibilities for those who were not to be considered under the humane treatment codes required for prisoners of war. This was not a failure of the rank structure (i.e. poor supervision) so much as it was a change of mission. Leadership at Abu Ghraib simply ended with the issuance of new definitions of reality: inhumanity was to be used against the inhuman (detainees) as a duty and as a means of preparing detainees psychologically to give over any requested information.

This was a new mission with broad guidelines but without a clear plan; and, social psychology would have told us that “good” soldiers would be both obedient and resourceful. The photography of their prisoner “preparation” was clearly done in pride, and with smiles and “thumbs up.”

Clearly, soldiers sometimes do horrible things. There at Abu Ghraib, the soldiers were doing good for the sake of their country and they were acting well within the spirit of the new definitions of what was acceptable. There was not poor supervision. The supervisors were part of the altered mission, part of the reality reconstruction from prison to dungeon (Zimbardo 2007). Tiers 1A and 1B contained “high value” detainees in a separate part of the Abu Ghraib facility; it was a different “world,” a world dedicated to interrogation and, as such, a world owned by the CIA (the “dominant force”) (Martin Frost n.y.), and a sub-world of the War on Terror. As such, its “theodicy” “...permitted the [MP guards] to integrate the anomic experiences [of Tiers 1A and 1B in Abu Ghraib] into socially established norms and

[their]...own consciousness[es]...These experiences...at least make sense now in terms that are both socially and subjectively convincing” (Berger 1969:58).

Higher levels of command – the highest – made torture permissible and necessary. There simply was no source of condemnation for the “good” soldiers of Tier 1A and Tier 1B. This absence of disapprobation was rightly interpreted as approval and encouragement to continue, business as usual.

The highest levels of command simply did not count on this mission spill-over or on interrogation becoming public. But then those infamous photographs came to public attention when a *60 Minutes II* news report (which aired April 28, 2004) and an article by Seymour M. Hersh in *The New Yorker Magazine* (posted online on April 30, 2004 and published days later in the May 10, 2004 issue) told the Abu Ghraib story.

The Thomas Theorem The Thomas theorem explains why individuals conducted acts of torture, abuse, and cruel or inhumane treatment toward detainees. The participants in the Abu Ghraib torture and inhumanity were participants in the social re-construction of a reality in which interrogation techniques were constantly increasing and gathering justifiable strength. The military officers, MP guards, MI personnel, and CIA operatives and contractors subscribed to the reality in which they existed, and considered that reality to be legitimate and authentic. Because of this, the reality became real in its

consequences: indignity, pain, fear, and eventually, photographic and medical evidence of physical and sexual abuse and torture.

The military police had ample reason to believe their superiors wanted them to discard the old laws, operate under new laws, and increase interrogation efforts in order to collect information. Military intelligence and CIA contractors believed they were authorized to command military police guards to administer pre-interrogation preparations without training. Military police believed they were fulfilling a job duty by assisting the CIA contractors and MI personnel with interrogations. The consequences of these beliefs materialized in the scenarios described in Chapter Five.

Obedience and the Agentic State Due to MP belief that they were subject to the authority of MI personnel and CIA contractors (whom they perceived to be legitimate authority figures), the MP guards willingly shifted their mission and obeyed the “commands” issued under the conditions of their “new” mission.

In situations like that of Abu Ghraib, the obedience of the MP guards is attributed to the agentic state. The guards shed personal accountability for their actions because they were acting under the instruction and command of MI personnel and CIA contractors. As discussed in the literature review, a loss of personal accountability is accompanied by a dismissal of the normal moral code, by which most people behave and on which society depends. Acting as an agent for superior officers (authority) enables individuals to define their success based on how

well they *obeyed*, rather than how well they behaved. The agentic state quickly became a point of unknown corruption for many of the men and women involved in the torture and abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib Prison.

The Social Psychology of Human Evil When obedience to a legitimate authority means engaging in (typically) bad behavior, the social psychological processes of dehumanization and deindividuation create windows of opportunity for human evil. The deindividuation of uniformed military members operating under a newly assumed subordinate identity allows for the individuals to dissolve and dismiss personal accountability for their actions. This creates a sense of undetected responsibility for acts of cruel, degrading, or inhumane treatment. The exact methods of deindividuation are discussed below.

