

A THEORETICAL MAPPING OF WATERBOARDING BLOGS 2007

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to map processes of political idealization and how images are used and understood within the waterboarding blogs included in the case study. Chapter One is designed to provide basic information about the waterboarding issue and elements of this research more generally. The first chapter provides the following: information regarding the background facts of the waterboarding issue, research methods, research limitations, general descriptions of the blogs included in the case study, information about the general findings/data, and a brief explanation of why the blogs were chosen to be included in the case study.

Chapter Two maps how elements of political idealization operate in the waterboarding blog case study. The first section of this chapter outlines Wendy Brown's theories connected to the process of political idealization. The second section maps the process of political idealization within the context of the waterboarding blog case study. The second section is broken into three additional sub-sections each representing a stage in the political idealization process.

Chapter Three uses Aaron Barlow's outline of the emergence of the "Celebrity Journalist" as the premise to provide a partial explanation of why some political subjects are looking to virtual publics to supplement news media. The main purpose of Chapter Three is to map how images are used in the CODEPINK and Kaj Larsen video clip.

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To those affected by the events of April 16, 2007

Totalitarianism is never content to rule by external means, namely, through the state and a machinery of violence; thanks to its peculiar ideology and the role assigned to it in this apparatus of coercion, totalitarianism has discovered a means of dominating and terrorizing human beings from within. In this sense it eliminates the distance between the rulers and the ruled and achieves a conditions in which power and the will to power, as we understand them, play no role, or at best, a secondary role.

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; pg. 325

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Introduction

Principles of democracy are and have always been cherished among “free” people. Scholars and commentators have suggested that the decline of physical publics and political participation can be partially explained by inequalities operating within democratic societies. Large disparities between socio-economic status, racial categories, gender categories, immigrant status, and access to education are only a few of the ways inequalities are promulgated in physical publics. These distinctions exclude some political subjects from full democratic recognition and/or participation.

However, with the advent of the Internet, specifically online political forums, some have hoped to improve democratic access and equality. Virtual publics influencing physical publics have been seen by some, as a way to approach universal and equal participation in the democratic process. These optimistic approaches are encouraging but, inaccurate and misguided at best. Elements that marginalize groups in physical publics manifest themselves in virtual publics. However, as the epigraph suggests, in some ways the nature of virtual publics raises significant concerns about hidden forms of oppression operating in the context of various conceptions of democracy. This thesis does not attempt to identify oppressive elements within specific conceptualizations of democracy. This research is only designed to map political idealization and how images are used in the context of virtual publics.

The purpose of the first chapter is to introduce the main elements associated with the waterboarding issue and the various blogs in the case study. In order to adequately address the general information regarding the waterboarding issue and its relationship to the blogs, the chapter is divided into six sections. The first section provides general details and background facts surrounding the political issues involved in waterboarding suspected terrorists. The second

section describes the general characteristics of each blog included in the case study. The third section describes the research methods. The fourth section indicates some of the major research limitations. The fifth section provides general findings and data about the blogs included in the case study. This section also breaks down the number of posts that were in support and opposed to the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique for each blog. The sixth section explains how each blog was selected to be included in the case study.

The main purpose of Chapter Two is to map elements associated with political idealization. The first section of this chapter outlines Wendy Brown's theories that are connected to highlighting the process of political idealization. The second section maps process associated with political idealization in the waterboarding blog case study. The second section is broken into three additional sub-sections each representing a stage in the political idealization process.

The first sub-section outlines the first element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. The process of how groups glorify their perceived control over truth is developed in the context of the waterboarding case study. This section shows how posters reference opposing views and use structural elements of blogs to glorify their particular group's perceived control over truth.

The second sub-section highlights the second element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. Indirect, direct, extreme, and hybrid posts are shown to be an example of how uncritical support of groups' power manifests itself in the waterboarding case study.

The third sub-section illustrates the processes associated with alienating dissent. Negative references to the "other," rank systems, and the use of satire and exaggeration will be shown to contribute to the final element of political idealization in the waterboarding case study.

Chapter Three uses Aaron Barlow's outline of emergence of the "Celebrity Journalist" as the premise to provide a partial explanation of why some political subjects are looking to virtual publics to supplement news media. Section two provides elements of Hannah Arendt, Makail Bahktin, Michael Gardiner, Tim Garvey, and Iris Young's theoretical understandings to frame virtual publics as being image based "wild publics." To achieve this task this section is subdivided into three additional divisions. The first sub-division addresses the theoretical basis for understandings virtual publics as wild image based virtual publics. The second sub-division focuses on the theoretical understandings of virtual/virtual publics. The third sub-division outlines some elements associated with individualistic political cultures. This outline helps understand how individualism contributes to the use of images in virtual publics.

Section three describes the CODEPINK video clip and Kaj Larsen's video clip in detail. Section four analyzes the waterboarding video clips from the standpoint that the images from the video clips create a text to study. Within the context of the whole chapter, section four uses the theoretical grounding constructed in section two to map how images are used and operate in the context of the video clips in the waterboarding blog case study.

Research Justification

Current public sphere theories fail to account for some elements of virtual publics. As more scholars and commentators look to the Internet as a place to develop democratic practices, the more necessary it becomes to connect virtual and physical publics' theories. This thesis is an important contribution to the larger body of public sphere theories for two reasons. Firstly, this thesis maps basics processes operating within virtual publics. Based on inferences associated with the theoretical mapping, this thesis will provide a starting point for future research. Secondly, the Internet is often assumed to be a platform that allows for equal participation, even

for groups that have been traditionally marginalized in physical publics. However, by mapping elements within virtual publics, this thesis is suggestive of oppressive elements and processes operating within virtual publics. By highlighting some possibly oppressive processes, this thesis provides insights that are counter to some of the common assumptions about virtual publics.

Chapter One:

General Overview of Waterboarding Issue and Case Study

The main purpose of the first chapter is to introduce the elements of the waterboarding issue and the various blogs that will be used in the case study. In order to provide the general information regarding the waterboarding issue and its relationship to the blogs, the chapter is divided into six sections. The first section provides general details and background facts surrounding the political discussions involved in the waterboarding issue. The second section describes the research methods employed by this thesis. The third section includes some of the research limitations associated with the research methods. The fourth section describes the general characteristics of each blog included in the case study. The fifth section explains why each blog is selected to be in the case study. The sixth section provides general findings and data about the blogs included in the case study. This section also breaks down the number of posts that were in support and opposed to the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique in each blog.

General Background Concerning the Issue of Waterboarding

The topic of waterboarding as a form of torture was a major political topic in the fall season of 2007. Waterboarding is an interrogation technique where suspects are strapped to a table that raises their feet slightly above their head. After the suspect is strapped to a table, a cloth is pushed into the person's mouth and water is continually poured over his/her nose and mouth. The waterboarding technique is intended to stimulate drowning. The theory behind the

interrogation technique is that after completing the waterboarding procedures suspects will become disorientated and be more willing to provide useful information.

When Michael Mukasey was named as the replacement for formal Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, the legal and ethical issues of waterboarding were a hotly debated political issue. The Mukasey confirmation hearings quickly focused on the legality of interrogation methods. Norman Pearlstine reported that although Mukasey was clear that he felt torture is unconstitutional, he did not clearly determine whether waterboarding constitutes a form of torture (Pearlstine Nov. 12, 2007). Based on a reasonable interpretation of historical events, the contestation of the waterboarding issue was increased when Mukasey refused to state his position on the legality of waterboarding during his conformation hearings. It seems reasonable to assume that because the Mukasey Conformation hearing focused on the legality of waterboarding it became a focused political issue during the fall of 2007.

Some U.S. Senators attempted to use the issue of waterboarding as an attempt to delay the new Attorney General's confirmation. As the Senate debated and focused on the issue of waterboarding, political subjects both in physical and virtual publics also addressed the issue of waterboarding. It was clear physical publics played an important role in defining the waterboarding issue. However, many political subjects also sought virtual publics to address the waterboarding issue.

During this time many political blogs focused on discussing the issue of waterboarding. For many political subjects the Internet provided information and images associated with waterboarding. Political subjects could google US Army manuals to learn about the military's interrogation procedures. Individuals could even go to youtube.com and watch countless video clips about waterboarding. Some video clips even showed the interrogation technique being

performed on people. Besides these informational elements of the Internet, blogs and virtual publics more generally provided a communicative space for political subjects to address the issue of waterboarding.

While following the general online discussion surrounding the waterboarding issue a series of video clips were continuously being referenced among bloggers. One of the video clips frequently being referenced on blogs documented CODEPINK's demonstration against the use of waterboarding. Kaj Larson produced the second video clip that was referenced often in the general online discussions. Larsen's video clip proposed to be an informational service, teaching political subjects about the procedures and ramifications of waterboarding suspected terrorists. These two video clips seemed to be the inspiration and basis, for a range of waterboarding blog discussions, specifically discussions on hotair.com and wizbangblog.com. Although it seemed that many political subjects/bloggers saw the videos and subsequent discussions as being an important form of political interaction, images were dominating the structure of virtual publics.

Based on the common assumption that virtual publics and blogs more generally, provide a communicative space that is free from many inequalities associated with physical publics; I was fascinated by how images dominated interactions and how processes of political idealization seemed to be operating within virtual publics. At this point I decided to select a few blogs to generate a case study and to analyze elements/processes operating within internal structures of virtual publics. All of the blogs selected to be in the case study had one thing in common. Each blog included in the case study was in some way was connected, referenced, or discussed another blog or one of the video clips that was identified previously.

Methodology

The primary method employed by this research is a form of theoretical textual analysis. Blog posts are selected from six blogs, (thehuffingtonpost.com, wizbangblog.com, codepink4peace.org, rightwingnews.com, democraticunderground.com, and hotair.com) and are interpreted and analyzed through various theoretical lenses. Each post studied within the case study is systematically analyzed and coded to determine whether it was in favor or opposed the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. Posts that represent an undecided position are also coded accordingly. The codes are only one element that is used to connect the various blog interactions to a larger discourse. The purpose of the theoretical analysis is designed to map processes of political idealization and images are used within virtual publics.

In addition to the textual analysis of the blog posts, two video clips, are analyzed. The video clips are actually the starting point for some of the blogs included in the case study. The video clips were originally viewed by bloggers on thehuffingtonpost.com and codepink4peace.org/hotair.com. After posters viewed the clips on the blogs they were encouraged to post a response. Both the blog posts and videos clips are studied using a form of theoretical textual mapping. The theoretical mapping is specifically intended to map processes associated with political idealization and outline how images are used in the case study. However, the theoretical mapping will allow one to infer how oppressive elements operate in and result from image based interactions within virtual publics.

Limitations

The most significant limitation for this research is how the blogs are selected to be in the case study. The Internet is so large and profuse it is nearly impossible to generate a complete pool of samples. Randomly selecting blogs into a case study is not possible. The profuse nature of the Internet precludes the case study from being generated randomly. Furthermore, some blogs are unable to be included into the case study due to the way the blog posts are organized by the sites designers. Some blogs designers do not organize blog posts by topic, making it difficult to study how the different posters relate to each other. One criticism of this research might be the fact that it is unclear whether the process highlights specific elements of virtual publics or whether the processes operating in virtual blogs are only limited to “take-off” issues¹ present in these particular blogs.

My research design accounts for these limitations by narrowing the study to only blog posts that dealt with the issue of using waterboarding as an interrogation technique. Limiting the study does not adversely affect the goal of mapping processes of political idealization and how images are used within virtual publics. The theoretical mapping of processes of political idealization and how images are used in virtual publics is important even if it is limited to just this case study of waterboarding blogs.

In an effort to address limitations associated with selection bias, posts that originated from blogs that did not have easily categorized topics, but were indirectly referenced on other blogs, are also included in the case study. Democraticundeground.com and codepink4peace.org

¹ “Take-off” issues have been conceptualized as being inherently moral or issues with an intense focus. i.e. attitudes towards abortion, gays in the military, or the Iraq War see (Baldassari and Pearman 2007).

are two blogs that did not have clearly defined issue posts. The posts on these blogs are unorganized and/or address a variety of unrelated topics. Some posts/media are still able to be included from democraticunderground.com and condepink4peace.org because posters referenced them on wizbangblog.com and hotair.com.

There is no guarantee that this theoretical mapping is able to obtain a complete picture about each subject acting in virtual publics. Anonymous subjects can have multiple accounts on various blogs and it would be nearly impossible to identify that type of behavior. However, nor does participating in virtual publics preclude political subjects from also having a role in other virtual and/or physical publics. It is important to understand that although this research cannot account for all variations, this thesis only maps the process of political idealization and how images are used within the waterboarding case study.

