

Lynch Mob:**Pack journalism and how the Jessica Lynch story became propaganda**

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ABSTRACT

The arc of U.S. media coverage of the Jessica Lynch story, from an exercise in follow-the-leader patriotism through qualified questioning to outright skepticism, is well known. Yet it is worth reexamining the coverage of this early “hero” of the war in Iraq through the lens of classical propaganda theory and recent psychological studies that suggest repeated denials may actually increase the residual credibility of false information in the minds of many members of the public. The author reprises popular coverage of the capture and retrieval of the 20-year-old from Palestine, West Virginia, the subsequent build-up of the “rescue” myth and its eventual discrediting when western reporters visited the hospital in Nasiriyah, Iraq, where she had been held. It contains several signifiers of classical propaganda, although it remains unclear whether the Lynch saga was deliberately orchestrated or was a byproduct of the media’s unskeptical patriotism during the early months of the war. The later denial of many elements of the story, including by Lynch herself in testimony before a Congressional committee in 2007, may, paradoxically, have contributed to the resilient perception that she was a “hero.”

KEYWORDS

Jessica Lynch, journalism, media, myth, patriotism, propaganda

The Jessica Lynch story – the unlikely saga of how a young woman from the Appalachian town of Palestine, West Virginia, became an early “hero” of the Iraq war and eventually repudiated that status in testimony before Congress – is among the clearest case studies of propaganda in that continuing conflict. What remains unclear, however, is how much intent was involved in the manufacturing of the myth, and how much culpability can be assigned to the government of President George W. Bush and

how much to the news media which leapt upon and expanded upon the story with such vigour. One may be forgiven the suspicion that the U.S. media, at least as evidenced by the patriotic enthusiasm with which they reported the first two months of the Iraq war, had by then still not recovered from that “posture of accommodating passivity” toward the presidency that Mark Hertsgaard describes them assuming after the election of Ronald Reagan, 22 years earlier (1988, p. 343).

This article traces the arc of the Jessica Lynch saga from its beginnings with her capture four days after the U.S. invaded Iraq, her rescue a fortnight later, and the growing media hype until western reporters began to investigate the conditions of Lynch’s captivity and the circumstances of her retrieval. The article addresses the publicity surrounding Lynch’s (auto)biography and her eventual repudiation, in an appearance at a Congressional committee hearing in 2007, of the mythmaking which had surrounded her, and highlights classic propaganda elements in the first several weeks of reports about her captivity and rescue, as outlined mainly by the (U.S.) Institute for Propaganda Analysis (in Appendix A), together with other sources.¹ It references critical analyses of the media’s early failings in the case and, finally, introduces psychological research on the paradox of repeated denials reinforcing false information, as a possible explanation of why Lynch’s name and photo can still, for some, conjure such a potent image of vulnerability and heroism.

To recap, Lynch enlisted in the military in July, 2001, and after training served in the 507th Maintenance Company, a supply and support unit whose duties included trucking fuel, water and ammunition to a Patriot missile air-defence battalion. The 507th was not a front-line unit; its members were not expected to see combat and they had no

defensive skills beyond a briefing on the U.S. military Code of Conduct during basic training.ⁱⁱ Lynch described her job as driving a “5-ton water buffalo truck” (Misleading Information from the Battlefield: Lynch, 2007). Following the U.S. invasion of Iraq on March 19, 2003, military supply lines became stretched and personnel overtired. On March 23, Lynch was in a vehicle at the tail of a 160-kilometre-long line of vehicles when her part of the convoy took a wrong turn near the city of Nasiriyah, on the Euphrates River approximately 100 kilometres (as the crow flies) northwest of Basra. The convoy was ambushed, the vehicle Lynch was riding in was hit with a rocket-propelled grenade, and it crashed (*Ibid.*). Eleven soldiers were killed and Lynch was captured. Some members of her unit were shown being interrogated in video released within hours by the Iraqi government; Lynch was not among them.

A March 25 Associated Press business story signalled Americans’ deepening involvement with Lynch’s story and the worry the country was feeling about this young woman in enemy hands. Headlined “Yellow ribbons make reappearance as war intensifies,” the article described chain stores selling out of ribbon and stated that “the nation’s largest ribbon manufacturer has added shifts to keep up with demand” (Loviglio, 2003). Explaining that the custom of using yellow ribbon to express solidarity with soldiers imprisoned by opposing forces may date to the U.S. Civil War, Philadelphia reporter Joann Loviglio quoted residents of several towns whose young soldiers had been taken captive, adding, “Yellow ribbons also adorned the front porch of the Palestine, W.Va., home of Pfc. Jessica Lynch, 19, among a dozen soldiers missing from a supply convoy ambushed in southern Iraq.”

The rescue narrative

On April 1, the U.S. military announced at its Central Command (Centcom)



headquarters in Doha, Qatar, that “a prisoner of war” had been rescued. According to an Associated Press Washington-dated story, “Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks at Central Command headquarters in Qatar announced that a U.S. POW had been retrieved but

refused to provide any further details. In a brief statement, Brooks said: ‘Coalition forces have conducted a successful rescue mission of a U.S. Army prisoner of war held captive in Iraq. The soldier has been returned to a coalition-controlled area.’” Lynch’s family rapidly confirmed that their daughter had been rescued, and the AP story quoted “Central Command spokesman Jim Wilkinson” as saying: “America doesn’t leave its heroes behind. Never has. Never will.” With this **glittering generality**ⁱⁱⁱ, the propaganda saga of Jessica Lynch began. It is imperative that the reader take note that it was a named U.S. military Central Command spokesman who first called Lynch an American hero – because in subsequent months various U.S. government spokespeople dismissed the by-then-discredited story of Lynch’s heroics as a fabrication by the media which, they said, had hyped the story based on unnamed sources; the first use of the word “hero,” however, can be attributed directly to Wilkinson. The Lynch story, already a paradigmatic version of what McAlister calls a “classic American war fantasy: the captivity narrative” (2003), blossomed with the rescue saga, which, Tenenboim points out, “added yet another layer to this archetypal myth of heroism” (2007).

In the days that followed, the Lynch story began to include the elements of **card**

stacking and **name calling**, by characterizing some Iraqis as heartless thugs who would slap a heroic young American “as she lay wounded.” *The Los Angeles Times* reported April 3 – citing unnamed defence sources – that after a tip from an Iraqi hospital worker, “U.S. Special Forces drew up and carried out a bold plan to rescue Pfc. Jessica Lynch from captivity at Saddam Hospital in Nasiriyah ... in a blaze of gunfire” and that Lynch’s injuries were “said to include broken legs, a broken arm and at least one gunshot wound” (Wilkinson & Miller, 2003). A named spokesman – Brooks – begins building the myth of the rescue story: ““There was not a firefight inside of the building, I will tell you, but there were firefights outside of the building, getting in and getting out,” said Brooks, deputy director of operations for U.S. Central Command in Doha, Qatar.” (This was later disproved.) And on April 4, a Knight-Ridder news service story said a “32-year-old lawyer whose wife was a nurse at the hospital” tipped off the U.S. military about Lynch’s whereabouts “after he saw her Iraqi captor slap her twice as she lay wounded in a hospital” (Tamayo, 2003). It is clear in these stories that for the U.S. media at this point, there were two kinds of Iraqis: those thugs who would abuse a wounded captive, and those whose perception that such actions were wrong led them to co-operate with the Americans.