The dehumanization of detainees separates “them” from “us” (inhuman from human) and therefore brings the thought of abuse and torture within reach. Defining others as something less than human allows for the displacement and then the dismissal of basic *human* rights. If deindividuation and dehumanization are combined (as they were at Abu Ghraib), it results in the degradation, humiliation, torture, and abuse of individuals at the hands of normal, average, mentally stable men and women.

Parallels Between the Stanford Prison Experiment and Abu Ghraib

Philip Zimbardo was summoned to be an expert in investigating Abu Ghraib Prison. He found Abu Ghraib to be a near-replica of the Stanford Prison Experiment

(Zimbardo 2007). Many of the guards' activities were exhibited in both prison environments, as were the social psychological processes responsible for their behavior. In his analysis of the abuses and cruel and inhumane treatment, he states, "With a shock of recognition, I realized that watching some of these images made me relive the worst scenes from the Stanford Prison Experiment" (Zimbardo 2007:328). He uses the findings from his study nearly 40 years prior to declare that the blame lies higher in the chain of command than the seven targeted low-ranking military police guards.

It was I, along with my research team, who was responsible for the system that made that situation work so effectively and so destructively. We failed to provide adequate top-down constraints to prevent prisoner abuse, and we set an agenda and procedures that encouraged a process of dehumanization and deindividuation that stimulated guards to act in creatively evil ways (Zimbardo 2007:329)

The parallel that exists at this level is best explained in a metaphor penned by Zimbardo, regarding the structure of authority and chain of command responsible for creating the environment at Abu Ghraib and constructing the reality in which so many individuals believed and behaved.

Think of the torture dungeon at Abu Ghraib and similar facilities... in Afghanistan and Iraq as having been designed by the senior 'architects' Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and [CIA Director] Tenet. Next came the 'justifiers,' the lawyers who came up with new language and concepts that legalized 'torture' in new ways and means – the president's legal counselors Alberto Gonzales, John Yoo, Jay Bybee, William Taft, and John Ashcroft. The 'foremen,' on the torture construction job were the military leaders, such as Generals Miller, Sanchez, Karpinski, and their underlings. Finally, came the technicians, the grunts in charge of carrying out the daily labor of

coercive interrogation, abuse, and torture – the soldiers in military intelligence, CIA operatives, civilian contract and military interrogators, translators, medics, and military police... (Zimbardo 2007:403).

In both prison structures, it was the situational forces that “created freedom from the usual social and moral constraints on abusive actions” and not the predispositions of a few bad apples that allowed the cruel and inhuman treatment to take place (Zimbardo 2007:352-3).

Specific elements that can be found in both the Stanford Prison Experiment and at Abu Ghraib include: isolation; sleep deprivation; meal management; handcuffing to immovable objects; removal of mattresses, sheets, and pillows; removal of clothing, and increases in abuse during the night shift (Zimbardo 2007).

These methods of abuse are similar because there were similar social psychological processes happening simultaneously. Guards at both prisons participated in the dehumanization of prisoners/detainees and felt the loss of accountability due to the deindividuation of guards (Zimbardo 2007). Both facilities existed within socially constructed realities and the guards acted on the belief that they were doing “good” by doing harm. The agentic state was evident in both situations and caused the guards to behave in ways contrary to their normal character because they considered themselves agents to their superior officers, who were issuing the commands. The diluted responsibility that results from

participating in an agentic manner convinced the guards in both prisons that they had the freedom to act outside of the everyday moral code.

Disputing a Counter-Argument Many people, including the panels conducting the investigations of Abu Ghraib, attribute the horrific outcome to the seven military police guards who received endless negative media attention. It is a popular belief that the low-ranking soldiers were “bad apples” who intentionally and independently made a conscious decision to abuse and torture the detainees. This school of thought grants immunity to the high-ranking military officers and government officials who bent the rules and silently encouraged the behavior by not challenging it.

The comparison to the Stanford Prison Experiment (and by extension, Milgram’s studies on obedience) flatly disputes this opinion. Philip Zimbardo, who became extremely familiar with both prison situations believed there to be no major differences between the two in terms of the social psychological processes at work in the created environments. The Stanford Prison Experiment proved (and continues to prove) to social psychologists that anyone is capable of committing cruel, inhumane, and amoral acts toward others. Anyone, no matter how upstanding, level-headed, or moral they may be, can succumb to a climate that condones ill treatment of others. This is due to the loss of personal accountability that comes from entering into the agentic state of mind that accompanies obedience to a legitimate authority.