General Description of Blogs Included in the Case Study

This section describes each blog and/or website that provided video clips or blog posts included in the case study. The blogs/websites that are included in the case study are the following: Hotair.com, thehuffingtonpost.com, wizbangblog.com, rightwingnews.com, codepink4peace.org, and democraticunderground.com. The section describes each blog/website.

Hotair.com:

Hotair.com founder Michelle Malkin defines the structure of the site as a video blog. Video clips are generally used to initiate blog discussions. According to hotair.com, the mission of the site is the following:

“-Expose new viewers to the revolutionary world of video blogging, animation and internet broadcasting.

-Recruit dynamic, enterprising people with creative skills from across the country to help us challenge (and Conquer!) the dinosaur broadcast media outlets!
-Laugh. Report. Laugh. Entertain. Laugh. Inform. Laugh. Make money. Did we say laugh?" (Michelle Malkin; hotair.com, March 12, 2008).

The video clip that inspired the blog interaction on hotair.com was a video originally posted on codepink4peace.org. The hotair.com site is organized like most other video blogs. The complete blog posting can be found in Appendix One.

Thehuffintotnpost.com:

According to the site, thehuffingtonpost.com is "The Internet Newspaper: News Blogs Video Commentary." The site not only includes sections devoted to politics, but users can view videos and read blogs in business, entertainment and living sections. Thehuffingtonpost.com is organized similarly to other video blogs. Users can view video clips, post on their site, and provide links to other parts of the Internet. After users view the various video clips they are encouraged to make posts. A unique character of thehuffingtonpost.com is that some users are "professional bloggers." Using the term professional blogger loosely, some of the bloggers that participate on thehuffingtonpost.com have developed a journalistic niche for themselves. Their names and subsequent blogs are recognizable to many people. Kaj Larsen, a professional blogger that posts on thehuffingtonpost.com for example, produced the waterboarding video clip that is the basis for an assortment of blog interactions. His waterboarding video clip is included in the textual analysis in Chapter Three.

The site also sometimes has recognizable people post on the blog. For example, Larry David, Seinfeld's co-creator and star of "Curb your Enthusiasm," has been known to make posts on thehuffingtonpost.com. Thehuffingtonpost.com is a notoriously liberal blog. Hotair.com alleges that it was founded to provide "ideological diversity and challenge thehuffingtonpost.com

specifically. Thehuffingtonpost.com blog posts concerning the waterboarding issue can be found in its entirety in Appendix Three.

Wizbangblog.com

Wizbangblog.com is a video blog that addresses a variety of topics. The site covers a plethora of news issues that range from politics to entertainment. The format is very similar to the other video blogs included in the case study. Posters view video clips and post their responses on various posting boards. A video clip that was posted on democraticunderground.com was the basis for the waterboarding blog interaction on wizbangblog.com. This blog is generally conservative, but sometimes provides a forum for the expression of liberal sentiments. The note from the founder of wizbangblog.com cited several liberal video blogs, including thehuffingtonpost.com, as being “produced by liberals for liberals.” According to hotair.com, the site was founded in the interest of providing “ideological diversity.” Hotair.com posters and general political interactions are conservative. The waterboarding blog posts on wizbangblog.com can be found in their entirety in Appendix Two.

Rightwingnews.com:

Rightwingnews.com is more of a traditional posting blog. In some posts video clips are posted; however, in most situations links are provided within individual posts that take bloggers to other sites to view video clips. However, rightwingnews.com has a link that takes users to youtube.com. Youtube.com allows visitors to view almost unlimited amounts of video clips. According to the site, the anonymous organizer founded the blog in response to the 2000 presidential elections. According the founder “I got really angry during the 2000 presidential elections at the horrible biased job media did in covering Florida. The breaking point for me was when I was watching a show on CNN and an emailed comment from a listener suggested ‘Bush

should concede.’ That was the moment I decided to put together a conservative web page...” (rightwingnews.com March 12, 2008). The waterboarding posts on rightwingnews.com can be found in their entirety in Appendix Four.

Codepink4peace.org:

The CODEPINK website is the most untraditional site included in the case study. Although there are blogging features on the website they are subordinate to other features. The Codepink4peace.org is primarily an informational website for a primarily women’s political action group. CODEPINK’s mission statement is the following:

“CODEPINK is a women-initiated grassroots peace and social justice movement working to end the war in Iraq, stop new wars, and redirect our resources into healthcare, education and other life-affirming activities. We reject the Bush administration's fear-based politics that justify violence, and instead calls for policies based on compassion, kindness and a commitment to international law. With an emphasis on joy and humor, CODEPINK women and men seek to activate, amplify and inspire a community of peacemakers through creative campaigns and a commitment to non-violence.” (Codepink4peace.org March 12, 2008).

The site is primarily used to organize women and motivate them to act politically. The site provides information on how to join CODEPINK, information regarding a variety of political issues, and information about upcoming protests and political action strategies. The site also provides news about the group’s political efforts, pictures, and video clips about various chapters’ protests. The codepink4peace.org site supports an assortment of liberal policies. As indicated earlier, one of CODEPINK’s protest video clips was referenced on wizbangblog.com and subsequently used in the textual analysis in Chapter Three.

Democraticunderground.com:

Democraticunderground.com is an interactive news commentary and blog site. Visitors come to the site to read opinion articles about various current events. The page also serves as a blog and blog control station. Members of the site can find blogs that are currently discussing

certain current events. The site attempts to seem ideologically neutral, but it has elements of a liberal bias. This site was not directly used because of the way the site is organized. However, members of this site posted a waterboarding video clip that was the basis of the wizbangblog.com waterboarding blog discussion.

Procedures and Justifications for Including Blogs in the Case Study

Each blog or web site is included in the case study for a reason. Because it is not possible to generate a random sample of blogs on the Internet, I want to focus my research within publics that are interacting closely with each other. The six blogs/websites that are included in the case study are all in some way connected to each other by the waterboarding discussion. Whether it is a direct reference in a post or a link to a waterboarding video clip, all of the blogs/web sites included in the case study interact virtual public to virtual public.

In order to execute the theoretical mapping, it is crucial to focus on how virtual publics interact and relate to each other when discussing the political issue of waterboarding. The blogs/web sites in this case study isolate the interactions between virtual publics. The close connection between all of the virtual publics [blogs/web sites] focuses the research. The theoretical mapping will be more precise by concentrating on the virtual publics as much as possible.

Data and General Observations

Using Wendy Brown's understanding about the creation of tolerance discourses as a theoretical basis, this research documents the number of direct and indirect posts that reference a symbolic "other." The results from the case study suggest that posters frequently reference a symbolic "other" both directly and indirectly. The following is the distribution and the number of times posters referenced the symbolic "other" directly and/or indirectly. The statistics include direct and indirect posts together; because, based on Wendy Brown's model of political idealization both techniques are theorized to create distinctions. Brown's theories only account for the presence of distinctions. It is not needed to break down the statistics to account for the type of distinctions being made.

Hotair.com – 22/102 (21% of posts);

thehuffingtonpost.com – 14/46 (30% of posts);

rightwingnews.com - 13/90 (14% of posts);

wizbang.com – 15/68 (22% of posts);

Total number of post across all blogs 64/306 (21% of all posts) make direct or indirect references to a symbolic "other." This statistic indicates that blog posts frequently employed some form of a distinction. This statistic is relevant because it indicates that elements of virtual publics can be accurately understood within Brown's theoretical understanding of political idealization.

The following is the distribution of posts that used direct and/or indirect references to the "other" and combined them with an unquestioned position.

Hotair.com – 4/102 (4% of posts);

huffingtonpost.com – 10/46 (22% of posts);

rightwingnews.com – 5/90 (5% of posts);

wizbang.com – 9/68 (13% of posts)

The total number of posts across all blogs 28/306 (9 % of all blog posts) are conceptualized as directly/indirectly making references to the “other” and combine said reference with an extreme position. This figure indicates that not only are posters using techniques to make distinctions, but also a small percentage of those posts take an extreme position.

This paragraph indicates the distribution of posts that support and oppose the use of waterboarding for each blog².

Hotair.com - 102/102 (100% of posts) posts are conceptualized as supporting the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique.

Huffingtonpost.com - 9/46 (20% of posts) posts are conceptualized as being in support of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 36/46 (78% of posts) posts are conceptualized as being against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 1/46 (.02 % of posts) post is conceptualized as a “non-response.” Based on the post it was not clear whether the post supports, opposes, and/or is undecided about the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique.

Rightwingnews.com - 68/90 (76% of posts) posts are conceptualized as supporting the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 21/90 (23% of posts) posts are conceptualized as being against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 1/90 (.01 of posts) post is

² Posts that were conceptualized as supporting the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique directly or indirectly expressed positive sentiments about the use, effectiveness, and/or elements associated with the interrogation technique. Posts that were conceptualized as being opposed to the use of waterboarding directly or indirectly expressed negative elements about the use, effectiveness, and/or elements associated with the interrogation technique. “Non-response” posts were conceptualized as not providing clear indication of either supporting or opposing the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. Posts that were contradictory in nature, opposed and supported the use of waterboarding were conceptualized as “non-response” posts. If a post did not reasonably connect to the issue of waterboarding it was not included in the total post amount.

conceptualized as being a “non-response.” The “non-response” post cannot be conceptualized as supporting, opposing, and/or undecided about the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique.

Wizbang.com - 41/68 (60% of posts) posts are conceptualized as being in support of the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 25/68 (37% of posts) posts are conceptualized as being opposed to the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 2/68 (.03% of posts) posts are conceptualized as being a “non-response.” The “non-response” posts cannot be conceptualized as being in support, opposed, and/or undecided about the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique.

Codepink4peace.org and democraticundground.com do not provide any blog posts for the case study. The two sites only contribute video clips that are analyzed specifically or through the posts on wizbangblog.com and hotair.com.

The presence and modes for enforcing unacceptable content is important to identify in each blog. Thehuffingtonpost.com and rightwingnews.com are the two blogs that provide guidelines for posts. The guidelines are as follows:

“Are There Any Rules About Posting Comments?: Yes, please don't flame excessively, use an exceptional amount of vulgar language, call anyone a "towelhead," "raghead," or "wetback," continually post off topic material, spam, use racial or gay slurs, libel anyone, troll, make threats, or challenge anyone to fight. In short, don't be a jerk. If that won't work for you, I'll delete your posts and ban your IP. If you are banned and genuinely don't know why, email me. If you know you were doing something mentioned above and you are banned, please don't try to get around the ban. Do everybody involved a favor and find somewhere else to post where they appreciate what you have to say.” (rightwingnews.com March 12, 2008)

“Q: What is the Huffington Post's Comment Policy?

Huffington Post pre-moderates comments on our blog posts and post-moderates comments on news stories. We never censor comments based on political or ideological point of view. We only delete those comments that include the following transgressions:

- are abusive, off-topic, use excessive foul language
- include ad hominem attacks including comments that celebrate the death or illness of any person, public figure or otherwise

- contain racist, sexist, homophobic and other slurs
- are solicitations and/or advertising for personal blogs and websites
- thread spamming (you've posted this same comment elsewhere on the site
- are posted with the explicit intention of provoking other commenters or the staff at Huffington Post.” (thehuffingtonpost.com March 12, 2008).

It is unclear even for the two blogs that provide clear posting guidelines, whether blog administrators regularly and/or strictly adhere to the established guidelines. Overall, none of the blogs strictly adhere to any posting guidelines. None of the blogs seem to provide a way to enforce posting guidelines.

This chapter provided general information about the waterboarding issue, the waterboarding case study and the general findings of the research. Understanding elements of the waterboarding issue provide a basis to understand the contents of the textual analysis. When reading this thesis it is important to understand that processes associated with political idealization and how images are used are dependent on a political subjects position within a virtual public.

Chapter Two:

Process of Political Idealization Mapped in Waterboarding Blogs

In Wendy Brown's book entitled *Regulating Aversion*, Brown focuses on how Tolerance Discourses develop in a depoliticized and non-historical fashion³. Brown's theoretical approach is useful in understanding how political idealization operates in other settings. Using Brown's ideas as a base, this chapter addresses processes of political idealization operating within virtual publics. The first section of this chapter will outline Brown's Tolerance Discourse, highlighting the process of political idealization. The second section will use Brown's ideas associated with political idealization to map how elements of political idealization operate in the waterboarding blog case study. The second section will be broken into three additional sub-sections each representing a stage in the political idealization process.

The first sub-section outlines the first element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. The process of how groups glorify their perceived control over truth is developed in the context of the waterboarding case study. This section shows how posters reference opposing views and use structural elements of blogs to glorify their particular group's perceived control over truth.