On April 3, *The Washington Post* published the most dramatic and widely reproduced of the early rescue stories. Under Susan Schmidt and Vernon Loeb’s bylines, the story cites “officials,” “U.S. officials” and “Pentagon officials” – without even a specific warning to the reader about unnamed sources – and the Pentagon’s then spokeswoman, Victoria Clarke. Lynch “fought fiercely and shot several enemy soldiers ... firing her weapon until she ran out of ammunition, U.S. officials said yesterday ...

‘She was fighting to the death,’ the official said. ‘She did not want to be taken alive’” (Schmidt & Loeb, 2003). These fictional details were later convincingly disproved by a U.S. Army investigation of the ambush, yet because of the cachet and credibility of *The Washington Post*, they spread “like a cultural virus” (Sussman, 2003, pp. 24-25). The U.S. media cribbed from one another in a textbook example of the perils of “relying on other news sources that relied on anonymous sources” (Mohl, 2003).

The *Post* story did include one cautionary note, in the fifth paragraph: “Several officials cautioned that the precise sequence of events is still being determined ... Reports thus far are based on battlefield intelligence, ... monitored communications and from Iraqi sources in Nasiriyah whose reliability has yet to be assessed.” But that didn’t stop Schmidt and Loeb from reporting a Republican senator gushing about her courage in the face of adversity. “‘Talk about spunk!’ said Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kan.), whom military officials had briefed on the rescue. ‘She just persevered. It takes that and a tremendous faith that your country is going to come and get you’” (Schmidt & Loeb, *ibid.*).

Deep in the 1,100-word *Post* story, in the fifteenth paragraph and attributed to Sky News, “an unidentified Iraqi pharmacist at Saddam Hussein Hospital ... filmed at the hospital wearing a white medical coat over a black T-shirt” is reported to have said the only injuries “he was aware of were to Lynch’s leg, but there was no way to evaluate his statement.” The astute reader could conclude from this skeptically framed hint that there might exist another narrative of events – that satellite television reporters, at least, were trying to get the other side of the story. Journalism ethics specialist Peter Sussman observes that many of the problematic aspects of the Lynch saga stem from the fact that

the “rescue took place in Nasiriya, but the press that reported it was gathered in Doha, Qatar, at the isolated press briefing room of the U.S. Central Command. Indeed, some of the more egregious errors were originated and disseminated by reporters covering the story from the United States” (Sussman, 2003, p. 23).

As the story grew by leaps and bounds in the United States, one Canadian writer introduced an early note of skepticism about the coverage and what Tucker & Walton (2006) note was its inherent racism. Linda McQuaig, in an op-ed piece in the *Toronto Star* on April 6, 2003, observed drily that “One could have easily gotten the impression last week that the war in Iraq is being fought to liberate pretty young American girls from Iraqi hospitals.” McQuaig, who at the time was one of a handful of left-leaning columnists still being published in the post-9/11 North American media, pointed out that the Lynch story contains a strong component of **distraction** in its ability to refocus the public’s mind away from the horrors of war to the peril in which an “innocent” young American finds herself:

With the Jessica story front and centre, the most lethal war machine ever assembled in history could be presented as fresh-faced, innocent and eager to please. Suddenly the war campaign no longer seemed to be about dropping bombs (8,700 in 12 days) relentlessly on a city of 5 million people, or killing unarmed women and children in Baghdad markets or at army checkpoints; it was about saving sweet, young co-eds from the Iraqi hordes ...

Jessica's story, milked endlessly by the media, is a reminder of the intense effort going on to ensure America is seen to occupy the moral high ground in this war. By focusing on the angel-faced, kindergarten-teacher-in-training, we easily forget Jessica is just a tiny cog in the massive U.S. war machine currently invading Iraq, with the stated goal of installing a former American general as military governor. (Not even the White House bothers any longer to pretend this war is about "disarming" Iraq - the goal that Washington put forward for months in trying to line up U.N. support.) Could imperial ambition be any plainer?

A buried correction

The story continued to snowball, particularly in the U.S. media, until April 15, when *The Washington Post* ran a story by reporter Keith Richburg, datelined “Nasiriyah, April 14,” which revealed that Lynch’s rescuers faced no resistance (Richburg, 2003). As veteran *Post* columnist Richard Cohen observed more than a month later, the story was essentially a correction of the April 3 page one hype: “The original story about Lynch was played on the front page. Later, when it turned out that some of the gripping details in the story were questionable, the ‘corrections’ – although they were never labeled that – were played inside the paper” (Cohen, 2003). Richburg quoted a physician at the hospital where Lynch was treated, Dr. Haitham Gizzy, who describes the retrieval as “just a drama ... A big, dramatic show.” There were “no soldiers at our hospital [the night of the rescue], just the medical staff ... just us doctors,” Gizzy told Richburg. Earlier, “They all ran away ... all the leadership. Even the governor and the director general of the Baath party ... They left walking, barefoot, in civilian wear.” Richburg also put on record Gizzy’s assessment of Lynch’s wounds: “It was a road traffic accident. There was not a drop of blood ... There were no bullets or shrapnel or anything like that.”

Interestingly, Richburg – at the bottom of his story on page A17 – introduced an element that had been conspicuously absent from the mainstream U.S. war coverage up to then: civilian casualties. “The doctors at Nasiriyah’s public hospital said they welcomed the U.S. and British invasion for having toppled Saddam Hussein’s government,” he wrote. “But that support is tempered by the high number of civilian casualties in Nasiriyah ... caused by U.S. tank fire and bombs during the first week of the war. Doctors said they have no exact documentation, but estimated that 300 civilians

were killed in Nasiriyah and 1,000 people were wounded. Richburg interviewed a couple of the victims. “‘I was shot by the Americans,’ said Akeel Kadhim, 20, a student whose left leg was amputated. ‘I was running to another wounded person, trying to save him ... I tried to save an innocent person. Why did they shoot me?’ In the next bed, Hassan Aoda, 28, said he was riding on a bus with 28 other Iraqis when a U.S. armored vehicle opened fire on them at a road crossing on March 25. ‘I don’t know why they shot at us,’ he said ... ‘I wasn’t fighting the Americans.’”

An April 16, 2003, story in *The Times* of London, also datelined Nasiriyah, carried similar details to Richburg’s, but added a new wrinkle: that Iraqis had attempted to return the wounded Lynch to a U.S. outpost. In his lede, Richard Lloyd Parry described the rescue as “not the heroic Hollywood story told by the US military, but a staged operation that terrified patients and victimized the doctors who had struggled to save [Lynch’s] life.” He also noted that the Iraqis had attempted to return to Lynch to American hands. This detail – later corroborated by Canadian reporter Mitch Potter and by Lynch herself – came from Dr. Harith al-Houssona, a 24-year-old resident who had treated Lynch. Ordered by Iraqi intelligence agents to move Lynch to another hospital for probable transfer to Baghdad, Parry said Houssona instead “told the ambulance driver to deliver her to one of the American outposts that had already been established on the outskirts of the city.” But the plan came to nought, Parry reported. “When he reached their checkpoint, the Americans fired at him,” Houssona said the driver had told him. Parry did not report on civilian casualties, but he did mention that the hospital’s medical staff was mistreated by the American special forces. “Far from winning hearts and minds, the US operation has angered and hurt doctors who risked their lives treating both Private

Lynch and Iraqi victims of the war” (*Ibid.*).

“US soldiers videotaped the rescue,” Parry wrote, “but among the many scenes not shown to the press at US Central Command in Doha was one of four doctors who were handcuffed and interrogated, along with two civilian patients, one of whom was immobile and connected to [an intravenous] drip. ‘They were doctors, with stethoscopes around their necks,’ Dr. Harith said. ‘Even in a war, a doctor should not be treated like that’” (*Ibid.*).