Research Questions Answered

The research questions, (1) “What symbols were involved in constructing the reality that corrupted the military police at Abu Ghraib?” and (2) “What were the institutional forces responsible for the behavior of the guards at Abu Ghraib?” must be addressed in reverse order, due to the nature of my findings. The content analysis revealed that the atmosphere of Abu Ghraib was created by pure policy and institutional forces via the memoranda that danced around the federal laws and international treaties for humane treatment of individuals in U.S. custody. The atmosphere created (also known as the socially re-constructed reality) was maintained by the actions and behaviors of the military and CIA personnel inside the walls of the prison. The symbols involved in constructing that reality (or atmosphere) emerged through inductive reasoning during the content analysis of military investigations. The symbols and their perceived and interpreted meanings are discussed below.

In answering the second research question, the institutional forces were found to be the memoranda that spawned the policies (authorized or not) present at Abu Ghraib. These documents managed to find loopholes and make exceptions to existing laws and treaties regarding the treatment of detainees in U.S. custody. To begin the creation of reality, there were memos proposing, encouraging, and approving the decision to deny members of al Qaeda and the Taliban the protections given to prisoners of war. Instead, they were termed “unlawful

combatants” and did not deserve the rights and privileges reserved for individuals classified as prisoners of war. The reality became stronger with the decision (proclaimed in a memorandum) that adhering to the existing laws may not prove to be reasonable in the current state of terrorism. In this memo, justifications of necessity and/or self-defense would most likely provide immunity to criminal liability.

Next, various memoranda circulated between officials in U.S. government requesting, encouraging, and eventually approving of additional and stronger interrogation techniques. These techniques became common practice and traveled from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba to Afghanistan, and finally to Iraq. The approved techniques evolved into cruel, degrading, and inhumane treatment of prisoners, followed by sexual and physical abuse and torture. These policy changes effectively constructed a reality in which the military police guards, CIA operatives, military intelligence personnel, and military officials lived and operated day-to-day. The institutional forces in the form of policy changes provided by the United States government and carried out by the CIA operatives and military men and women offered a platform giving permission and encouraging the abuse and torture of detainees. The atmosphere, or socially constructed reality, was maintained by the symbols discussed below.

In answering the first research question, the symbols that were involved in constructing the reality described above include: dehumanizing written and spoken

language; uniforms for soldiers; stripping of detainees and forced nudity; forced simulated sex acts; male prisoners forced to wear or be blindfolded by women's panties; lack of visible personal identification for CIA contractors; use of hooding and blindfolding of detainees; removal of bedding; phenomenon of ghost detainees; use of dogs to induce fear; and non-existent negative response from the chain of command. These symbols achieve five different tasks: (1) They act as the stage props and scripts to induce and sustain (a) the suspension of normal, everyday morality and (b) the re-construction of reality for Tiers 1A and 1B. (2) They dehumanize detainees and make them into "others." (3) They make plausible the dialectical process of deindividuation and subordination to authority (of military and CIA personnel). (4) The isolation and specialization of Tiers 1A and 1B for "high value" detainees reinforces the reality that "different rules apply in here." And, (5) these symbols "furnish" and "locate" a social world that encourages and permits torture and abuse (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Symbols tell us who and where we are; different symbols signal change of identity and place. Hooding and/or blindfolding the detainees, removing their clothing, and using dogs to elicit fearful confessions from the detainees cumulatively accomplish the dehumanization of detainees. The use of hoods and blindfolds (in the form of women's underwear) dehumanize individuals by preventing the MP guard from seeing his/her face. If the guard cannot see the expressions of pain or associate the pain with a specific person, the guard finds it easier to commit the acts

of abuse and torture. Preventing eye contact also contributes to the loss of accountability.

The public forced removal of clothing depersonalizes, increases actual and sense of vulnerability, humiliates, degrades and dehumanizes detainees. Forcing the detainees to remain nude for extended periods of time teaches and internalizes the belief that they are less than human and undeserving of humane treatment. The use of dogs to terrify detainees into disclosing important information is also degrading. By playing on the fears of the detainees, American soldiers are able to force the detainees to become even more vulnerable and helplessly exposed. Segregating certain detainees from the general population of prisoners by placing them in a special unit manifests the reality that they will be treated differently.