The second sub-section highlights the second element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. Indirect, direct, extreme, and hybrid posts will be shown to be an example of how uncritical support of groups' power manifests itself in the waterboarding case study.

³ Brown argues "no matter its particular form and mechanics, depoliticization involves removing a political phenomenon from comprehension of its historical emergence and from a recognition of the powers that produce and contour it" (Brown 2006, 15).

The third sub-section illustrates the processes associated with alienating dissent. Negative references to the “other,” rank systems, and the use of satire and exaggeration are shown to contribute to the final element of political idealization in the waterboarding case study.

Theoretical Construction of Political Idealization

In the 1990s Wendy Brown realized that a unique phenomenon was created when liberal groups justified the imperial state. In attempts to explain this process Brown developed a theoretical argument. The argument purported to explain how discursive techniques of tolerance were used to justify the imperial state. By constructing an understanding of Brown’s theory the first section of this chapter provides a reference point to accurately describe the process of political idealization operating in the waterboarding blog. Although Brown gives little explicit attention to group formation and identity construction in *Regulating Aversion*, it is the foundation and is fundamental to understanding Brown’s conceptualizations of the political idealization. This research has connected Brown’s two arguments in a way that more accurately describes elements of group formation and identity construction. By connecting Brown’s theories from *Regulating Aversion* and *Edgework* a more developed understanding of the process of political idealization emerges.

According to Brown in *Edgework*, before a strong Tolerance Discourse can be created, groups of people have to connect with each other based upon a shared value or political idealization. Using a Freudian understanding of humans, Brown understands that humans are horde animals. From this perspective, humans are generally self-interested and have a “primarily rivalry’ instinct. This uneasy relationship is depicted by Freud using “Schopenhauer’s porcupine

problem.” “Schopenhauer’s porcupine problem” is the following: “A number of porcupines, feeling cold, huddle together in order to benefit from each other’s warmth. But in drawing close, they feel one another’s quills and sense danger, leading them to draw apart again, a separation that returns them to the suffering of the cold” (Brown 2006, 159).

Understanding the human condition as an uneasy relationship between horde animals, Brown is able to explain how groups of people resist their natural horde animal tendencies and become herd animals. Brown understands that to make the move from horde animals to herd animals the group idealizes a common leader or ideal (Brown 2005, 29). As discussed in one of the essays in *Edgework* entitled “Political Idealization” Brown argues that love is what draws and connects groups together. Brown proposes “love is devotion to an abstract idea projected onto an object...” which allows a group of individual horde animals to have a common connection (Brown 2005, 28).

Coupling Brown’s understandings of group formation in *Edgework* with ideas from *Regulating Aversion* three larger problems emerge. Firstly, groups lack the ability to guide group actions using a super-ego⁴. The elimination of individuals’ super-egos leads to groupthinking. Brown establishes that the “group coheres to the extent that individual super-ego ideals has been replaced or absorbed by a common object”, vis a vis the idealized object (Brown 2006, 162). Secondly, the idealization of the group operates in the public sphere as opposed to the private sphere (Brown 2006). When this type of idealization is practiced in the public sphere nationalism and fascism can quickly develop. Brown presents two issues of concern when love is projected in the public sphere. Firstly, Brown suggests that “the attachment achieved through idealization is

⁴ According to Sigmund Freud’s structural theory, the super-ego is one of three parts of a person’s subconscious. The super-ego acts as the moral compass and is contrasted by a persons’ id. The super-ego and the id are mediated by the ego.

likely to glory in the power of the nation, a power expressed in states action; second and relatedly, because the individual ego ideals have been displaced onto the nation, citizenship and patriotism are rendered as both passive and uncritical adoration of this power” (Brown 2005, 30). Secondly, Brown argues “the process of group construction can have severe affects upon the health of democracy, leading to an alienation of dissent” (Brown 2005, 30). As a result of love being practiced in the public sphere, Brown implies that the process of group construction creates an “us” and “them” dichotomy. The distinctions are based on the notion that “if you are not with us you are against us.” The presence of dichotomous distinctions creates heavy burdens on dissent. Distinctions create the conditions that require unqualified support of the groups’ idealization. If any aspect of the groups’ idealization is criticized or questioned the subject is defined and grouped as the enemy. Political discourses can utilize groups’ weak reasoning skills to pursue political objectives without any challenge. Combining Brown’s ideas in *Edgework* and *Regulating Aversion* illustrates how group dynamics dilute a group’s analytical abilities, leading to unquestioned support of what the particular group’s political discourse promotes (Brown 2005; 2006).

Brown’s theory highlights the ironies associated with liberal groups suggesting they promote ideas of individual autonomy. At any given time processes can influence political subjects of liberal groups and they can quickly be drawn into groupthinking. Freudian understandings of group dynamics, suggest that group cohesion is valued more than open-discourse. In order to preserve the unity and purity of the idealization, dissent must be externalized from the group. Using discursive techniques, Brown argued that one way groups externalize dissent is through creating “us” and “them” distinctions. Brown provides three points to illustrate the possibility of “us” and “them” distinctions being used to externalize dissent

within group dynamics. First, Brown argues “high levels of idealization, and particularly expression of unqualified adoration and devotion are signs of the unconscious hostility inherent in love” (Brown 2006, 162). The lovers find themselves in situations in which they must “refuse all evidence of flaws in the object, shout down her or his own aggression toward the object, and denounce others’ aggression toward the project” (Brown 2006, 162). Any criticism will illuminate limitations in groups’ idealization. In the interest of group cohesion any attempt to challenge the idealization must be eliminated. Secondly, Brown suggests that a fear of a group member acknowledging the validity of a criticism, both consciously and unconsciously causes strict enforcement of criticism (Brown 2006, 162). Brown suggests that in order to “avert this contagion in the context of a relatively free social order, there must be a relatively even suppression of ambivalence toward the collective love object among members of the group” (Brown 2006, 162). These forces cause group members to enforce and protect the idealization in non-legal and non-institutional ways⁵. Lastly, group love often directs its aggression outward to an enemy or “other.” Brown understands that “groups achieve harmony within diverting aggression outward, not only toward that which does not share their love but toward that which is imagined as opposite to their love...” (Brown 2006, 159). These three points highlight a process that is the foundation of Brown’s understanding of political idealization.

⁵An example of the governmentality or individual political subjects regulating and maintaining established norms of appropriateness to prohibit criticism was the debate surrounding the 2003 Iraq War. Anyone who did not support the 2003 Iraq war was defined as siding with the terrorists, or not willingly to do what it takes to fight terrorism. When in reality the invasion of Iraq had very little to do with the War on Terror. Furthermore, individuals that dissented from war were also coupled with being disrespectful of the soldiers sacrifice. This device of criticism suppression does not recognize that one can support the troops without having to support the war. This same process is seen in the waterboarding discussions. Waterboarding supporters argue that the opposition is not willing to do “what it takes” to fight the War on Terrorism”. Furthermore, the waterboarding blogs utilized many techniques to enforce and protect the group’s idealization.

By framing issues in an “us” and “them” structure, Brown argues that through processes associated with political idealization, liberal groups feel they are the only ones capable of awarding tolerance. By making the dichotomous distinction it is assumed that all non-liberal groups are intolerant. Groups define their identities by what they are not. Since liberal groups view themselves as not being intolerant, they assume that all aspects of their liberal lifestyles must be tolerated. Liberal groups then create their identities by framing liberalism as being separate from culture. Brown argues that tolerance is extended “to practices seen to be “chosen” by liberal individuals, but it may be withheld from practices seen to be imposed by culture inscribed as law...” (Brown 2006, 171). Tolerance operates within an asymmetrical power structure between the tolerant and the tolerated. By allowing the liberal groups to determine what is “civilized”, western groups define themselves as superior, while concluding that non-western practices are intolerable (Brown 2006, 197-98). Brown suggests that it is this “...identification of liberalism as the telos of the west – that provides the basis for western civilizational supremacy” (Brown 2006, 184). Brown accurately argues that the western civilizational supremacy leads to the following logic: “that which is tolerated is often presumed incapable of tolerance” (Brown 2006, 187). Brown explains that the “superordination” is maintained by “presenting liberalism as being able to tolerate difference without being overcome by it. Brown suggests that by separating liberalism and culture, “liberal groups establish the dominant position in terms of conferring or withholding what is within the range of toleration” (Brown 2006, 185).

Brown critiques liberal scholars such as Bernard Williams, Joseph Raz, Michael Ignatieff, and Will Kymlicka for having understandings of culture that are separate from liberalism (Brown 2006). Brown characterizes these scholars as having argued that “a tolerant

worldview is only available to people or groups with a deep value and practice of individualization, an investment in individual rather than group identity” (Brown 2006, 154).

Brown correctly suggests that liberal groups attempt to separate liberalism from culture.⁶ Liberal groups frame themselves as promoting individual autonomy while defining non-liberal groups as being fundamentalist who are guided by culture. By separating liberalism from culture, tolerance discourses are able to condone activities that are not “chosen” by individuals.⁷ Any practice that is socially coerced or prescribed by law does not allow for free choice, making it inherently suspect of being awarded the classification of a difference that can be tolerated.

Brown outlined how the construction of liberalism allows tolerance to be “conferred by the dominant” (Brown 2006, 191). Liberal groups construct their political identity within an asymmetrical power structure that disadvantages “non-liberal” groups. Discourses that operate within the structure reaffirm liberal practices by determining that which is to be tolerated. Groups that have elements that are tolerated are systematically disadvantaged. Tolerating groups grant and withhold tolerance. The control of tolerance disadvantages the tolerated groups. In political terms, Brown suggests that when something is tolerated “power and of a certain security in that power” is established (Brown 2006, 202). In *Regulating Aversion*, Brown discussed how “a civilizational discourse” is used to “define the superiority of Western groups, and as that which marks certain non-Western practices as intolerable (Brown 2006, 192).

⁶ Brown is not really saying that liberalism and culture are separated; she is just saying that liberals make the case the liberalism is above culture. Brown gives repeated examples throughout *Regulating Aversion* that illustrates how culture permeates through liberal groups.

⁷ Brown presents an argument that Islam women wearing head veils is not significantly different from western understandings of female beauty. Western standards of beauty apply pressure on how women behave and dress. Although there are no formal laws dictating how women are to dress, societal forces apply enough pressure on women to make ad hoc laws dictating appropriate beauty types and clothing styles (Brown 2006).

Brown explains that the power and the certainty of that power allows the west to “tar the non-west with the brush of the intolerable for harboring certain practices that are not only named barbaric, that is, uncivilized in contrast to our practices, but coerced, that is, unfree compared to our practices” (Brown 2006, 191).⁸ Brown correctly understands that by framing the “Other” as “barbaric” “liberal groups” can justify forcing “non-liberal groups” into complying with liberalism. Therefore, if a sub-group is opposed to the larger idealization they are identified as being outside the range of toleration. This logic allows the most powerful group to justify various forms of imperialism upon non-liberal groups.⁹

The coalescing of these factors creates the conditions in which powerful groups representing the “liberal voice” justify imperial influence upon “non-liberal” sects of the public discussion. Due to aspects of the discourses construction, sects within the discussion that represent “western liberal democracies” are unable to see the hypocrisy in their actions. From their perspective groups representing “liberal democracies” are in a position to confer tolerance because liberalism is seen as being above culture. If sub-groups labeled “intolerant” want to be recognized in various “liberal” forums they have little choice but to accept what is described as tolerable. These classifications also allow powerful tolerating groups to limit the range of public

⁸ Brown argued that Tolerance Discourses allow certain ‘barbaric’ sections in liberal groups to be overlooked. This allows various questionable acts to be deemed appropriate because they are practiced in liberal groups. i.e. eating animals, materialism, abortions, developing weapons of mass destruction, etc (Brown 2006)

⁹ Blogs try to create positions of power to confer or withhold elements of authority. However, based on the case study posters assume their group is in the position of power. It is unclear that power translates to the practices Brown addresses in her state level analysis. There is no clear legitimizing power within the blogosphere. Bloggers are connected through idealizations but are continuously positioning for authority and power. Although bloggers hope to achieve a hegemonic position, structural elements of the web prohibit the accumulation of power.

debate. Therefore, by dispensing a tolerance discourse western liberal democracies can subvert principles of individual autonomy.¹⁰

Theoretical Construction of Political Idealization Mapped in Waterboarding Case Study

Using Brown's theoretical model this section describes how elements of political idealization operate within the online waterboarding blog case study. Brown's tolerance discourse theory encompasses much more than this sections even hopes to address. This research does not mean to privilege political idealization above other elements of discursive and/or psychoanalytic theories. However, by focusing on political idealization this section maps a single element of Brown's larger theory in the context of waterboarding blogs.