On April 21, 2003, three divergent versions of the Lynch saga appeared in the U.S. media – on ABC-TV’s *Good Morning America*, hosted by Diane Sawyer; in a cover story in the mass-circulation *People* magazine; and in a story on page A12 of *The New York Times*. Sawyer hinted that the narrative of Lynch’s retrieval was more complicated than it had appeared to be up to then, while Alan Feuer in *The New York Times* added to the demolition of the rescue myth begun by Richburg a week earlier. But the dominant frame for most Americans would have been the cover story in *People*, which introduced new levels of name calling – and outright untruth – perpetrated by an unnamed government source.

It should be noted that the media environment was heating up. As Daphne Eviatar wrote in a July 7, 2003, autopsy of the Lynch saga, “For the US military, the story of Private Lynch arrived just in time ... By the end of March, US forces had been stymied by unexpectedly fierce fighting in the south, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was facing harsh criticism ... US troops had just killed a van full of Iraqi women and children, and American forces had lost four Marines in a helicopter crash. The Lynch rescue was finally some good news” (Eviatar, 2003). By April 21, questions were also

surfacing about the whereabouts of the “weapons of mass destruction” (WMD), which had been the putative reason for the “pre-emptive strike” against Saddam Hussein under the Bush Doctrine.^{iv} At this point the White House was beginning to be forced into a “defensive propaganda posture” (Patrick & Thrall, 2007, p. 107), and it was clearly in the administration’s interests to have Americans focus on Jessica Lynch, her “heroic” rescuers and the alleged “abuse” she suffered at the hands of her Iraqi captors.^v

Americans woke up to Diane Sawyer reminding them about “Private First Class Jessica Lynch, who was rescued by American Special Operations forces three weeks ago after spending eight harrowing days in captivity” (ABC News, 2003). Sawyer introduced the new element about the story partway into the newscast, saying, “We are also this morning getting new details about how she may have been treated in captivity.” But Sawyer immediately casts doubt on this unfamiliar, more complicated version of the retrieval: “A lot of mixed reports out there. And here now is a man who *claims* to be an Iraqi doctor [emphasis added]. And he says that some of the Iraqi doctors did try to help her, operating on her even as the bombs were dropping ... But again, we don’t know who did help her and who didn’t help her. Hoping to hear her story some day.” Sawyer seems unwilling to turn the **bandwagon** too quickly, away from the hitherto conventional rescue narrative.

Feuer, as the second North American reporter on record as having visited Nasiriyah’s Saddam Hospital after the invasion, interviewed two young English-speaking Iraqi doctors who told him that, two days before the “rescue,” they had put Lynch into an ambulance and tried to get her back into U.S. hands. “But when the driver drew near to the American troops [at a checkpoint, the U.S. soldiers] stopped his car and turned it

around before the driver had a chance to speak” (Feuer, 2003).

Two elements of Feuer's story are – in the clarity of hindsight – controversial. One is his adherence to the then-current narrative of the brave rescue. He remains silent as to whether the U.S. special forces met with any resistance – in spite of Richburg's contradiction of that element a week before. Feuer describes the violence of the raid in neutral terms, although he does acknowledge that it was a more complicated event than had been reported up to then, saying that “a ground-level view of the mission, provided by two Iraqi doctors who witnessed it, suggests that it ... included far more than simply saving an injured prisoner of war.” His lede is: “First, there was a huge explosion. Then, the helicopters with soldiers landed on the hospital grounds. They moved through the wards destroying doors with plastic explosives and yelling, ‘Go! Go! Go!’” He quotes Houssana: “It was just like a Hollywood movie ... But there was louder shouting and scarier bombs.” This is an interesting observation, in light of revelations that the U.S. forces that night included a video team. The second controversial element – again, in hindsight – was Houssana's description of Lynch's wounds: “We received her in the casualty unit. She had a fractured leg, a gunshot wound and a pulmonary edema.” Although military doctors went back and forth for nearly a month on the matter of whether Lynch was shot, subsequent Congressional testimony has clearly established that her injuries were limited to those received in the crash of the truck she was riding in (Farsetta, 2007).

Feuer's story was one of the first post-invasion attempts in the U.S. news media to humanize, rather than demonize, ordinary Iraqi civilians in Iraq. (I draw a distinction here between unpoliticized “ordinary” civilians and the westernized opponents of Saddam

Hussein who had been portrayed as freedom fighters – to use the parlance of an earlier incumbent of the White House – by the Bush administration and much of the American media.) For example, based on his interviews, Feuer wrote that “Dr. Houssona said he reassured Private Lynch that he was duty-bound to help” the desperately frightened young captive, and that “her [Iraqi] nurses would sing her to sleep each night.” But Feuer’s 865-word story also contained several of the glittering generalities and **just folks** elements which had become part of the mainstream Lynch narrative: he describes her as having “blond hair, blue eyes” and that with her “disarming manner, Private Lynch enchanted the hospital staff” – one would expect nothing less of a Hollywood heroine, held behind enemy lines.

And that’s what *People* magazine delivered, in spades (Rogers et al., 2003). In the magazine’s 2,767-word cover story there is neither hesitation nor nuance – in fact, there are several allegations (from nameless sources) which were to form part of the dominant and erroneous myth lodged firmly in the American public’s mind. Consider *People*’s massive circulation: 3.7 million copies a week in 2004 (up from 3.6 million in 1999)^{vi} and the fact that Lynch’s face, silhouetted against the Stars and Stripes U.S. flag, was on virtually every newsstand and supermarket magazine rack in the nation – if the story was beginning to fray around the edges in the quality press, many more Americans were reading the glossy-magazine version.

The omnibus article by lead writer Patrick Rogers and five others (Peter Mikelbank, Rose Ellen O’Connor, Susan Keating, Jane Sims Podesta and Courtney Rubin) is rife with unnamed sources, glittering generalities, just folks elements and breathtaking name-



calling. In the lede paragraph, a “colonel who was there” during the raid says of a nearly fatal helicopter accident: “God smiled on us that night.” Then the writers begin the second graf with, “He also smiled on Jessica that night.” The article is filled with the pathos (and bathos) of manufactured heroics: “I’m not sure I could go through what she’s gone through,” Air Force Capt. Shean Galvin tells *People*, “I’m 6’ 2”, 200 lbs. She’s just a little thing. She must be tough as nails.” And Marine Gunnery Sgt. Joe Morehead, apparently one of the special forces soldiers, emails his mother: “Awesome Victory!!! I just wanted to let you know that we are finally war heroes. We pulled out the POW last night. Makes me feel as if it was all worth it.”