Deindividuation of soldiers and CIA contractors occurred in two ways. First, the uniformed soldiers are indistinguishable and represent a unified group, one entity. Because the soldiers are encouraged to see themselves not as individual people with personal accountability, but as parts of a larger body, the accountability is diluted in the group instead of concentrated on one person (Crader and Wentworth 1984). The absence of personal accountability increases the likelihood that individuals will participate in unusually abusive treatment. Second, the anonymity of the CIA operatives provides a different sense of deindividuation. The contracted CIA civilians operated under aliases and often wore no identification as they visited the facility in civilian clothing. The blatant anonymity creates a strong

sense that the anonymous person is accountable to no one, that they are themselves the bearers of authority.

Loss of accountability was also achieved through the “ghost detainees” that were never recorded as being detained at Abu Ghraib. There is no documentation of these individuals ever being in the facility. This allowed the MP and MI personnel, as well as CIA operatives to abuse, rape, and torture people that never officially existed. MP guards believed that, if there is no one on file to abuse or torture, then it did not happen – to a real person. And if it didn’t technically happen, there is nothing for which to be responsible.

The lack of clarity in job description and limitations, compounded by the shift in mission mentioned earlier, and the multiple sources of supervision (Chain of Command, military intelligence, CIA operatives, and CIA contractors) resulted in a crossover of job duties, gaps in other job-related tasks, and undetected, unaccounted misconduct. Thus, it became common practice for military police guards both to prepare detainees for interrogation and to assist in actual interrogations of detainees, thus erasing the formerly strict line between guard and interrogator and re-constructing the entirety of Tiers 1A and 1B into a dungeon (Zimbardo 2007). During these interrogations, the guards were acting under the instruction of MI and CIA personnel. This places the MP guards in the mindset of the agentic state, convincing them that proper authority is being obeyed and that the accountability for this behavior lies with other parties.

And finally, the lack of disapproval and condemnation communicated to the guards and other individuals that their performance was satisfying the new rules of the War on Terror. In the absence of complaint or challenge, the military police guards, military intelligence personnel, and CIA contractors believed their group-constructed job specifications and their use of creative, not-specifically authorized “preparatory” techniques were approved, appreciated, and encouraged.

Conclusions

The literature on the social construction of reality, impression management, the Thomas Theorem, obedience to authority, the agentic state, and the legitimacy of the situation was combined in order to understand the contextual and social psychological processes behind the question “Why do good people do bad things?” The experiments conducted by Stanley Milgram on obedience to authority and by Philip Zimbardo on the psychological effects of prison life provided the scientific evidence for the application of the aforementioned theories.

Institutional forces in the form of apparently legitimate, very high-level policy creation and alteration re-constructed a thoroughly established, historical and legal reality of prisoner rights, privileges and treatment. This newly constructed reality gave license to the military police guards, military intelligence personnel, CIA operatives and contractors, and military officials to dehumanize, humiliate and torture persons taken into custody for small or large suspected offenses or alleged dangers to U.S. national security. This socially re-constructed definition of humanity,

law, and proper duty spawned the environment that caused physical and sexual abuse, cruel and inhuman treatment, and torture of certain detainees on tiers 1A and 1B at the Abu Ghraib military detention facility. Strong chain-of-command leadership in the promulgation of the new definitions created a symbol system that powerfully and clearly communicated the legitimacy of this dehumanization, instigated the deindividuation (and subordination) of ordinary soldiers to both a new authority and to multiple sources of supervision, and caused a radical, unprecedented shift in their mission from prison guarding to assistants interrogation. While Captain Wood provided on the job training in the newly broadened parameters of detainee treatment, the increased scope of their “preparatory” and assisting interrogation responsibilities necessitated and encouraged creative methods of detainee stress.

The abuses at Abu Ghraib were predictable, preventable, and incorrectly attributed to isolated, unsupervised individuals (“bad apples”) at the bottom of the chain of command. While the officers and officials higher up in the chain of command neither do the actual fighting of wars nor the keeping of prisoners, they do cause the wars and set policies for prisoner detention. In keeping with their rank and position, they did authorize and approve the “enhanced” interrogation techniques that predictably led the construction of an abusive new reality at Abu Ghraib. Give soldiers a mission, they will assess, adapt and successfully carry out their orders. In this terrible case, success meant cruel and inhumane treatment,

which, if perpetrated against animals, would be immediately halted. Yes, at Abu Ghraib there were other stressful and straining factors (frequent mortar attacks, overcrowding, and understaffing), but such as these hardly point toward torture and dehumanizing behaviors. In the end, clear, top-down, chain-of-command leadership created Abu Ghraib as we know it.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CLASSIFICATION SCHEME

Step One: Comb through each source of information for individual pieces of data for analysis. (This can be anything from a single sentence to the tone of an entire document, or as simple as a photograph).