Political idealization can be understood as operating within a three-step process. Using Brown's theories to inform this theoretical mapping, political idealization includes the following elements within the context of the waterboarding blogs. First, the group¹¹ is likely to glorify the power/insightfulness/perceived hegemony over political truth.¹² In the case of political blogs,

¹⁰ In the context of waterboarding blogs this element will be seen as a way to counter opposing arguments. In waterboarding blogs it is not about forcing acts and behaviors outside the range of tolerance. In waterboarding blogs distinctions are made to justify and support group positions.

¹¹ Under Brown's theory groups were organized around "non-liberal" practices. As explained earlier, groups define their identity by what they are not. In Brown's theory, "liberal groups" identified "non-liberal" groups and practices as a way to confirm their group as being "liberal." A similar process was used in the context of waterboarding blogs. Bloggers organized themselves by what they were not. Specifically, groups were organized around whether they supported or opposed the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique of suspected terrorists. Values, political assumptions, and ideological bias influenced the organization of groups. It is important to note that the blog pages/postings were not the main way groups organized online. As seen in the case study, posters from all group's, at times used the same blog to protect group idealizations (Brown 2005, 2006).

¹² Political truth is a concept created to explain groups' perceived hegemonic control over understandings of political issues. The perceived regulation of political truth is important in the

posters tend to hold the idea that they control the understanding of political truth. Secondly, the individual group members give uncritical adoration to the group's power and/or assumed hegemonic control over political truth. The adoration leads to "us and "them" distinctions between blog posters. The final element of political idealization is the group's design to alienate dissent.¹³ Dissent must be externalized because its presence represents a challenge to group idealizations and political identities. Views that are incompatible with the group's idealization are disregarded as being a view from the "other."

This section outlines the process and operation of political idealization within the waterboarding blog case study. When mapping the political idealization process, descriptive examples are given from posts that support and oppose waterboarding as an interrogation technique.

Glorification of a Perceived Control over Political Truth

The first element of political idealization is the glorification of the group. Under Wendy Brown's theory, the element that connects individuals into groups is the glorification of the nation's power (Brown 2005, 30-31). It is appropriate for Brown's research to understand the glorification of power at the state level. In the context of this research bloggers tend to glorify groups' perceived control over political truth. Groups organize around the idea that individual

group's processes of protecting the political idealization. The following paragraphs will show how groups' regulates political truth and attempt to withhold political truth from the symbolic "other" to protect the group's idealization.

¹³ Alienation accurately encompasses the final elements of political idealization. Alienation attempts to address the desire to make the "other" feel as life their opinions and existence does not belong. Alienation also picks up on elements of perceived isolation that are needed to fully grasp the final element of political idealization.

groups/publics have the correct understanding of political truth. The organization around each specific understanding of political truth connects individuals to larger groups/publics. Posters divisively reference opposing views and use structural elements of blogs to glorify their specific group's/public's perceived control over political truth.

Referencing Opposing Views to glorify a Perceived Control Over Political Truth

Referencing “opposing blogs”¹⁴ in a divisive way is one technique that is used to protect the glorification of the group's control over political truth. Posts that use this approach often make claims and/or arguments that are based on perceived emotional responses. The element of the post that attacks the perceived group seems to make the poster more likely to take an extreme position that parallels or in some way supports their own perceived group's connection.¹⁵ The following excerpt is one example of posters' tendencies to move to an extreme position when attacking the perceived opposition. In order to understand the post, it is important to acknowledge the context of the posting. The following post was originally written on wizbangblog.com. For purposes of this study, the blog and most of the posters are conceptualized as being supportive of conservative values politically, socially, and culturally. For unknown reasons many blog posters framed the blog “Democratic Underground” as the

¹⁴Bloggers often associated the “other” with a conceptualized “other” blog”. The study does not suggest that if a poster identified a blog as being the opposition that the identified blog was actually the opposition. Based on the case study, posters frequently referenced a symbolic “other” both directly and indirectly. The following is the distribution of the number of times poster referenced the symbolic “other” directly and/or indirectly. Hotair.com – 22/102 (21% of posts); huffingtonpost.com – 14/46 (30% of posts); rightwingnews.com - 13/90 (14% of posts); wizbang.com – 15/68 (22% of posts) total number of post across all blogs 64/306 (21% of all posts studied made direct or indirect reference to other.

¹⁵ The following is the distribution of posts that used direct and/or indirect references to the “other” and combined them with references to an unquestioned position. Hotair.com – 4/102 (4% of posts); huffingtonpost.com – 10/46 (22% of posts); rightwingnews.com – 5/90 (5% of posts); wizbang.com – 9/68 (13% of posts)

symbolic “other.”¹⁶ For purposes of the study, the Democratic Underground was perceived as being a “liberal blog,” in which posters tended to support liberal sentiments.¹⁷ Anon Y. Mols posted the following content on wizbangblog.com: “I’d like to prove that electric shock is torture. First, I need a few volunteers from DU” (wizbangblog.com October 30, 2007 3:15PM). When viewed from a higher level of abstraction, Mols’s post can be understood as having the purpose of glorifying a perceived group control over political truth. By referencing “DU,” Mols situates the post with the values of the group that supports pro-waterboarding sentiments. It is crucial that Mols includes the attack on the “DU” because the poster makes it clear that the post is not from the symbolic “other.” The conceptualization of what it means to be a group member (blog poster) can be different depending on the individual. Individuals do not even need to actually connect to each other based on the same values or understandings (Brown 2005; 2006). Posters perceive values differently; but are unable to articulate variations. Values and subsequent perceptions of those values are molded to conform to other individual’s perceived group values. Understandings of political positions are limited in the direction of the posters perspective. Combining understandings of Kittler and Enzensberger it is clear that posters/group members are not

¹⁶ It is unclear whether Democratic Underground and Wizbang were partnered as opposites by design. Based on case study wizbang often-included links to Democratic Underground and vice versa. It is unknown if this connection was officially moderated by the blogs management. It is just as easily believed that individual posters were responsible for the frequent posts to the two blogs. The same relationship occurred between hotair.com and codepink4peace.org. However, this case seems to be that hotair.com was motivated to discuss the issue of waterboarding because of a video clip posted on codepink4peace.org. Most of the posts were in reference to the specific video clip.

¹⁷ Democraticunderground.com blog content was not specifically analyzed or included in this cases study. The issue of waterboarding was not devoted a single forum. The organization of the blog made it difficult to study. Excerpts to some of the Democratic underground posts were referenced and provided on wizbang.com. It is acknowledge that this is a significant research limitation. See limitations section in Introduction.

introspective; they mold their values to that of the perceived group's idealization, based on how the values/message are conveyed (Kittler 1986; Enzensberger 1974).

It is reasonable to interpret Mol's post as valuing his/her group's glorification of controlling political truth. By suggesting electric shock is torture the post attempts to frame waterboarding as being below the torture threshold. The strategy assumes that the group's value of supporting waterboarding, as an interrogation technique is correct. Mols's post jests at using volunteers from the perceived opposition (Democratic Underground) to prove that electric shock is torture. The most significant part of this post is Mols attitude towards attacking the vague and generalized Democratic Underground. The Democratic Underground is a symbolic threat to the group's glorification. The presence of the Democratic Underground, as an opposing opinion, challenges Mols's group glorification of holding the truth about the waterboarding issue. This arrangement within Mols's post glorifies his perceived groups' correctness/truth.

Mols's post highlights some of the dangers associated with glorifying a group's perceived control over political truth. A group's supposed control over political truth is privilege to such an extent that group members seem disgusted that other political subjects, not within their group, want group positions to be justified. Posts often suggest that it would be ridiculous not to accept the group's values. By glorifying the group's understood monopoly on truth, posters stop even attempting to justify or question the group's values. Based on the case study, the posts quickly move to unquestioned positions that expose the groups' values to criticism because of weak arguments.

Unquestioned posts illustrate the absolute glorification of a group's perceived control over political truth. Posters become so sure of the glorification that there is complete disregard of ensuring the posts make strong arguments that support the group's values. Moesby, a poster on

wizbangblog.com, said “so what if WB (waterboarding) is torture. We need to be doing more than that to get these bastards [SIC]. They’re animals anyways—they can afford to lose their souls” (Moesby wizbangblog.com October 31, 2007 3:25 PM). Moesby is so sure that his/her group controls the political truth surrounding the waterboarding issue that the poster disregards justifying his/her opinion. The Moesby post shows that posters inclinations to only consider the political ends as being important. In the context of the waterboarding case study the primary ends is to protect and maintain a group’s idealization. Interacting along a common argument to address the issue of waterboarding is not the norm. In the waterboarding case study the actual waterboarding issue is in most instances just a mechanism used to protect group idealizations and/or political identities.

From the results of the case study, all of the blog posters incrementally disregard justifying their positions as glorification of the groups’ control over truth increased. Most of the posts at the beginning of the blog forum, at a minimum, indirectly addressed their position and/or in some way justified their position. All of the blogs studied had indications that at some point a portion of the posters were not even attempting to justify their position. The results from the case study support an argument that processes operating within blogs lead posters of various groups to glorify their group’s perceived control of political truth. The incremental decline of posters’ justifying their positions is one element that indicates the glorification of political truth was operating in the waterboarding case study.

Structural Elements used to Glorify a perceived Control Over Political Truth

Analyzing the content of blog posts helps uncover the process of glorification. Robert Benford’s research is an example of how structural elements need to be incorporated into research, in order to have a more complex understanding of group glorification associated with

political framing (Benford 2000). A scoring system is one structural element that is used to glorify a group's control over political truth.¹⁸ On wizbangblog.com after lurkers/posters¹⁹ read blog posts they were able to select a rank that would be connected to the specific blog post. The ranking scale on wizbangblog.com had a negative and a positive score range.²⁰

After looking at the case study, it became clear that the wizbangblog.com scoring system functionally glorified one group's control of political truth over another. There are 68 posts on wizbangblog.com concerning the waterboarding issue during the case study.²¹ Of those 68 posts on wizbangblog.com, 25 individual posts were against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. 41 individual posts supported the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. The presence of both support and opposition for the waterboarding issue seems to indicate that multiple groups'/publics' are interacting on wizbangblog.com. It is assumed that the group that supports waterboarding is the more powerful group compared to the group that opposed waterboarding. This is a limited assumption that rests on the fact that the

¹⁸ Wizbangblog.com was the only blog included in the case study that had a scoring system. Although this leaves many comparison questions left unaddressed, it does not fundamentally affect the research. The wizbangblog.com scoring system shows that structural elements have an effect on the political idealization process. It is reasonable to suggest that evidence produced from the study indicates that structural elements contribute to the glorification of the group. There is no evidence to suggest that this structural element will not operate similarly in other blogs. For example, on the Daily Kos, a blog not included in the case study, a scoring system is used to prohibit ideological diversity. On the Daily Kos posters that continually receive low scores because of ideological divergence from the pages political goals will be erased from the board. An individual's account can even be terminated if a particular poster is found to be continually posting material that is counter to the pages ideological guidelines. The Daily Kos scoring system even more clearly operates in a way that alienates dissent and utilizes structural elements to glorify the group's control over political truth.

¹⁹ Concepts created by Richard Davis in Politics Online.

²⁰ It was unclear what the exact range for both the negative and positive ranges were. It seems that, at the time of the waterboarding discussion the scoring system was -25 to 25. The score was computed by taking the average of all the votes. However, since the case study wizbang has changed the scoring to a 1 to 5 scale.

²¹ Case study dates for wizbang.com: October 29, 2007 to November 13, 2007.

group that supports waterboarding was conceptualized as having more total posts. 25 out of 25 posts that took positions against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique all received a negative score. The 62 posts that are conceptualized as supported waterboarding as an interrogation technique all received a positive score. It was not clear whether the positive scores always correlated with the degree the post adheres to the understanding that the group is the arbitrator of truth. The scoring system can be interpreted as providing a means to glorify the more powerful group's perceived control over truth. The following excerpts illustrate a few examples of posts and how structural elements of blogs are used to glorify a group's perceived control of truth.

Post A:

“ ‘It is really torture, do it to me again’. (Reference to Democratic Underground poster who waterboarded themselves multiple times to have ability to speak first hand about waterboarding). Let me bring a half-inch hammer drill and some bits and show them what torture is. Bet they won't want a do over. We now have the most stupid population in the history of the world. Hey folks, it was designed as a training tactic and never harmed anyone. Get a life and don't let any politician that opposes using the tactic to get information that will save thousands of lives near our white house. Goodbye, McCain you whimpering back stabbing POS. The NVA broke him bad” (Scrapion wizbangblog.com October 29 9:17 PM)

Post B:

“Abuse of prisoners by any nation or organization to get information is both immoral, unethical and unreliable. A prisoner will often say anything to stop the abuse, leading to useless information. And abuse of prisoners reflects poorly on a society and only encourages abuse by other ruthless rival nations or organizations.