The name-calling is blunt and sets up an Orientalist^{vii} us-versus-them dichotomy between Americans and Lynch’s Iraqi captors and perpetrates what this scholar interprets as a **big lie**: “... a Capitol Hill source privy to intelligence briefings about her condition tells PEOPLE that some of her wounds were the result of extensive torture. ‘These people – the Iraqi captors – were barbaric,’ says the source. ‘I have no doubt that with her injuries, and with what they had planned for her, she was going to die.’” Rutgers media scholar Deepa Kumar observes that “[t]he deployment of whiteness in the Lynch hero/victim narrative is essential to differentiating ‘America’ and the ‘West’ from ‘Islam’ and the ‘Middle East’ ... the white angelic hero/victim stands in contrast to the dark uncivilized Iraqi villains” (Kumar, 2004, p. 302). There are, for contrast, some exceptional Iraqi individuals; readers are introduced to a “32-year-old lawyer named Mohammed” whose wife was a nurse at the hospital. Mohammed “says he saw a black-uniformed officer ... slap [Lynch] across the face. ‘The Colonel wanted a certain reaction out of Jessica, and he didn’t get what he wanted,’ says a Pentagon intelligence officer

familiar with Mohammed's account.'" The lawyer called in the Marines, and he "and his family were taken to Marine combat headquarters to escape possible reprisals."^{viii}

The *People* article is perhaps the zenith of the just folks paradigm. Lynch's cousin back home in Palestine, W. Va., 25-year-old Angel Joy, is reported as saying when they were youngsters together, "'We lived in the woods. We climbed trees and swung from vines. We packed picnics, and you wouldn't see us for the rest of the day.' Part tomboy, part wannabe beauty queen, Lynch played with Barbies and took pride in her appearance." The writers mention Lynch's sister Brandi, 17, "who shared a bunk bed with Jessica in the family's three-bedroom A-frame house nestled between two hills" and describe Jessica Lynch as "an enthusiastic, if not very effective, right fielder on the varsity softball team" at her high school. After enlisting, the authors say, "she stayed true to her desire to one day be a teacher, like her friend and former kindergarten teacher Linda Davies." When Lynch's parents are reunited with their daughter at the U.S. military recuperation hospital in Landstuhl, Germany, they bring gifts: "summer blouses to fit over the cast on her right arm, a bag of hometown newspapers, a teddy bear – and the curling iron that Jessica Lynch calls her magic wand." But all she really wants, the authors say, is "a return to the status quo" – or, as her brother Gregory Jr. says, "We want to see her just get back to normal."

'Willing propagandists'

With this victim/hero/just folks frame ascendant, it is easy to understand how difficult it would be – and unpopular for a newspaper or broadcaster – to tear down that image. But the narrative was fraying rapidly. An April 27 analysis of U.S. propaganda in the Iraq war that ran on page B1 of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* led with the Lynch story.

After a two-paragraph recapitulation, Washington bureau chief Jon Sawyer wrote: “Key elements in the story appear to have been wrong. Lynch's father and her Army doctor have both said there is no evidence that she was shot or stabbed. There is as yet no substantiation of any torture. Doctors at the hospital say that when the retrieval team swooped in the building was undefended ...” (Sawyer, 2003). The article went on to list other unrelated events in the early days of the war where “initial reports turned out wrong” including: An uprising in Basra; victories claimed, then delayed; “‘smoking guns’ that weren’t”; torture chambers that turned out to date to the 1980s Iran-Iraq war; and “pre-war propaganda” – especially “the media's uncritical acceptance of claims by the administration that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and that he was involved in the 9-11 terrorist attacks.” Sawyer concluded with a caution from George C. Wilson, who covered Vietnam for *The Washington Post* and had gone to Iraq as an embedded reporter with the U.S. military: “Embedment carries the danger of turning journalists into willing propagandists instead of auditors, into cheerleaders instead of reporters.”

One who eschewed the role of cheerleader was Canadian reporter Mitch Potter. After a week of interviews carried out on the grounds of the Saddam Hussein hospital and in Nasiriyah, Potter's 1,946-word story ran on the front page of *The Toronto Star* on May 4, 2003. “The fog of war comes sometimes with a certain odour, and cutting through its layers, like cutting through an onion, can bring tears to the eyes,” Potter began. “Such is the case with what is far and away the most oft-told story of the Persian Gulf War II – the saga of Saving Private Lynch” (Potter, 2003). After recapping the conventional narrative, Potter observed, “All Hollywood could ever hope to have in a movie was there

in this extraordinary feat of rescue – except, perhaps, the truth. So say three Nasiriya doctors, two nurses, one hospital administrator and local residents interviewed separately last week in a *Toronto Star* investigation.” These individuals reveal that the “rescuers” met no resistance and that the medical staff had earlier tried to deliver Lynch to the Americans. Adding relevant detail that neither Richburg nor Feuer reported, Potter quotes Houssana: “We carefully moved her out of intensive care and into an ambulance and began to drive to the Americans, who were just one kilometre away. But when the ambulance got within 300 metres, they began to shoot. There wasn't even a chance to tell them ‘We have Jessica. Take her.’”^{ix} There is detail about her medical treatment, as well: “Three days before the U.S. raid, Lynch had regained enough strength that the team was ready to proceed with orthopaedic surgery on her left leg,” Potter writes. “The procedure involved cutting through muscle to install a platinum plate to both ends of the compound fracture. ‘We only had three platinum plates left in our supply and at least 100 Iraqis were in need,’ [Dr. Mudhafer] Raazk said. ‘But we gave one to Jessica.’” And Potter catalogues the damage the American raid caused: 12 doors broken, a sterilized operating theatre contaminated, “and the specialized traction bed in which Lynch had been placed was trashed. ‘That was a special bed, the only one like it in the hospital, but we gave it to Jessica because she was developing a bed sore,’ Houssana said.”

The *Toronto Star* story corrected the rescue narrative and debunked much of the media hype surrounding it. It also humanized the Iraqi surgeons, one of whom delicately pointed out the irony in the “rescue” to an American doctor who visited the hospital three days after the raid to thank the staff for looking after Lynch: “‘He was an older doctor with gray hair and he wore a military uniform,’ Raazk said. ‘I told him he was very

welcome, that it was our pleasure. And then I told him: 'You do realize you could have just knocked on the door and we would have wheeled Jessica down to you, don't you?'"

From this point on, the hype unravelled, although for many Americans, Lynch will ever remain the petite blonde heroine on the cover of *People* magazine. But little by little, what is now accepted as the real story seeped out – especially overseas.^x On May 15, 2003, *The Guardian* ran 1,882 words by John Kampfner, promoting a BBC documentary, *War Spin*, for which he was the presenter and which was to air the following Sunday (Kampfner, 2003). The BBC team interviewed even more Iraqis in Nasiriyah, but essentially expanded on factual material that Potter had reported. One interesting detail speaks to the cross-links between the U.S. administration in 2003 and the White House of George W. Bush's father, president George H.W. Bush: Mohammed Al-Rehaif, the lawyer granted U.S. asylum after tipping off the CIA about where Lynch was held captive, is described in *The Guardian* as by then being "the toast of Washington, with a fat \$500,000 book deal." In her later academic article, Kumar relates that Al-Rehaif's book publicist in Washington was Lauri Fitz-Pegado, who "was previously involved in another high-profile campaign involving Iraq ... that spun the story about babies being snatched from incubators by Iraqi soldiers in 1990"^{xi} (2004, p. 304).

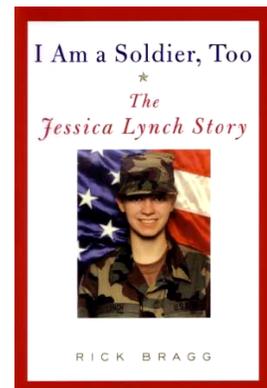
Kampfner's piece contains some astute analysis of the U.S. media's relationship with the military, which clarifies a reported delay of several hours on April 1 between the first announcement that Lynch had been retrieved and Centcom's distribution to the media of the widely aired Combat Camera^{xii} video of the raid. "The American strategy was to concentrate on the visuals and to get a broad message out," Kampfner writes. "The

key was to ensure the right television footage. The embedded reporters could do some of that. On other missions, the military used their own cameras, editing the film themselves and presenting it to broadcasters as ready-to-go packages.” The Pentagon had been influenced by Hollywood producers, notably Jerry Bruckheimer of *Black Hawk Down* fame (not to mention the blockbuster *CSI* and *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchises among many other box office successes). Kampfner quotes another producer, Bertram van Munster (the reality show *Cops*): “What these guys are doing out there, these men and women [in the military], is just extraordinary. If you’re a cheerleader of our point of view – that we deserve peace and that we deal with human dignity – then these guys are really going out on a limb and risking their own lives.”