Step Two: Assign each item of data (whether it be a direct quote, an implied tone of voice, or a photograph) to individual data cards (index cards). Each card represents one item of data to be analyzed.

Step Three: After collecting the items of data, read or examine each one separately and independently.

Step Four: Using the contrast comparative method, group similar pieces of data together according to the topic addressed and/or character of the item.

Step Five: Inductively realized categories emerged: (1) laws (U.S. statutes and international treaties), (2) proposed and accepted changes to those laws (created in the memoranda), (3) actual accounts of abuse and torture (consisting of the findings in the investigation reports as well as photographic evidence), and (4) elements contributing to the environment that allowed the ill treatment.

Step Six: Step Four was used again to conduct a secondary comparative contrast of data items in the latter primary category. After reading and examining the items in the “contributing factors” group, the following secondary categories emerged: (1) lack of leadership, supervision, and communication, (2) lack of training, (3) undetected gaps and overlaps in job descriptions, and (4) the circulation and transferal of people and policies from other theaters of operation to Abu Ghraib.

Step Seven: From the categories derived, the research questions were answered in terms of institutional forces (policies created by memoranda) and situational symbols (hooding/blindfolding detainees, over or under use of uniforms, forced nudity, and unclear job requirements/limitations, etc.).

Step Eight: The situational symbols were analyzed using the contrast comparative method from Step Four. Three types of social psychological processes were represented: dehumanization, deindividuation/loss of accountability, and perceived encouragement.

Step Nine: The institutional forces from government and military officials were found to be responsible for creating the atmosphere (“constructing the reality”) for soldiers at Abu Ghraib. The situational symbols activated social psychological processes that maintained and perpetuated the reality.

APPENDIX B

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

December 2001 – Bagram detention facility opens in Afghanistan.

January 9, 2002 – John Yoo (DoJ) sends memorandum to William Haynes (DoD), recommending members of al Qaeda and the Taliban not be protected by the Geneva Conventions or the War Crimes Act.

January 11, 2002 – Guantanamo Bay, Cuba detention facility opens.

January 19, 2002 – Secretary Rumsfeld sends memorandum to the Joint Chiefs of Staff asking them to relay to the Combatant Commanders that al Qaeda and Taliban members are not entitled to the protections that come with the prisoner of war status for application of the Geneva Convention or the War Crimes Act.

January 25, 2002 – Alberto Gonzales sends memorandum to President Bush, relaying a request from Secretary Powell to reconsider the decision to lift the Geneva Convention and War Crimes Act for members of al Qaeda and the Taliban.

February 1, 2002 – John Ashcroft sends the memo to President Bush stating that military officers, law enforcement officials, or intelligence officials would not be charged with violating the Geneva Convention if he chose to continue with the decision to disallow members of al Qaeda or the Taliban the protections of prisoner of war status.

February 7, 2002 – President Bush sends a memorandum to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, and four other officials, declaring once and for all that members of al Qaeda and the Taliban are not considered prisoners of war and therefore do not deserve the protections that follow prisoner of war status under the Geneva Convention and the War Crimes Act.

August 1, 2002 – Jay Bybee (DoJ) issues a memorandum to Alberto Gonzales regarding the applicability of U.S. Code 2340 and 2340A on torture. Bybee determined that the law only prohibits extreme acts, that criminal penalty would only be used for torture (not dehumanizing or cruel treatment), that prosecution under the Code could be considered unconstitutional if it countered presidential authority, and that claims of necessity or self-defense may justify tactics that violate the Code.

August 1, 2002 – John Yoo (DoJ) writes a letter to Alberto Gonzales determining that U.S. Code 2340 and 2340A only applies if torture was the intent or objective of the person committing the act. It also states that first, the prosecution would have to prove the act constituted torture.

October 11, 2002 – A request was made to the Commander of Joint Task Force 170 (Guantanamo Bay) for the approval of a new, improved interrogation plan (Categories I, II, and III are introduced).