I know that my Palestinian prisoners began to feel some empathy with their Israeli captors and this mutual respect often results in an open dialogue of information. In hostage situations, captors often began to feel some empathy with their captors known as “The Stockholm Syndrome” and begin to share their feelings once fear levels have decreased. Many of these examples give better clues into gaining information in more humanitarian ways that is more likely accurate than information gained under prisoner abuse where any answer to avoid more pain is often the rule” (P. Paul Hooson, wizbangblog.com October 30, 2007 8:25AM)

Post C:

“The accuracy of information obtained from terrorist prisoners can be evaluated as reliable or not. However, as shown in Iraq, it has produced a lot of useful and actionable information that has led to many terrorist deaths.

Morality is an intangible point that should not be used in regards to interrogation techniques that can be considered abusive, but not meet the definition of torture. There is a hell of a lot of the USA that allows the many consider immoral and unethical, but that is not stopping liberals from allowing it and doing it. Think of abortion, the ultimate immoral/unethical abuse of unborn American life. If that is ok, waterboarding terrorism prisoners is ok...” (P. civildisobediace wizbangblog.com October 30, 2007 9:44 AM)

Post A is conceptualized as being in support of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. Post A references political issues that elicit an emotional response with the intention of attacking dissenters in a divisive and demeaning way. Post A received the highest score out of the 68 posts with a score of 11. The score is generated based on 17 posters’ casting votes.

Post B is conceptualized as a post that is against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. It is reasonable to interpret the post as being grounded in relatively well-articulated arguments based on reasonable historical understandings. Out of the 25 posts that opposed waterboarding as an interrogation technique, Post B made one of the clearest arguments. Post B received a score of – 12. The score for Post B is generated based on 16 votes by posters. The large point disparity between posts that support and oppose the use of waterboarding seem to indicate that the pro-waterboarding group used their numerical superiority to generate a lower rank for posts that challenged their perceived control over political truth. Post B is conceptualized as being a challenge to the group’s control of truth and was subsequently systematically rank with a low score.

The numerical point difference between Post A and Post B highlights how political truth is dependent on the group a poster identifies with. In the context of this blog, Post A is understood to be a rational argument based on the particular group bias. Post B is conceived as being opposed to the predominant group’s value and received the lowest score. However, the

individual scoring of each post is not important to take away from this interaction. It is crucial to acknowledge that in different circumstance both Post A and Post B could have received different scores. If Post B was posted on a board that attracted more posters opposed to waterboarding it would have likely been perceived as a powerful post and received a higher score. On the other hand, if Post A were included on a blog that attracted more subjects that were opposed to waterboarding, Post A would have likely received a low score. The structural elements of a scoring system are intended to highlight how they can be used to promote a group's perceived control over political truth.

Post C is conceptualized as a post that supports the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. Post A and Post C are both based on emotional arguments. Post C references "liberals" and compared the waterboarding issue to that of abortion, which in the United States is an extremely emotionally charged political issue.²² However, in Post C the argument is only indirectly connected to emotional political issues. The third post received a score of 7.

The operation of a scoring system illustrates how structural elements are used to promote the glorification of a group as hegemonic controller of truth. The process of connecting scores to political blog posts can severely limit debate and dialogue. The glorification of a group as arbitrator of truth limits the effectiveness of online debate. Group members and the opposition alike no longer address the arguments within posts. The positions and political stances are only

²² In the United States the "personal has become political." Personal issues are used in blogs to incite emotional political responses. Williams, Juliet A. (Mar., 2001). *The Personal Is Political: Thinking through the Clinton/Lewinsky/Starr Affair*. PS: Political Science and Politics Vol. 34 (1):93-98

thought of in terms of their numerical “power.”²³ The power of a position, in such a democratic system only accounts for how a post is scored. As scores are being conceived within a limited framework, the persuasive force behind complex political positions is reduced to numerical values or scores. This simple numeric representation overwhelms the complexity of political stances and political thought. Hence, the case study shows the idealization, as represented through the numeric values, is seen as the force behind the political argument.

Uncritical Support of Group Power

While posters glorify their group’s perceived control over truth, posters critical evaluation skills are severely weakened. At some point in the political idealization process, posters typically move towards uncritical support of their group’s power.²⁴ Based on the results of this case study, the transition between glorification and uncritical support occurs around the point a poster feels it is unnecessary to justify their positions and blog posts. Uncritical adoration of the groups perceived control over political truth can be identified by posters insistence on making various forms of “us” and “them” distinctions. This section outlines elements of waterboarding blogs that illustrate “us” and “them” distinctions and how they increase uncritical adoration of the group.

Uncritical adoration of the group’s power is manifested in many ways. In the circumstances of the case study, waterboarding blog posters are organized as either rejecting the

²³ The political power of the post is not based on strength of argument; it is formulated on the numerical value attached to the post.

²⁴ There has been a plethora of research that highlights how elements of political idealization affect political agents’ support for a position (Baldassori 2007; Benson 1996; Druckman 2001; Hill 1997).

values of a group or supporting the values of a group. The elements associated with uncritical support make it if a poster is challenging one group's values they must be supporting and protecting another group's values²⁵. The line between an individual identity and a shared group/political identity is quickly blurred. Political Subjects make public posts that protect idealized political values that are connected to their political identity. Individual posts begin to affirm other posters values. The individual values, represented in the blog post, begin to dissolve into the aggregate sum of all the poster's value[s]. Overtime the value that was originally shared changes and develops into a group value. The idealization is the aggregate sum of individuals' values molded into a single group idealization. This process severely weakens the complexity of the values and political positions. Individual posters are unable to identify that their original value[s] might be different then the group idealization. However, in the context of the waterboarding blogs, political agents embrace the connection to other political subjects. The model of democracy operating within online blogs privileges intensity and the amount of support from group members. Although values/political positions are reduced to a single group idealization, the presence of the group and the connection to other group members confirms the political identity of group members. In the context of the waterboarding blogs, the political affirmation associated with being connected to other group members is what is paramount. In some cases, otherwise irrelevant political subjects feel politically connected. By protecting the group's idealization, not only are the posters connecting their political identity to the group's idealization; but, they are connecting their political efficacy to protecting and supporting the group's idealization. This desires to maintain political identities connected to idealizations are suggestive of the oppressive nature of political idealization. These political actors are personally

²⁵ Druckman, Davis, and Wilhelm all suggest that elements online lead political agents to intensify their positions.

and emotionally invested in protecting these idealizations on blogs. However, there is very little indication that blog interactions limited to virtual/virtual publics regularly influence political outcomes.²⁶

Once a group identity is constructed, individual posters lose individual analytical skills. Uncritical adoration of the group's values, and the group's control of truth, quickly affect how bloggers' posts are understood. The posters and the group more generally do not allow for an element of viewpoint variance. The variance of understanding cannot exceed the range of support and move into something that could be understood as criticism.

If a post or poster is outside the accepted range of truth or provides qualified support of a group's value or understanding of truth, the post/poster is conceptualized as "other."²⁷ Once a poster or post is conceptualized as "other," the group understands the post or poster as a threat to the group and the group's values more generally. Preserving the group's identity, while maintaining the connection to idealization, is privileged over engaging in disagreement. The operation of political idealization and identity construction is based on stability. Attacks on the

²⁶ Brown understood groups to be "uneasy" relationships between horde animals, designed to overcome a shared problem. The case study and blogs indicates, that at least in terms of blog interactions individuals were easily connected to groups. This desire to be a part of a political group might be explained by acknowledging that blogs and other online forums might be perceived as "political" and Public space. Political agents that might have little political efficacy in the "physical", "real", or actual political realm are able to gain a sense of political efficacy by participating online. However, feelings of political efficacy might be just be perceived. Online political forums can be interpreted as being a political vacuum. The political subjects are only limited to the online virtual world. Online political efficacy does not always translate into real/physical world political efficacy. The need for some political agents to gain a sense of political efficacy online can be interpreted as a consequence of limited access and representation issue in "real-world", "physical" democratic processes. Future research might ask when or even whether the "virtual" political space can become and move into the "real-world", "physical" political space?

²⁷ Brown talks about the symbolic "Other" as way groups create distinctions that protect the idealization.

idealization, are attacks on the group's political identity. Challenges, dissent, and criticism represent instability that cannot be tolerated.

The main way groups combat uncritical support is by creating dichotomous categorizations. "Us" and "them" distinctions begin to organize the relationship between bloggers and blog posts. Based on the case study, all of the blogs that are included in the study are organized around "us" and "them/other" distinctions. The application of Brown's theory to the case study creates new understandings of the distinctions. In the context of the waterboarding case study the "us" is the poster's who give uncritical support to the values of the group. The "them" or "other" is the poster's who questions group values and/or other posters who are not conceptualized as being a member of the "us." However, it is important to understand that "us" and "them" distinctions quickly reverse depending on the particular group referenced. Therefore, the character of interactions within virtual publics can be understood as constantly changing depending on the specific context of a virtual public.

Political subjects make distinctions to protect idealizations and maintain the group's identity over time. The case study indicates that the space controlled by the various groups is more about making distinctions and protecting the dominant group's identity than anything else. However, in different circumstance the "other" can become the "us" and the "us" becomes the "other."

Techniques Used in the Case Study to Make Distinctions

The procedure for creating dichotomous relationships between posters is complex. Blog posters use four ways to create and allude to "us" and "them" distinctions in the case study.²⁸

²⁸ This research has identified four modes of creating "us" and "them" distinctions. This is in no way suggesting that in other circumstance there are and could be more than four modes of creating "us" and "them" distinctions.

The first technique posters use is the indirect post. Indirect posts vaguely reference how certain arguments are associated with the “other.” For purposes of this study these quotes will be known as indirect posts. Secondly, posters use direct reference to show how arguments are associated with the “other”. For purposes of this study these posts will be known as direct posts. The third technique posters use is the unquestioned post. Unquestioned posts, are characterized a being based on the assumption of correctness. Poster assume that their position/opinions are correct and do not critically evaluate their the persuasive content of their post. For the rest of the study these types of posts will be referred to as unquestioned posts. The final technique that posters use to make “us” and “them” distinctions is the hybrid post. Hybrid posts use a combination of extreme positions and indirect and/or direct reference to the “other.” The following section provides examples and analyzes each posting technique.

Indirect posts

One technique posters use to create “us” and “them” distinctions are the indirect reference to the symbolic “other.” Indirect posts, as opposed to direct posts only, hint, suggest or provide indirect connections to how a position is opposed to the “other”. Posters using the indirect posting technique might make references to the “other,” however the references to the “other” will not be connected to concrete political understandings. The connection between indirect quotes and the “other” must be inferred within the context of the blog. The following excerpt from thehuffingtonpost.com illustrates an example of how indirect posts are used to create dichotomous distinctions.

“In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence [sic] of the indefensible.
...
Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and cloudy vagueness. Defenceless[sic] villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the

roads with no more than they can carry: this is called transfer of population or rectification of frontiers. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the head or sent to die of scurvy in arctic lumber camps: this is called elimination of unreliable elements. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental picture of them. George Orwell” (Necron99 huffingtonpost.com November 4, 2008 1:40 PM).

This quote is interesting because it does not even mention elements of waterboarding, but is effective in providing readers an understanding of the poster’s position on the issue. Read within the context of the post, readers infer that the poster supports anti-waterboarding values. The clearest way that this post can be understood as an indirect post is the fact that the poster is citing George Orwell.²⁹ Referencing Orwell makes indirect references that connect the Bush administration anti-terrorism policies to Orwell’s literary depiction of “big brother”. Many commentators opposed to the Bush administration often try to connect Orwellian connotations to his policies. Whether it is true or not the reference to Orwell creates a divide between positions. By invoking the words of Orwell, the poster is showing his/her allegiance to the group and the group’s values that are connected around not supporting waterboarding.³⁰ The Orwell quote also simultaneously provides distance between the posters values and the symbolic “other” that the words are assumed to be describing.

Direct post

As opposed to indirect techniques, direct posts specifically connect understandings and political values to oppose the symbolic “other”. Direct posts tend to be more blatant, upfront, and

²⁹ George Orwell is a pseudonym for Eric Arthur Blair. Orwell was an esteemed novelist and social/political critic. Orwell is most noted for his novels Animal Farm and 1984. His depiction of “Big Brother” as an intruding government figure has become popular in some circles to criticize post 9/11 governmental policies.