Asked about the *Guardian* article by U.S. reporters, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer declined to comment. “I haven’t seen those reports,” he said. “And I don’t comment on things I haven’t seen.” Pentagon spokesman Marine Lt. Col. Dave Lapan told Reuters it was “ludicrous and insulting” for the BBC to suggest the raid was staged and hyped up (Pleming, 2003). “The thing that is most insulting is the suggestion that we would put U.S. service members at risk to stage such an event. This was a real rescue under a combat situation,” Lapan told Reuters. “In addition, the war was not going badly.”

But the damage had been done. The Lynch story was irretrievably compromised. And the U.S. administration began to feel the political pressure brought on by “the collision of real world events with mass public opinion” that classical propaganda theory suggests results from a president selling what the public no longer wants to buy (Patrick & Thrall, 2007, pp. 102,103).^{xiii} On May 21, in the heart of Middle America, *The Des*

Moines (Iowa) Register ran a column by staffer Rekha Basu on the op-ed page, that said of the Lynch story: “What actually happened may be a far cry from what you’ve been told.” It referred to Potter’s *Toronto Star* report, and documentaries on the BBC and ABC-TV from Nasiriyah, saying, “whatever the military believed, there never was a need for the April 1 raid” (Basu, 2003). Writing from a decidedly skeptical perspective (which enraged conservative American bloggers at the time), Basu said: “It’s easy to see how, in the confusion of war, bad information gets around ... But the Pentagon is refusing to say what really happened, and one official even suggested that reporters pursuing the true story should have better things to do.” She hit at the heart of the credibility issue – as the Lynch saga crumbled, official stonewalling raised doubts among the media and the public. “From the White House and Pentagon’s point of view, maybe the truth doesn’t matter,” she wrote. “Lynch is safe, the war is over and remains popular at home. But if this story is wrong and left uncorrected, then you have to wonder how many other stories coming out of the war, big and small, are false.”



On May 29, 2003, Associated Press reporter Scheherezade Faramarzi filed a 1,520-word wire service feature datelined Nasiriyah. After speaking to “more than 20 doctors, nurses and other workers at the hospital” where Lynch had been held, she reported that “in interview after interview” the consensus was that the dramatic “rescue” was unnecessary. Faramarzi balanced the Iraq side with this – and got on record an admission that there was little or no resistance at the hospital: “American military doctrine calls for using overwhelming force in such situations. ‘We don’t want it to be a

fair fight,' Marine Lt. Col. David Lapan, a Pentagon spokesman, told AP this week. 'The fact that we didn't encounter heavy resistance in the hospital was a good thing ... We didn't need to create any drama. It was there already'" (Faramarzi, 2003).

After this, it was left for Lynch to try to set straight the record, as she saw it. Which she did first – partially – in a book published Nov. 11, 2003. Reports of a \$1 million advance (or \$1.4 million, according to *Advertising Age*) split with her ghostwriter, ex-*New York Times* reporter Rick Bragg (who had been compromised after an internal *Times* investigation found he was passing off stringers' work as his own) did not help the book's credibility.^{xiv} It was not really until Lynch testified before Congress – in a different era, with American deaths in Iraq at 3,300 and climbing, civilian deaths in the tens of thousands,^{xv} and evidence of a military cover-up of the friendly-fire death in Afghanistan of former football star Pat Tillman at the top of the agenda – that the Lynch legend was finally corrected for the record.^{xvi} However, conservative think-tanks like Accuracy in Media still maintain on the web, unchanged, their early blame-the-messenger analyses slamming Potter, Richburg, the BBC and "the leftist U.K. daily" *The Guardian* for being "leftist reporters trying to discredit the [Lynch] story" who along with others "were less than rigorous in their reliance on anonymous 'official sources' ... [and] did great harm to the credibility of the military in the midst of a war" (Accuracy in Media, 2003).

Marketing the myth

In his scathing assessment of the news media's failings in the Lynch case, Sussman (2003) argues that the root cause of the hype was the blurring of the boundaries between news and entertainment exacerbated by the ownership of major U.S. news

outlets by media firms with major entertainment holdings. A *Quill* editorial noted that the story “brought out the corporate greed, and [as] large media companies competed for Lynch exclusives ... the news/entertainment lines began to blur” (Mohl, 2003). This resonates with the first of the five political economy “filters” in Herman & Chomsky’s propaganda theory, which suggests that news is framed in accordance with the interests of the media’s corporate owners (1998, 2002). Today these owners, as Ben Bagdikian has pointed out, are mainly entertainment media conglomerates whose products “help establish ... social, political and cultural attitudes” (cited in Herman & Chomsky, *op.cit.*, p. xiii; Bagdikian, 1989, pp. 805-811). Hertzgaard, too, lashes out at “the profit-obsessed corporations that now own America’s news organizations” (1988, p. 349). The United States, Sussman writes, has “a national news/entertainment marketplace that has been conditioned to expect that its real-life stories have the outsized drama of its fictional fare; a government that has learned how to succeed in that marketplace by projecting its carefully contrived and equally fictional images and messages onto the national screen; and ... news media that sell their wares in the marketplace without adequate control over the quality of their own merchandise” (2003, p. 22).

A letter from CBS News Senior Vice-President Betsy West to Lynch’s family and officials at Walter Reed Army Medical Center where Lynch was recuperating, obtained by *The New York Times*, “outlined news and entertainment opportunities at various divisions of CBS News’ corporate parent, Viacom” (Rutenberg, 2003; Appendix D). Sussman comments: “Sadly, such hopelessly confused and conflicting loyalties at the corporate level have filtered down to individual reporters and editors” who run “lurid stories [that] play to entertainment demographics, increasing the ravenous appetite of the

market each time they cater to it.” Reminding practitioners that “journalists’ core business is news, not entertainment,” Sussman exhorts them to “do constant battle with the demands of the marketplace by distinguishing news from entertaining story line[s]” (2003, p. 26). He concludes that in reporting the Jessica Lynch saga, “American journalist-storytellers liked their narrative line so much that they held on to it long after its truthfulness sagged under the weight of its own ungainly hype.”

Even today, the name Jessica Lynch has the power to conjure up the “tiny” and “petite” 19-year-old who “ultimately, despite her courage [was] still in need of rescue by her male counterparts, who were the real heroes,” as Kumar says (2004). She calls the Lynch saga “war propaganda [that came] at a time when the war was not going well for the US, [and] acted as the means by which a controversial war could be talked about in emotional rather than rational terms.” Kumar’s analysis was presaged by American studies professor Melani McAlister, who wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed less than a week after Lynch’s retrieval: “If the war’s first weeks didn’t give us as many pictures of Iraqis welcoming their own rescue by American liberators as we expected, the image of a blonde American woman being saved may be the next best thing” (2003). Tucker & Walton point out that “almost instantly, the ‘Jessica Lynch’ story was able to block out the televisual images that proliferated in the first days of the war and dampen criticism of the war itself” (2006, p. 324) – a **shift of scene** that, in light of subsequent revelations of the dubiousness of the saga’s early versions, qualifies them as successful propaganda.