November 27, 2002 – William Haynes sent the list of increased interrogation techniques from October 11 to Secretary Rumsfeld.

December 2, 2002 – Secretary Rumsfeld signs in approval of the increased interrogation techniques for use specifically at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

January 10, 2003 – The first Standard Operating Procedure for use in Afghanistan is approved. It contains four techniques listed in the memo approved by Secretary Rumsfeld on December 2 (isolation, stress positions, multiple interrogators, and sleep deprivation). The memo approved on December 2 was strictly for Guantanamo Bay.

January 25, 2003 – Secretary Rumsfeld rescinds the December 2, 2002 approval of Category I, II, and III techniques.

April 16, 2003 – Secretary Rumsfeld sends a newly approved list of interrogation techniques to Guantanamo. It is a continuation of the December 2, 2002 approved techniques and contains mostly Category I, but some Category II techniques, based on recommendations from the DoD Working Group created in March 2003.

July 15 2003 – The first Standard Operating Procedure specifically for Iraq is created. It includes stress positions, twenty-hour interrogations, yelling, auditory and light control, isolation, and use of dogs as a means of inducing fear.

August 4, 2003 – Abu Ghraib Prison reopened under U.S. command.

August 4, 2003 – Captain Wood becomes the Interrogation Officer in Charge at Abu Ghraib. She had been serving in a similar capacity in Afghanistan.

August 31, 2003 – September 10, 2003 – Major General Miller visits Abu Ghraib to assess interrogation and detention operations. He concludes that the detainees are receiving too much respect and not enough harsh treatment. He

provides officials at Abu Ghraib with a copy of the April 16 approval from Secretary Rumsfeld for use at Guantanamo Bay, where MG Miller had experience.

September 14, 2003 – Lieutenant General Sanchez issues the first Interrogation and Counter-Resistance Policy for Abu Ghraib. The document is very similar to Secretary Rumsfeld’s April 16 approval of increased interrogation techniques for use specifically at Guantanamo Bay. It included use of dogs, stress positions, and sleep management, as well as sound and light control. He sent the document to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) for approval, but did not wait for a response. The techniques became available immediately.

October 9, 2003 – Captain Wood creates an abbreviated version of the September 14 document and starts using it for training purposes within the military units at Abu Ghraib.

October 12, 2003 – LTG Sanchez’s September 14 document is returned, and the new techniques are not approved. Military officials at Abu Ghraib are limited to those listed in FM 34-52. Captain Wood continues to include the unauthorized techniques in training.

October 25, 2003 – A new Standard Operating Procedure is created for Abu Ghraib. It includes all techniques listed in FM 34-52 and adds: muzzled dogs, stress positions, sleep deprivation/adjustment, yelling, loud music, light control, environmental manipulation, removal of comfort items, isolation, false report, and multiple interrogators. Some of these tactics were removed before approval of the document (muzzled dogs, stress positions, sleep deprivation, and environmental manipulation).

September - December 2003 – The photographs of detainee abuse and torture are taken at Abu Ghraib.

April 2004 – The media releases photographs from Abu Ghraib to the public.

APPENDIX C
CATALOG OF TITLES

Name	Rank/Title/Position
Ashcroft, John	Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
Bybee, Jay	Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, U.S. Department of Justice
Fay, George	Brigadier General Commanding General, U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command
Gonzales, Alberto	Assistant to the President and White House Counsel
Haynes, William	General Counsel, U.S. Department of Defense
Jones, Anthony	Lieutenant General Deputy Commanding General Chief of Staff U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
Karpinski, Janis	Brigadier General Commanded 800 th Military Police Brigade in Iraq
Miller, Geoffrey	Major General Commanded Guantanamo Bay, moved to Abu Ghraib
Powell, Colin	Secretary of State, U.S. Department of State
Rumsfeld, Donald	Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense
Sanchez, Ricardo	Lieutenant General Former Commander of Joint Task Force 7 (senior military official in Iraq)
Schlesinger, James	Former U.S. Secretary of Defense, U.S. Department of Defense
Taguba, Antonio	Major General U.S. Army Commander
Yoo, John	Former Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, U.S. Department of Defense

U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM)	Combatant Command covering the Middle East (including Iraq and Afghanistan), Central Asia, and Northern Africa
U.S. Southern Command (SOUTHCOM)	Combatant Command covering Latin America (including Guantanamo Bay, Cuba)

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