³⁰ The word choice of “not supporting” is crucial to acknowledge. Instead of using opposed or some other word the expression of the idea was articulated as “not supporting.” The words “not supporting” can be interpreted as emphasizing how posters define themselves by what they are not. The previous post was designed to allow other readers to know that the poster was not supporting waterboarding.

combative in nature. Elements of anger often influence the presentation of direct posts. Based on the results of the case study, direct posts occur most frequently at the end of blog discussions. The evidence from the study seems to suggest direct posts are a result of anger combined with analytical fatigue and frustration. The following excerpt illustrates how direct posts are used to create “us” and “them” distinctions.

“I find it ironic that liberals are the ones taking flak for being “weak”. Yeah, cuz hiding under your covers is much more brave than fighting back” (Veeshir wizbang.com October 30, 2007 4:46 PM)

“And torturing people for information is definitely bravery, right? That’s why John McCain, George Washington, Dwight Eisenhower, and George Patton were against torture. They were gutless pussies. I distinctly remember Eisenhower hiding under his covers on D-Day and George Washington changing his mind so he could hook up Ben Franklin’s kite to some Red Coats genitals. Thanks for showing me the true meaning of courage. Ashamed” (P. Ashamed wizbang.com October 30, 2007 4:55 PM).

“Dude, I’m against torture too. I just have a different definition than you” (Veeshire October 30, 2007 4:56 PM).

“Dude, I’m against torture.... A definition that also differs from the one used by G. Washington, John McCain, Patton, Ike, the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremberg Commission, Amnesty International, Jesus, Pope John Paul, Mother Theresa, and every US president prior to Bush II, and soon and so forth.

People who agree with your definition Hitler, Pol Pot, the VC, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Saddam, Osama and the Taliban...

What you fine, heroic company you’ve [sic] cast your lot with. Good luck with that tell me how it works out for you.

Meanwhile, I will assume that if people in the US military who study torture call waterboarding torture, then their definition carries more weight than yours. You may have a different definition of what rain is, but that doesn’t mean your not pissing on my leg. Ashamed (P. ashamed October 30, 2007 5:07 PM).

The previous excerpt is a quality example of a direct post for a variety of reasons. First, throughout the interaction between Veeshire and Ashamed each poster directly connects a group value to their respective post in a way that is intended to challenge the opposing position.

Veeshire “hiding under your covers post” directly infers that his group’s values power and strength. Under this framework because the opposition does not support waterboarding they also

do not value power and strength. Veeshire's logic suggests that posters who do not revere power are opposed to his group's values.

Ashamed took a different approach when challenging Veeshire's post. Ashamed counters Veeshire's post by directly citing brave men who have throughout history opposed torture.³¹ Intentionally Ashamed couples Veeshire's position with historical figures that generally evoke images of evil, unethical behavior, and abuse of power. Ashamed's post supports other findings in the case study that indicate that posters primarily position arguments within "us" and "them" distinctions. Any disagreement about the group's values, move posters into the "them" categorization. In order to make distinctions, direct posts often rely on assumptions that are dependent on a poster's perspective. Using the example included above, the historical figures used to give force to the posts can only be interpreted correctly if a viewer shares the same historical and political understandings. One poster might think being associated with Al Gores as being a good thing other posters might despise any connections with the environmentalist.

The structure of the direct post is designed to situate the opposition's position outside the group's values. From this example, we see how by saying the opposition is connected to "Hitler, Pol Pot, the VC, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Saddam, Osama and the Taliban" the poster associates the opposition with general understandings of evil and the "other." If the opposition is connected to the "other" reciprocally his or her position must be correct because of its closeness to the group's

³¹ The fact that he only mentions men in his first quote suggests that the posts might be limited within a masculine-normative dialectical framework. Ashamed does mention a female in his second post however the rest of the examples are of men. Interesting feminist questions arise from the posts organization. The dialectical range might be limited in a way that certain approaches and topics become marginalized. It is difficult to develop a full feminist critique because the posts are anonymous. P. ashamed could very well be gendered as a female. Still even if P. ashamed is a female it raises interesting questions of why she only included masculine examples of bravery.

idealization. This posting technique insulates the group's political idealization from the "other" and all associated perceived "other" values.

Unquestioned post

The third technique posters use to create "us" and "them" distinctions is the unquestioned post. Unquestioned posts illustrate a radical position that supports a particular set of values that are perceived to be associated with a particular group. The techniques of unquestioned posts are used throughout blog discussions. Unquestioned posts seem to be used to obtain authority and respect from other members of the same group.³² The following excerpt is an example of an unquestioned post.

"Just kill them on the battlefield. Apparently, capturing the enemy...the ones who flew planes into our towers is tantamount to locking up MLK Jr. to these SOBs. At least that is how these liberals seem to portray poor little Khalid down in gitmo. You know Khalid, the one who gains weight and gets sick satisfaction seeing GIs gloving up to handle the "holy Quran".

I am so sick of this up side down world I am living in. The media and the left are frenzied about some mythical global warming BS and they kowtow to our enemies every needs and desires. The enemy doesn't need soldiers on the ground here in America (though they do and probably have lawyered up) they have the ACLU, Codepink, and the Democrat party doing everything and more than they ever dreamed. I say lefties go ahead and offer free room and board to one of these terrorists and lets see how long that lasts" (Jares wizbang.com November 6, 2007 9:28 PM).

This post is an interesting unquestioned post for many reasons. Firstly, Jares attempts to connect the posters who oppose his perceived values by connecting them to the suspected terrorists, suggesting that because the two groups do not share his values they must be the "other." Once a poster categorizes a position as "other" they are unable to distinguish how positions/values are different on a varying scale. In this case, Jares is unable to acknowledge that the values of suspected terrorists and those opposed to the use of waterboarding as an

³²This can be seen in the wizbangblog.com scoring system. Posts that adhered to the groups perceived values received the highest cores. Posts that were extreme in general were more likely to receive a positive score.

interrogation technique might be different. Obviously, there are likely to be differences in positions, but political idealization only allow Jares to identify values that adhere to his group's idealization compared to those values that do not. Secondly, Jares suggests the appropriate solution to the waterboarding issue is to "just kill them on the battlefield." This extreme position fails to even identify the basic ethical/political/social issues being discussed surrounding waterboarding. Thirdly, Jares's reference to "poor little Khalid" and distaste towards U.S. military personnel handling the Quran with respect, shows a high degree of cultural insensitivity that fundamentally limits serious discussion. Regardless, the cultural insensitivity is achieving the poster's purpose. By making an unquestioned post it is clear what values Jares wants to protect. There is little chance that this post or other subsequent posts made by Jares will be conceptualized as being opposed to the posters perceived group. There is little question Jares intent is to be conceptualized as a member of the "us" by doing everything possible to identify and distinguish the "other." The unquestioned post is highly effective in protecting the idealizations associated with the poster's individual and group identity.

Hybrid posts

The final technique that posters used to make "us" and "them" distinctions is a combination of direct and/or indirect posts that is coupled with an extreme position. Posts that encompass all of these elements are conceptualized as hybrid posts. Hybrid posts often begin by looking like a direct or indirect post but at some point move to an extreme position. The following excerpt illustrates the hybrid post.

"Our anti torture law is written in a very vague manner. Quite subjective. Nothing that causes permanent mental or Physical duress. To some loud music and sleep deprivation is torture, to others it's a college party. I don't consider pissing on the Koran torture, but Ahmed might. Simulated drowning doesn't seem like torture to me, but to you it does. Panties on the head sound great to me, but not to ahmed. It's not like we are doing this b/c we are bored, it's to get info that they wouldn't voluntarily give up to us. You lefties know what real torture is and we

don't do it. Nobody comes from our captivity physically harmed. We are at least letting them live. Uniformed enemy combatants deserve and would otherwise get death on the battlefield, but we would rather extract terror info from them and set them free" (tblrk2006 rightwingnews.com November 8, 2007 1:00 PM).

Throughout the case study many of the posts utilize multiple techniques to create "us" and "them" distinctions. The previous quote is a common way posters incorporate various techniques to create "us" and "them" distinctions. The reference to "pissing on the Quran" and alluding to "Ahmed" shows an element of cultural insensitivity that is suggestive of unquestioned posts. However, the reference to the "lefties" in this particular post directly cites an element of the "other" which is an element of direct posts. Hybrid posts are very common in all of the blogs studied.

"Us" and "them" distinctions play a crucial role in maintaining the group identity. Based on "us" and "them" distinctions groups define the "other" by what they are not. If a post/poster does not reflect the group's value categorically, then the post/poster is conceptualized as being "other". This analytical move contributes to the final element of political idealization. In order for political idealizations to crystallize, criticism of the group's values cannot be accepted. However, in order to protect the idealization the "other" needs to be isolated. This isolation/move to non-existence is the last element of political idealization. Analytical and structure processes are used to separate the idealization from the "other." Once group values become political idealizations challenges to those idealizations cannot be tolerated. Qualified support of the political idealization is not even tolerated. In order to protect the group's idealization groups begin to alienate all forms of dissent. The alienation of dissent is the final element of the political idealization process.

Alienation of Dissent

Once groups create “us” and “them” distinctions group values become crucial in maintaining group identities. Based on the glorification of the group’s control of truth and uncritical adoration of the group, values become political idealizations. Because there is a nexus between the political idealization and the group’s identity all challenges to the idealization must be externalized. The final element of political idealization is the alienation of dissent (Brown 2006). This section will outline three different ways that groups suppress/externalize dissent in the case study.

Negative References to the Perceived “other” as a Way to Externalize Dissent

The most common way dissent is suppressed is when posters negatively or derogatory reference perceived opposing positions. These types of posts usually reference common stereotypes about the opposing group. In some sense negative posts try to alienate dissent through satirical and exaggerated assumptions about the “other”. The following excerpts from the case study illustrate how poster’s attempt to remove opposing positions from serious political consideration. A poster of wizbangblog.com tried to move the opposition’s views to the “other” by suggesting the “torture” aspect for the moon bats is that it is too close to bathing...” (Mater Shake wizbangblog.com October 29, 2007 10:48 PM). The previous post has the intent of removing the opposition from the “normal” that is associated with the group and moving the “other” to the abnormal. By making the opposition abnormal within the context previously indicated, their political opinions are removed from the group’s consideration. By understanding the opposition as being abnormal this allows the poster to assume their group is normal.

Based on the case study there are forces that define the “normal” and the “abnormal”. Posters used abnormality in a way that attempts to challenge opposing views. However, the “normal” is defined by each group and is guided by the idealization. Again, the distinction between the “normal” and the “abnormal” allows groups to protect idealizations by separating the group from the “other”. Again, the constructions of dichotomous distinctions help preserve the group’s political idealization. Another interesting quote that eliminates opposing positions from serious political consideration follows:

“What I consider torture is listening to lefties justify their positions. Maybe we should send about three of them trolls on this board to Gauntanamo Bay to explain their political and life positions. The terrorists will be yelling for us to stop them. They will tell us all. WW. (WildWillie wizbang.com October 30, 2007 7:23 am).

The quote assumes that “lefties” are against the poster’s group values. Underlying this post is the assumption that “lefty” policies challenge the poster’s perceived group’s political idealization. Based on the “us” and “them” distinctions “lefties” are understood as the “other”. The fascinating element of this post is that Wild Willie categorizes the “lefties” within the same categorizations as the individuals contained in Gauntanamo Bay. It is counter to the assumption that suspected terrorists pose more of a threat to the group than the political opposition. Wild Willies suggests not even the prisoners (symbolic enemy) at Gauntanamo bay can tolerate “lefties.” By coupling the “Lefties” with the enemy, opposition opinions become associated with the “other.” Because the “lefties” are associated with the “other” the group externalizes the opposing position while insulating their own political idealization from criticism. The political opposition represents more of a threat to Wild Willies political identity/political idealization than suspected terrorists.

Ranking systems as a way to Externalize Dissent

On wizbangblog.com,³³ 25 posts out of 68 are against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique of suspected terrorists. 25 out of 25 posts that are opposed to the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique for suspected terrorists received negative scores. The scoring system on wizbangblog.com highlights how one group uses an arbitrary point system to de-legitimize posts/groups/publics that are seen as opposing the group's political idealization.³⁴ It seems reasonable to infer that the outcome of the scoring system on wizbangblog.com shows how a group's identity is constructed and relies on the preservation of the group's political idealization.