Perhaps it is because so much bad news about the Iraq quagmire has come since, that some Americans still cling to the fictional image of “just-folks Jessica” being rescued in an act of heroism. Yet one may reasonably conclude that the myth of the

rescued heroine that sticks in some Americans' minds is an example of the propaganda principle that an untruth "repeated often enough becomes widely accepted as truth" (Rampton & Stauber, 2003, p. 78). Also, Tenenboim suggests that NBC's television docudrama, *Saving Private Lynch* (starring Canadian actress Laura Regan), shows that "journalism is not only the first draft of history, but also the draft of other cultural forms that lay claims to the story" – and such popular-culture versions may be as potent, for some, as "news" itself. Lynch certainly repudiated the early characterization of herself as "the little girl Rambo from the Hills" at the House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, making clear she felt her story had been propagandized: "The bottom line is the American people are capable of determining their own ideals for heroes and they don't need to be told elaborate tales" (Misleading Information from the Battlefield, 2007, Testimony p. 3).

Another possible explanation for the residual potency of Lynch's name and image^{xvii} can be found in research on the paradox of repeated denials reinforcing false information. University of Virginia social psychologist Ian Skurnik (who was at the University of Toronto when this research was published), found that older adults especially tend to assume that familiar information is true information, with that result that "paradoxically, after three days had passed, the more times older adults had been warned that a claim was false, the more likely they were to remember the claim as true. In [a] second study, trying to discredit claims after making them familiar to older adults backfired and increased their tendency to call those claims true" (Skurnik, *et. al.*, 2005, p. 713). Shankar Vedantam, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, canvasses six decades of research literature in an article entitled "Persistence of Myths Could Alter Public Policy

Approach,” in which he writes that “psychological studies show that denials and clarifications, for all their intuitive appeal, can paradoxically contribute to the resiliency of popular myths” (Vedantam, 2007). Such research “highlights the disturbing reality that once an idea has been implanted in people’s minds, it can be difficult to dislodge,” he adds, warning that “someone trying to manipulate public opinion can take advantage of this aspect of brain functioning.”

It remains difficult to assess the degree to which the Pentagon or the U.S. administration in 2003 *intended* to hype the Jessica Lynch myth, but it has become abundantly clear that when the opportunity to take advantage of it presented itself, they pulled out all the stops. And, as Sussman says, the news media – with some shining exceptions – were their willing accomplices.

NOTES

- ⁱ For the purposes of this article, the system of classification of propaganda developed by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1938) and expanded in the U.S. Army *Psychological Operations Field Manual* (1939) is useful because it describes or types several key elements of propaganda. More recent propaganda theories, for instance Herman and Chomsky's five-filter political economy model (1988, 2002) – even with the addition by Boyd-Barrett (2004) of a sixth filter to address the original's lack of a method to identify intentional deception of the public – tend rather to focus on the proximate causes and the manifestations of propaganda, without providing a detailed method for identifying propaganda elements as such, which is the focus of this investigation.
- ⁱⁱ American Forces Press Service. (2004, July 16). DoD Developing New Training to Help Potential Captives.
<http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=25696>
- ⁱⁱⁱ This paper will use underlining (within media texts) and **boldface** (for categories) to highlight propaganda types as defined by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis and others; see Appendices A, B and C.
- ^{iv} The Bush Doctrine on national security has been described as “an active and expansive stance of strategic primacy and a continued willingness to employ military force [in] preemptive or ‘preventive’ use of American military power” (Donnelly, 2003), or more simply, as “the belief that pre-emption was required to deal with rogue states” (Switzer, 2006, p. 17) – in other words, military action that is “anticipatory, pre-emptive, and, if need be, unilateral” (Treverton, 2003, p.9).
- ^v Some of the propaganda elements identifiable in the build-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq are covered in Boyd-Barrett (2004). Brian Patrick and Trevor Thrall note that classical “propaganda guidelines still apply [because the Bush administration's] decision for war preceded mass public assent,” and point out that propaganda theory can explain the rapid drop in popularity of both Bush and the Iraq war after the fall of Baghdad – an erosion of support that forced the administration into a longterm “defensive propaganda posture” (2007, pp. 100, 107).
- ^{vi} Project for Excellence in Journalism. (2006). *The State of the News Media 2006*.
http://www.stateofthenewsmedia.org/2006/narrative_magazines_audience.asp?cat=3&media=8
- ^{vii} Said, E. (1978/1994). *Orientalism*. New York: Random House.

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- viii On April 29, 2003, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge announced that Mohammed Al-Rehaif and his family would receive asylum in the United States. They would settle in the Washington, D.C. area. Associated Press quoted Ridge saying that “Americans are grateful for his bravery and for his compassion.” Al-Rehaif was one of a lucky few; by February, 2007, a total of 466 Iraqi refugees had been allowed into the United States, according to CNN and *The Washington Post*.
- ix Lynch confirmed the Iraqis’ abortive attempt to return her to U.S. forces, in her April 24, 2007 testimony to the Congressional Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Tillman, Lynch – Testimony, 2007, p. 2).
- x Skepticism about American motives for the war was, for the most part, magnified by distance from American shores and political culture. Rampton & Stauber write, quoting a military propaganda manual, that “the paradox of the American war in Iraq ... is that perception management [a Pentagon euphemism for propaganda] has been much more successful at ‘influencing’ the ‘emotions, motives, and objective reasoning’ of the American people than it has been at reaching ‘foreign audiences’” (2003, pp. 5-6).
- xi Rampton & Stauber characterize the debunked incubator story as an example of Adolf Hitler’s **big lie** propaganda tactic of relentless repetition. They say that it was part of a campaign for Kuwait’s government-in-exile that, according to *O’Dwyer’s PR Services Report*, gave public relations firm Hill & Knowlton “a role in world affairs unprecedented for a PR firm” (Rampton & Stauber, 2003, p. 71).
- xii Combat Camera units operate in every branch of the U.S. military. Members are involved in “the acquisition and utilization of still and motion imagery in support of military operations,” collecting, editing, distributing and archiving “Multimedia/Visual Information.” <http://doim.army.mil/viweb/combatacam.html>
- xiii Patrick & Thrall also note that Bush’s ability to manage the message from Iraq degenerated soon after the U.S. invasion, as the news “became increasingly conflictual and less reflective of the administration’s themes ... despite the fact that the American military still controlled most available information from Iraq, despite the fact that America was still at war in Iraq, and despite the administration’s relentless and highly professional campaign to sell the war the occupation, and the war on terror” (2007, p. 107).
- xiv *Quill* editor Jeffrey D. Mohl called Bragg “another example of how good storytelling ... can become a hindrance to accurate newsgathering” (Mohl, 2003).
- xv <http://www.iraqbodycount.org/>
- xvi Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. (April 24, 2007). Oversight Committee Holds Hearing on Tillman, Lynch Incidents. <http://oversight.house.gov/story.asp?ID=1242>

^{xvii} Although the World Wide Web is saturated with mainstream media stories debunking the myth of Lynch's "heroism" and that of her "rescuers," websites like <http://www.jessica-lynch.com> – while acknowledging her congressional testimony – still feature links such as the one to evangelist musician Eric Horner's "She Is A Hero," and forum posts about war heroes. The site claims over 2,200 registered users and says its highest number of users simultaneously online –783 – took place at 11:35 p.m. on June 16, 2008.

APPENDIX A

Propaganda Device Descriptions

From Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1938). *Propaganda Analysis*. New York: Columbia University Press. Available: <http://carmen.arts.washington.edu/propaganda/name.htm> [29 April 2002].

Name Calling

Bad names have played a tremendously powerful role in the history of the world and in our own individual development. They have ruined reputations, stirred men and women to outstanding accomplishments, sent others to prison cells, and made men mad enough to enter battle and slaughter their fellowmen. They have been and are applied to other people, groups, gangs, tribes, colleges, political parties, neighborhoods, states, sections of the country, nations, and races.

Glittering Generalities

We believe in, fight for, live by virtue words about which we have deep-set ideas. Such words include civilization, Christianity, good, proper, right, democracy, patriotism, motherhood, fatherhood, science, medicine, health, and love.

For our purposes in propaganda analysis, we call these virtue words "Glittering Generalities" in order to focus attention upon this dangerous characteristic that they have: They mean different things to different people; they can be used in different ways. This is not a criticism of these words as we understand them. Quite the contrary. It is a criticism of the uses to which propagandists put the cherished words and beliefs of unsuspecting people.

When someone talks to us about democracy, we immediately think of our own definite ideas about democracy, the ideas we learned at home, at school, and in church. Our first and natural reaction is to assume that the speaker is using the word in our sense, that he believes as we do on this important subject. This lowers our 'sales resistance' and makes us far less suspicious than we ought to be when the speaker begins telling us the things 'the United States must do to preserve democracy.'

The Glittering Generality is, in short, Name Calling in reverse. While Name Calling seeks to make us form a judgment to reject and condemn without examining the evidence, the Glittering Generality device seeks to make us approve and accept without examining the evidence. In acquainting ourselves with the Glittering Generality Device, therefore, all that has been said regarding Name Calling must be kept in mind...

Transfer

Transfer is a device by which the propagandist carries over the authority, sanction, and prestige of something we respect and revere to something he would have us accept. For example, most of us respect and revere our church and our nation. If the propagandist succeeds in getting church or nation to approve a campaign in behalf of some program, he thereby transfers its authority, sanction, and prestige to that program. Thus, we may accept something which otherwise we might reject.

Testimonial

This is the classic misuse of the Testimonial Device that comes to the minds of most of us when we hear the term. We recall it indulgently and tell ourselves how much more sophisticated we are than our grandparents or even our parents.

With our next breath, we begin a sentence, 'The Times said,' 'John L. Lewis said....,' 'Herbert Hoover said...,' 'The President said...,' 'My doctor said...,' 'Our minister said...'. Some of these Testimonials may merely give greater emphasis to a legitimate and accurate idea, a fair use of the device; others, however, may represent the sugar-coating of a distortion, a falsehood, a misunderstood notion, an anti-social suggestion...

Plain Folks

By using the plain-folks technique, speakers attempt to convince their audience that they, and their ideas, are "of the people." The device is used by advertisers and politicians alike.

America's recent presidents have all been millionaires, but they have gone to great lengths to present themselves as ordinary citizens. Bill Clinton eats at McDonald's and reads trashy spy novels. George Bush hated broccoli, and he loved to fish. Ronald Reagan was often photographed chopping wood, and Jimmy Carter presented himself as a humble peanut farmer from Georgia.

We are all familiar with candidates who campaign as political outsiders, promising to "clean out the barn" and set things straight in Washington. The political landscape is dotted with politicians who challenge a mythical "cultural elite," presumably aligning themselves with "ordinary Americans." As baby boomers enter their fifth decade, we are starting to see politicians in blue jeans who listen to rock and roll.

Card Stacking

"Card stacking" is a device in which the propagandist employs all the arts of deception to win our support for himself, his group, nation, race, a policy, practice, belief, or ideal. He stacks the cards against the truth. He used under-emphasis and over-emphasis to dodge issues and evade facts. He resorts to lies, censorship and distortion. He omits facts. He offers false testimony. He creates a smoke screen of clamor by raising a new issue when he wants an embarrassing matter forgotten. He draws a red herring across the trail to confuse and divert those in quest of facts he does not want revealed. He makes the unreal appear real and the real appear unreal. He lets half-truth masquerade as truth. By the Card Stacking device, a mediocre candidate, through the "build-up," is made to appear an intellectual titan; an ordinary prize fighter, a probable world champion; a worthless patent medicine, a beneficent cure.

By means of this device propagandists would convince us that a ruthless war of aggression is a crusade for righteousness. Some member nations of the Non-Intervention Committee send their troops to intervene in Spain. Card Stacking employs sham, hypocrisy, effrontery.

Bandwagon

The propagandist hires a hall, rents radio stations, fills a great stadium, marches a million or at least a lot of men in a parade. He employs symbols, colors, music, movement, all

the dramatic arts. He gets us to write letters, to send telegrams, to contribute to his cause. He appeals to the desire, common to most of us, to follow the crowd. Because he wants us to follow the crowd in masses, he directs his appeal to groups held together already by common ties, ties of nationality, religion, race, sex, vocation. Thus propagandists campaigning for or against a program will appeal to us as Catholics, Protestants, or Jews...as farmers or as school teachers; as housewives or as miners.

With the aid of all the other propaganda devices, all of the artifices of flattery are used to harness the fears and hatreds, prejudices and biases, convictions and ideals common to a group.

Thus is emotion made to push and pull us as members of a group onto a Band Wagon.

Fear Appeal

Characterized by threat with a way to reduce the threat provided as a counter message. Creates conflict and tension.

False Dichotomy

Offering only two sides or positions; a politician saying “you’re either with us or against us,” for example. Neutrality is not an option.

Ad hominem

Subversive rhetoric that attacks the spokesperson rather than the issue. Example: calling a politician a sleaze and exhorting others not to vote for that politician.

* * *

[From: Curtin, Patricia & Gaither, Kenn. (2003). Public Relations and Propaganda in Cyberspace: A Quantitative Content Analysis of Middle Eastern Government Websites. *Conference Papers -- International Communication Association*, 2003 Annual Meeting, San Diego, CA, pp.1-47. Retrieved March 18, 2008 from

<http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/ehost/detail?vid=5&hid=115&sid=4ddb1f4e-f461-4920-8b2b-e48450bf333c%40sessionmgr107>]

APPENDIX B

Dahr Jamail has a concise list of five propaganda techniques used by governments – and the news media when they are in collusion with authorities.

They are:

1. **Delay**
2. **Distract**
3. **Discredit**
4. **Spotlight**
5. **Scapegoat**

[from Jamail, D. & Pflueger, J. (2006, June 9) Propaganda and Haditha.
<http://www.truthout.org/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/61/20378>]

* * *

Adolf Hitler mentions a classic propaganda technique, the Big Lie, in *Mein Kampf*:

[I]n the big lie there is always a certain force of credibility; because the broad masses of a nation ... more readily fall victims to the big lie than the small lie, since they themselves often tell small lies ... but would be ashamed to resort to large-scale falsehoods [so] they would not believe that others could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously.

[Hitler, A. *Mein Kampf*. p. 134. SourceWatch:
http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Big_lie]

APPENDIX C

Self-evident Technique

[from *Psychological Operations Field Manual No.33-1* (Department of the Army, 1979)]

Appeal to Authority. Appeals to authority cite prominent figures to support a position idea, argument, or course of action.

Assertion. Assertions are positive statements presented as fact. They imply that what is stated is self-evident and needs no further proof. Assertions may or may not be true.

Bandwagon and Inevitable Victory. Bandwagon-and-inevitable-victory appeals attempt to persuade the target audience to take a course of action “everyone else is taking.” “Join the crowd.” This technique reinforces people's natural desire to be on the winning side ... “Inevitable victory” invites those not already on the bandwagon to join those already on the road to certain victory. Those already, or partially, on the bandwagon are reassured that staying aboard is the best course of action.

Obtain Disapproval. This technique is used to get the audience to disapprove an action or idea by suggesting the idea is popular with groups hated, feared, or held in contempt by the target audience ...