Use of Satire and Exaggeration to Externalize Dissent

The final example of how groups alienate dissent is through attacking opposing posts through the use of exaggeration and satire. This mode of alienation is common on all of the blogs in the case study. A common post of this sort includes exaggerated assumptions about the unethical, evil, or abnormal elements of the symbolic "other." Usually these types of posts occur when posters of different groups engage each other through blog posts. The following blog excerpt illustrates how posters used exaggeration and satire to alienate opposing dissent.

"Torture also produces a lot of disinformation because people will say what they think the torturer wants to hear even if it is false" (econmike huffpo.com November 1, 2007 1:27 PM).

"Absolutely! That is only ONE of the problems with torture. The ONLY reason to torture is to be sadistic and intimidate, not to get information. I bet there are recordings of torture that the folks that ordered the torture like to watch, just to get their jollies" (splashy huffpo.com November 1, 2007 9:42 PM).

"Actually torture is very effective at corroborating other testimonies. In other words, if you took three liberals and told them to hide their beloved signed copy of "An Inconvenient Truth" somewhere in the US, torture (more accurately coerced interrogation) would assuredly

³³ Wizbangblog.com is a conservative blog. In terms of the case study most of the posters on the blog supported the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique of suspected terrorists.

³⁴ There is little evidence to interpret the scoring system as being a reflection of the quality of the posts content. 25 out of 25 posts that were against the use of waterboarding received negative scores the study has interpreted this to mean that the scores were based more on viewpoint as opposed to strength and quality of argument.

cause them to reveal the location of their book no matter how resolved our progressive heroes wished to be” (TimN huffpo.com November 1, 2007 10:30PM).

The previous excerpt outlines an interaction between a pro- and anti- waterboarding posters. The satire and exaggeration used in this post is emblematic of the case study as a whole. In all of the blogs studied satire and exaggeration is employed to attack opposing positions. The post by Splashy is conceptualized as a post against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique. The references to the “sadistic” and “intimidation” elements of the opposition is used to protect the group’s idealization and confirm that the group is correct in perceiving the opposition as the “other.” The concluding reference to the notion that the opposition enjoys sitting around watching torture films to get their “jollies” conforms to the group’s idealization. This conclusion is based on the assertion that “other” really employs waterboarding for sadistic pleasure. The “jollies” reference also provides undertones that the opposition enjoys sexual perversions in private while denouncing non-confirming behavior in public.

As a counter to Splashy, TimN creates an exaggerated hyperbole using the same techniques Splashy used. Assuming TimN is male, his posts highlight certain elements of the opposition that elicit certain responses; but also protect his group’s idealization. The use of the story concerning the missing signed copy of “An Inconvenient Truth”³⁵ is suppose to highlight the effectiveness of torture. The story supports the pro-waterboarding position while protecting the group’s political idealization. Referring to “An Inconvenient Truth” evokes values associated with “liberal,” environmentalism and positions usually against the use of military force. By acknowledging the “liberal” values, TimN situates himself and his post within the accepted range

³⁵ “An Inconvenient Truth” is an award-winning documentary film about global warming. The presenter and narrator of the documentary is former vice-president Al Gore. Liberals and environmentalist alike used the film as focal point to raise environmental awareness. Conservative and climate change doubters viewed the film as “liberal propaganda.”

of his perceived group's idealization. Once the distinctions and loyalties are made the post is able to use the satire to push the opposing position beyond group consideration. By suggesting torture or "coerced interrogation" would work on liberals, the poster jests that it is also effective on suspected terrorists. More importantly, in regards to the process of political idealization, the move to couple the opposition with both the figurative and literal "other" removes the opposing position from group consideration; alienating any form of dissent.

Conclusion

The process of political idealization is operating within the waterboarding blog case study. Because the process associated with political idealization can operate below the threshold of conscious awareness, it is crucial that scholars develop appropriate descriptive theories to account for its presence. Political idealization has a significant impact on dialogues in the context of democratic processes. The cloud of political idealization can cast an oppressive fog over political interactions between political subjects. Instead of engaging the substance of political issues, processes associated with political idealization consume political subjects. Processes associated with political idealization are suggestive to the oppressive nature associated with protecting idealizations that are connected to individual/group identities.

Using Brown's ideas as a base, this chapter addressed processes of political idealization operating within virtual publics. The first section of this chapter outlined Brown's Tolerance Discourse, highlighting the process of the political idealization. The second section used Brown's ideas associated with political idealization to describe how elements of political idealization operated in the waterboarding blog case study. The second section was broken into a series to three additional sub-sections.

The first sub-section outlined the first element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. The process of how groups' glorify their control of truth was developed in the context of the waterboarding case study. Referencing opposing views and the use of structural elements was shown to be operating in the waterboarding case study and signal the first element of political idealization.

The second sub-section highlighted the second element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. Indirect, direct, extreme, and hybrid posts were shown to be an example of how uncritical support of group's power manifested itself in the waterboarding case study.

The third sub-section illustrated the processes associated with alienating dissent. Negative references to the "other," rank systems, and the use of satire and exaggeration was shown to contribute to the final element of political idealization in the waterboarding case study.

Chapter Three:

Mapping of Images used in Waterboarding Blogs

Scholars such as Jurgen Habermas, Nancy Fraser, Hannah Arendt, and Wendy Brown have written on a variety of issues that are in tension with effective democratic participation (Arendt 1959; Habermas 1998; 1989; Fraser 1992; Brown 2005). Besides studying elements of democratic process, recent academic research has documented the decline of democratic participation. A large amount of scholarly research has been devoted to understanding this decline. Scholars that have been documenting the decline of the democracy have also been providing plans to revitalize democratic values.³⁶ This chapter in no way attempts to account for any democratic revitalizations plans. This chapter's main purpose is to map the use of images in the waterboarding case study. Chapter Three uses Aaron Barlow's outline of the emergence of the "Celebrity Journalist" as the premise to provide a partial explanation of why some political subjects are looking to virtual publics to supplement news media. Section two provides elements of Hannah Arendt, Makail Bahktin, Micheal Gardiner, Tim Garvery, and Iris Young theoretical understandings to frame virtual publics as being image based "wild publics." To achieve this task this section is sub-divided into three additional divisions. The first sub-division addresses the theoretical basis for understandings virtual publics as "wild image based virtual publics." The second sub-division focuses on the theoretical understandings of virtual/virtual publics. The third sub-division outlines elements of individualistic political cultures. This outline helps understand how individualism contributes to the use of images in virtual publics.

³⁶ The following are just a few references that call for increased democracy: Benjamin R. Barber, *Strong Democracy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 267-311; Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, *Politicians Don't Pander* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Derek Bok, *The Trouble With Government* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001; Micheal Katz, *The Price of Citizenship* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001); Herbert Gans, *Middle American Individualism* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

Section three describes the CODEPINK video clip and Kaj Larsen's video clip in detail. Section four performs the textual analysis of the waterboarding video clips. Within the context of the whole chapter, section four uses the theoretical grounding constructed in section two to map how images are used and operate in the context of the video clips in the waterboarding blog case study.

General Outline of the Emergence of the "Celebrity Journalist"

Journalists and scholars generally suggest that there is a nexus between journalism, public information, and the decline of democratic citizenship. Anthony Lewis has suggested, "the theory of democracy is that of the citizens are the ultimate sovereign. But in today's world, individuals cannot personally observe events and reach decisions in a forum, as in ancient Athens. They necessarily depend on the press to be informed" (Lewis 1997, 62). As various forms of news media take on a different democratic identity, the Internet has been extolled as a possible democratic alternative. This section will not make any normative claims about the democratic potential of virtual publics and the Internet more generally. This section's main purpose is to outline Barlow's argument purporting to highlight how economic forces have led to the emergence of the "celebrity Journalist."

According to Barlow, before there was Murdoch and Time Warner, William Randolph Hearst was the first to profit from selling news. Hearst applied economic principles to the sales of news, forever changing the nature of journalism. In efforts to expand the pool of consumers, Hearst realized that the intellectual level of the news needed to be lowered. Hearst's framework spread news and current events to a larger population; however in doing so it reduced the

information complexity needed to engage democratic citizens (Barlow 2007, 85-87). In order to engage citizens in critical discussions, citizens need to have a minimum threshold of knowledge. The devolution of informational news intensified over the decades. The 1950s and at the introduction of news television marked the beginning of the end for informational news.

Barlow argues that in the early days of television, major networks maintained news shows as a matter of prestige. Edward R. Morrow³⁷ and Walter Cronkite³⁸ were televised with the intention of promoting the stations professional status (Barlow 2007, 121). As television became an established cultural feature, the profitability of news media blossomed. Television executives' began to change the format of news shows so that they could contribute to the networks bottom line. Barlow indicated that "by the 1990s readers knew, even if they were not able to verbalize it, that the news was now nothing more than a vehicle for advertising (Barlow 2007, 121). Barlow identifies the television news show "60 Minutes"³⁹ and the newspaper "USA Today"⁴⁰ as some of the first successful business models for selling news. Barlow's historical interpretation of the media suggest that once "60 Minutes" and "USA Today" had success making profits other news outlets were expected to do the same (Barlow 2007).

According to Barlow as profit expectations increased, television executives reduced and changed understandings of news content. Newspapers eliminated complicated stories almost all together. Events began to only be news worthy if they could be explained in a few paragraphs (Barlow 2007). Barlow cites one of the "innovations" employed by "USA Today" to attract more

³⁷ Morrow was a television and radio journalist, most commonly known for his unbiased approach to reporting of World War II.

³⁸ Cronkite was an American television broadcasting and the anchorman on the "CBS Evening News Show". During his heyday public opinion polls indicated that Cronkite was considered to be the "most trusted man in America".

³⁹ "60 Minutes" is an investigative news show run on CBS since 1968.

⁴⁰ "USA Today" is a daily national newspaper publication that began to be published in 1982.

customers “was to de-emphasize foreign news in favor of domestic news” (Barlow 2007, 124). Newspapers understood that they could attract more customers if news stories were easy to understand and familiar to the news consumer. Barlow’s argument rests on the premise that the news began to be conceptualized as a product that consumers wanted, rather than a public service that the democratic citizen required. As forms of media pushed for more profits, journalists themselves began to lose touch with the public’s needs.

Herbert Gans provides an alternative perspective that adds insight to Barlow’s understanding of the emergence of the “celebrity journalist.” Gans intuitively suggests that because of structural elements, the citizenry has become disempowered. Economic and political disempowerment has reduced the citizens’ political voice. Elements of citizens’ sovereignty and power has been transferred to groups that can successively organize. (Gans 2003, 9) Although Gans never explicitly states it, his scheme suggests that sovereignty is wrongly being removed from the citizen and transferred to major economic and political organizations. By combining Barlow’s and Gans’s models, a specific theory is supplemented by a more systemic understanding. The lack of citizen organization combined with the transfer of power to organized institutions can help explain the emergence of the “celebrity journalist.”

Even though structural inequalities reduce citizens’ voice the democratic identity of the journalism profession has changed over time. According to Klein and Burstein, news outlets began to intensify a focus on production value. Television news shows began to focus on the spectacle and entertainment value of current events (Klein and Burstein 2005). Barlow suggests the “celebrity journalist”⁴¹ quickly became privileged over traditional understandings of responsible journalism (Barlow 2007, 129). Barlow suggests that as a result of the emergence of

⁴¹ Celebrity Journalist is conceptualized by Aaron Barlow (Barlow 2007).

the celebrity journalist skills of research, articulation, and reporting are no longer their job. Standards of journalism have become seen as a medial task reserved for television producers (Barlow 2007). Barlow characterizes the celebrity journalists as emphasizing popularity, self-image, promotion, and ratings (Barlow 2007). Some of the transformative understandings of journalism can help explain news consumers' interest in image news.

News reporting has fundamentally changed because the standards of journalism have moved in a new direction. As a result of a possible a perceived or real decline and/or change in journalistic standards⁴² of both the print and news media, citizens seek information from alternative sources. Barlow seems to suggest that the increased popularity of blogs can be partially explained as a reaction to the “celebrity journalist” and the “commercial journalist” (Barlow 2007, 132). Technological advancements in the World Wide Web (www) provide a forum in which citizens can interpret news events. Even though Stephen Farnsworth and Robert Lichter suggest that more people are looking to the web to supplement their news intake understandings are still focused on how images and text are “framed” (Farnsworth 2003). News consumers are becoming more limited to understanding news that operates through the use of images, shock-values, and expressive understandings of political/social/cultural events operating within a virtual “wild public.”

Theoretical Construction of Virtual Publics and Images

The second section articulates a theoretical understanding of the interaction between virtual to virtual publics. Using a theoretical base constructed by elements of Hannah Arendt,

⁴² Assumes that the journalistic profession is understood as a public good that serves an important role in the democratic process.