Glittering Generalities. Glittering generalities are intensely emotionally appealing words so closely associated with highly valued concepts and beliefs that they carry conviction without supporting information or reason. They appeal to such emotions as love of country, home; desire for peace, freedom, glory, honor, etc. They ask for approval without examination of the reason ... Generalities may gain or lose effectiveness with changes in conditions. They must, therefore, be responsive to current conditions ...

Vagueness. Generalities are deliberately vague so that the audience may supply its own interpretations ...

Rationalization. Individuals or groups may use favorable generalities to rationalize questionable acts or beliefs. Vague and pleasant phrases are often used to justify such actions or beliefs.

Simplification. Favorable generalities are used to provide simple answers to complex social, political, economic, or military problems.

Transfer. This is a technique of projecting positive or negative qualities (praise or blame) of a person, entity, object, or value (an individual, group, organization, nation, patriotism, etc.) to another in order to make the second more acceptable or to discredit it. This technique is generally used to transfer blame from one member of a conflict to another ...

Least of Evils. This is a technique of acknowledging that the course of action being taken is perhaps undesirable but that any alternative would result in an outcome far worse ... generally used to explain the need for sacrifices or to justify the seemingly harsh actions that displease the target audience or restrict personal liberties ...

Name Calling or Substitutions of Names or Moral Labels. This technique attempts to arouse prejudices in an audience by labeling the object of the propaganda campaign as something the target audience fears, hates, loathes, or finds undesirable.

...

Pinpointing the Enemy. This is a form of simplification in which a complex situation is reduced to the point where the “enemy” is unequivocally identified. For example, the president of country X is forced to declare a state of emergency in order to protect the peaceful people of his country from the brutal, unprovoked aggression by the leaders of country [Y].

Plain Folks or Common Man. The “plain folks” or “common man” approach attempts to convince the audience that the propagandist's positions reflect the common sense of the people. It is designed to win the confidence of the audience by communicating in the common manner and style of the audience. Propagandists use ordinary language and mannerisms (and clothes in face-to-face and audiovisual communications) in attempting to identify their point of view with that of the average person ...

Social Disapproval. This is a technique by which the propagandist marshals group acceptance and suggests that attitudes or actions contrary to the one outlined will result in social rejection, disapproval, or outright ostracism ...

Virtue Words. These are words in the value system of the target audience which tend to produce a positive image when attached to a person or issue. Peace, happiness, security, wise leadership, freedom, etc., are virtue words.

Slogans. A slogan is a brief striking phrase that may include labeling and stereotyping. If ideas can be sloganized, they should be, as good slogans are self-perpetuating.

Testimonials. Testimonials are quotations, in or out of context, especially cited to support or reject a given policy, action, program, or personality. The reputation or the role (expert, respected public figure, etc.) of the individual giving the statement is exploited. The testimonial places the official sanction of a respected person or authority on a propaganda message. This is done in an effort to cause the target audience to identify itself with the authority or to accept the authority's opinions and beliefs as its own.

...

A double-cutting edge. This technique has a double-cutting edge: It increases the credibility of the US/friendly psychological operator while decreasing the credibility of the enemy to the enemy's target audience ... Actually, propagandists using this technique will normally require access to special compartmented information and facilities to avoid

compromise of other sensitive operations or projects of agencies of the US Government. Though such news will be incredible to the enemy public, it should be given full play by the psychological operator. This event and its significance will eventually become known to the enemy public in spite of government efforts to hide it. The public will recall ... that the incredible news was received from US/allied sources. They will also recall the deception of their government. The prime requirement in using this technique is that the disseminated incredible truth must be or be certain to become a reality.

Insinuation. Insinuation is used to create or stir up the suspicions of the target audience against ideas, groups, or individuals in order to divide an enemy. The propagandist hints, suggests, and implies, allowing the audience to draw its own conclusions. Latent suspicions and cleavages within the enemy camp are exploited ...

Card stacking or selective omission. This is the process of choosing from a variety of facts only those which support the propagandist's purpose ... Card stacking, case making, and censorship are all forms of selection. Success or failure depends on how successful the propagandist is in selecting facts or "cards" and presenting or "stacking" them.

...

Presenting the other side. Some persons in a target audience believe that neither belligerent is entirely virtuous. To them propaganda solely in terms of right and wrong may not be credible. Agreement with minor aspects of the enemy's point of view may overcome this cynicism ...

Lying and distortion. Lying is stating as truth that which is contrary to fact. For example, assertions may be lies. This technique will not be used by US personnel. It is presented for use of the analyst of enemy propaganda.

Simplification. This is a technique in which the many facts of a situation are reduced so the right or wrong, good or evil, of an act or decision is obvious to all ... By suggesting apparently simple solutions for complex problems, this technique offers simplified interpretations of events, ideas, concepts, or personalities. Statements are positive and firm; qualifying words are never used.

...

Change of Pace. Change of pace is a technique of switching from belligerent to peaceful output, from "hot" to "cold," from persuasion to threat, from gloomy prophecy to optimism, from emotion to fact.

Stalling. Stalling is a technique of deliberately withholding information until its timeliness is past, thereby reducing the possibility of undesired impact.

Shift of Scene. With this technique, the propagandist replaces one "field of battle" with another. It is an attempt to take the spotlight off an unfavorable situation or condition by shifting it to another, preferably of the opponent ...

Repetition. An idea or position is repeated in an attempt to elicit an almost automatic response from the audience or to reinforce an audience's opinion or attitude. This

technique is extremely valid and useful because the human being is basically a creature of habit and develops skills and values by repetition (like walking, talking, code of ethics, etc.).

...

Fear of change. People fear change, particularly sudden, imposed change over which they have no control. They fear it will take from them status, wealth, family, friends, comfort, safety, life, or limb. That's why the man in the foxhole hesitates to leave it ... the psychological campaign must give him a safe, honorable way out of his predicament or situation.

Terrorism. The United States is absolutely opposed to the use of terror or terror tactics. But the psychological operator can give a boomerang effect to enemy terror, making it reverberate against the practitioner, making him repugnant to his own people, and all others who see the results of his heinous savagery. This can be done by disseminating fully captioned photographs in the populated areas of the terrorist's homeland. Such leaflets will separate civilians from their armed forces; it will give them second thoughts about the decency and honorableness of their cause, make them wonder about the righteousness of their ideology, and make the terrorists repugnant to them.

[Edited version of "Propaganda Techniques" (1979, Aug. 31)
Psychological Operations Field Manual No.33-1. Washington:
Department of the Army. Retrieved Oct. 5, 2008 from:

http://milresource.ru/US_Army_FM_33-1.pdf, and
<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/fr/546409/posts>]

APPENDIX D

Letter from CBS News senior v-p Betsy West to Jessica Lynch's family and military representatives, as printed in *The New York Times*:

“Attached you will find the outlines of a proposal that includes ideas from CBS News, CBS Entertainment, MTV networks and Simon & Schuster publishers,” Betsy West, a CBS News senior vice president, wrote to Private Lynch's military representatives. “From the distinguished reporting of CBS News to the youthful reach of MTV, we believe this is a unique combination of projects that will do justice to Jessica's inspiring story.”

CBS Entertainment executives, the proposal said, “tell us this would be the highest priority for the CBS movie division, which specializes in inspirational stories of courage.” Simon & Schuster, it said, “is extremely interested in discussing the possibilities for a book based on Jessica's journey from Palestine, West Virginia, to deep inside Iraq.”

MTV Networks, the letter went on, was offering a news special, a chance for Private Lynch and her friends to be the co-hosts of an hourlong music video program on MTV2, and even a special edition of its hit program “Total Request Live” in her honor. “This special would include a concert performance in Palestine, West Va., by a current star act such as Ashanti, and perhaps Ja Rule,” the proposal said.

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