Mikhail Bakhtin, Michael Gardiner, Iris Young, and Tim Garvey, virtual publics are conceptualized as image based “wild publics.” The purpose of this section is to explain the theoretical process associated with the development of image-based “wild publics.” In order to achieve this task this section is sub-divided into three additional divisions. The first sub-division addresses the theoretical basis for understanding virtual publics as “wild image-based publics.” The second sub-division focuses on the theoretical understanding of virtual/virtual publics. The third sub-division outlines elements of individualistic political cultures. This outline helps understand how individualism contributes to the use of images in virtual publics.

Hannah Arendt understands that once a political statement is expressed, the subject loses the ability to define its meaning after the statement enters public space (Arendt 1959). Language variations are what allow virtual publics to have the potential of influencing physical publics. According to Gardiner, once it is understood that public statements are continually being re-defined it becomes clear that all forms of public speech are “inherently value laden” (Gardiner 2004, 36). As a desperate attempt to control the meaning of public speech, content is always given a political slant. Political slant is one way virtual publics can gain the ability to interact with physical publics. Subjects utilize various language techniques to help guide meaning once speech enters a communicative space. Gardiner suggests that besides ideological one-sidedness, public speech utilizes “irony, selective paraphrase, parody and so forth...” in an attempt to guide the meaning of public statements (Gardiner 2004, 36). However, no matter how a person frames public statements, subjects will never be able to completely dictate their meaning. The fluidity of language helps explain how virtual publics are able to influence physical publics sometimes and other times not. Hypothetically, the meaning of language originating from a virtual public can have a significant impact on a political understanding across physical and virtual space. Publics

reach, interact, and overlap within and across both virtual and physical publics. The forms of interactions overlap between publics and influence the way political interaction occurs. The processes associated with the various forms of interactions need to be understood in a proper theoretical framework.

Mikhail Bakhtin suggests understanding the interactions within and in between publics as a “grotesque symposium of counter-views” (Bakhtin 1993). In order to encapsulate the processes of how virtual publics relate to physical publics, theories are required to embrace complexity. A more chaotic understanding of the public sphere allows scholars to understand the systematic power structures operating within both virtual and physical publics. Increased participation by marginalized groups in virtual publics has the potential to challenge normalized modes of political action within physical publics.

Nancy Fraser’s research implies that the mere presence of marginalized groups influences power relations between the dominant and the dominated (Fraser 1992; 2003). The presences of virtual publics create conditions that apply pressure on traditional dominant physical publics. The development of political information and components of political debate within virtual publics can be seen as challenging physical publics. Physical publics no longer operate in a sphere of complete hegemonic control. Although physical publics are often the dominant public they now are in a situation where they need to at least acknowledge the presence of virtual publics. It is theoretically possible to envision a situation where virtual publics can be organized above physical publics. The superior relationship of a virtual public might be seen within a specific technology field or some subject matter that privileges virtual interactions over physical public interactions. What is crucial to understand about virtual/physical or physical/virtual interaction is that the two publics are interacting across real and virtual space. One public, either

(physical/virtual) can be understood as guiding the dominant interactions while the other publics (virtual/physical) are supplementing the interaction.

Virtual publics often employ forms of ideological slant to challenge more dominant publics. Michael Gardiner correctly critiques Habermas's desire to remove "hidden agendas" from communicative space (Gardiner 2004). Eliminating "hidden agendas" only handicaps marginalized groups by dictating pre-established norms and standards to participate in the interaction. In normal physical public sphere conditions, dominated publics do not have enough political power to enter the political discussion. T. Garvey and Michael Gardiner understand that by incorporating ideological slant into public statements, marginalized groups have more leverage to challenge the dominant publics norms of participation (Gardiner 2004; Garvey 2000). Understood from another theoretical perspective Michel de Certeau suggests that dialectic strategies and subsequent challenges to those strategies (tactics) can empower marginalized groups (de Certeau 1998). A significant element of virtual publics is their perceived ability to challenge dominant publics, within both virtual and physical communicative spaces.

Dominated publics can use language and ideological slant to challenge dominate publics within the physical and/or virtual publics. Young perceptively conceptualizes the relationship between dominant and dominated publics as being identified as "wild publics" (Young 1987). Gardiner correctly argues that within wild publics, "existing social hierarchies were [are] often questioned and subverted through carnivalesque strategies of remarkable variety and invention, including the use of parody and satirical language, grotesque humor, and symbolic degradations and inversions"(Gardiner 2004, 38). The use of different forms of language can be seen throughout the public sphere by dominated publics. Virtual publics regularly interacting with physical publics across virtual and physical space seems to be a reasonable normative goal.

However, interaction between virtual/physical publics is often limited and only seen in rare instances.

Theoretical understanding of virtual publics relating to virtual publics

Young's understanding of "wild publics" combined with Bakhtin's "grotesque symposium of language" creates a very complex understanding of the public sphere. Under previous assumptions it is important to understand how knowledge operates in the context of "wild publics" employing various forms of language. This section develops a general theoretical basis for how understandings of truth and knowledge operate within virtual publics.

Within the context of virtual publics understandings of knowledge and truth are constructed through a series of social interactions and historical understandings. From a social and historical perspective ideals and norms develop and subsequently guide public speech. Knowledge and political truth are extremely difficult concepts to define. However, in a very limited and general sense, knowledge and truth operating in virtual publics can be understood as a product of social interaction, historical development of various understandings, and competition. Subjects participating in virtual publics develop understandings of knowledge and truth through competition, compromise, and shared interactions. These competitions and subsequent negotiations of knowledge and truth are grounded in a historical context. De Ceteau's understandings of "strategies" help inform Crossley's explanation of how through social interaction, a series of norms and strategies of participation, connected to understandings of knowledge and truth emerged within publics (Crossley 2002; de Certeau 1984).

Although norms of participation developed within virtual publics these norms are often laden with power. Using de Certeau to inform this process, some groups are able to influence interactions and use coercive force to develop “strategies of culture/participation” (de Certeau 1984). Interactions between subjects develop participation norms that quickly move away from objectivity. According to Crossley subjects from dominant publics in the social/political arena quickly move to create norms that advance ideological outcomes (Crossley 2004).

Knowledge formation and norm production often determine how virtual publics operate. Groups of individuals are connected based on norms of participation and values. The norms of participation are an element of governmentality that protects group idealizations and ultimately the individuals’ political identity.

Norms established by dominant publics quickly lead to marginalized subjects branching out and developing around specific issues. Multiple publics interact and position themselves against other publics within a larger virtual and physical communicative space. Publics position themselves to be in conflict with each other or multiple publics can overlap and share a common dialogue and understanding of knowledge and truth. In some situations some publics are limited to operating within their specific category. Publics are created around particular issues and even subjects’ reactions to other publics. The variations in which publics can be organized are almost infinite. Although virtual publics can be interacting based on a topic produced from physical publics the interactions are limited to virtual/virtual publics. The interactions usually do not reach across virtual space back into physical space. The political value of these publics is extremely low because processes of knowledge formation and norm production are affected largely by structural elements inherent with virtual publics. Knowledge, truth, and norms of participation can partially be explained by how images operate within virtual publics.

Virtual publics connecting to virtual publics are in some ways, the functional reality of online communicative space. Virtual publics require only moderate levels of political efficacy and social capital to participate. Based on Richard Davis's study, it is reasonable to infer that many of the virtual public's participants are generally unable to participate in physical publics (Davis 2005). However, it is important to recognize that participation in virtual publics does not preclude a political subject from participating in other virtual and/or physical publics. Political subjects can participate in physical publics in some situations but also be limited to participating in virtual publics in others. Furthermore, it is important to understand that elements of physical publics can influence virtual publics but interactions are still limited to virtual/virtual publics. For example in the case study virtual/virtual publics are motivated to address elements of physical publics but these interactions are limited to virtual/virtual publics. Virtual/virtual publics' interactions are only one part contributing to the focus on images. Increasing individualistic political cultures also contributes to the focus on images.

Individualistic Political Culture

Individualism has developed in a way that has a major impact on the political culture of the United States. Understandings of political behavior and lifestyles have become more inward looking. In an attempt to understand the relationship between individualism and social inequality, this research relies on Adrie Kusserow's conceptualization of growing forms of individualism, operating at different levels of social structure.⁴³ What is important about

⁴³ Hard Individualism is associated with lower classes. Kusserow suggested that hard individualism "were parts of stories of struggle...Independence and self-reliance were spoken about with a great deal of pride and bitterness, fueled by anger and resentment against "the

Kusserow's research is not that American parents are individualistic, but they are instilling individualistic values into their children. During an interview one of the respondents that Kusserow talked with poignantly illustrated how individualist parents are raising their children to instill different forms of individualism. The cited excerpt follows:

When I asked her [mother/respondent] to pick three characteristics she'd like her child to have as an adult, she said 'independence, definitely' and gets along well with others, self-confidence, and self-reliance. I asked her if independence was really so important: 'Absolutely, definitely 'cause other people are gonna let you down, and it's a burden to other people if you can't do it yourself, and people will start main' you feel like you owe them things, or are obligated to them if your're always relying on them. You really need to be able to rely on yourself or else you're in big trouble in the real world" (Kusserow 2004, 69).⁴⁴

Kusserow's anthropological study of how individualism operates at different class levels in the United States has direct connections in helping understand why public interactions within virtual and physical publics might not be meeting the suggested potential. Across class, Kusserow's study suggests that more Americans were raised and are being raised to appreciate some form of individualism. It is easy to see how these attitudes of self-reliance, self-interest, and individual autonomy can bubble over into the political culture. In an individualistic political culture public matters can quickly succumb to the collective action problem. As the American trend of individualism increases, Delli Carpini and S. Keeter argue that political agents are spending less time participating politically, acting politically, and learning about politics (Carpini and Keeter 1996). Americans are focusing attention inward and have less connection to the public. A plethora of research illustrates how growing portions of the neo-liberal capitalist

system", the violent environment, or a difficult past or person that the parent has been disappointed by" (Kusserow 2004, 57). Soft individualism is associated with higher classes. Kusserow suggested that soft individualism "was thus less of a toughening against harsh environments; rather, it was tied to ensuring that the child opened out into the world, into a successful career (Kusserow 2004, 82).

⁴⁴ The excerpt is from family of lower class. Other classes had similar attitudes about individualism. However, the interviews suggest that the type of individualism that is applied to children is different based upon social class.

cultures are constructing their identity around different elements of individualism. Various conceptions of individualism and political apathy directly affect all forms of publics. Since more and more political subjects do not have the political information, the time, or real desire to effectively deliberate, political interactions and responses are guided by political cues, images, and idealizations.

In modern societies, political issues are usually complex and involve intricate disputes about allocations of power and/or resources. However, many workers in the horizontal work force do not easily conceptualize complex political debates that are intertwined in the political process. Besides the proliferation of a horizontal labor force, another major cultural change is that more workers are spending more time working. Richard Florida suggests that between 1965 and 1995, “free time [generally] increased by more than six hours, from 34.8 to 41 hours per week on average, Americans today have roughly as much free time as they work (Florida 2002, 146). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), “People in professional, technical, and managerial occupations were more likely to work “long work weeks of 49 hours or more” (Florida 2002, 146). Besides working more hours, Robinson and Godby suggest, members of the professional fields are more likely to feel stress and time pressure” (Robinson and Godby, 338-41).⁴⁵

Longer workweeks combined with feelings of stress and time restraints have dramatic effects on the political culture in the United States. Over worked, over stressed and time pressed workers seem likely to have less motivation to add additional time consuming stresses to their

⁴⁵ Florida’s research only encompasses jobs that fit within his conceptualization of “creative” jobs. Florida makes many suspect assertions surrounding his notion of the “creative class”. His claims might not be generalizable to all classes.

lives. Complex political issues are becoming an after thought for most Americans. A growing segment of the population is choosing not to spend their free time dealing with political matters.

Interaction based on forms of spectacle, shock, and images are designed to fit within the rushed and hurried lives of most people living in the United States. This case study looks at how media within specifically virtual publics is contributing to an increased focus on images. The emerging American culture is relying more heavily on media to “facilitate” the democratic process. Images become emblematic of political dialogues. Political dialogues become emblematic of images. Images and symbolic rhetoric dominate political understandings. The image becomes the political argument. Political interactions have begun to emphasize images and subsequent responses to those images. Virilio provides an interesting example of these types of image-based interactions in the following excerpt:

“From that moment, whoever says nothing consents to cede their ‘right to remain silent’, their freedom to listen, to a noise-maker process that stimulates oral expression or conversation.

But did anyone in the past ever fret about the very participate silence of the visible, best exemplified by the pictorial or sculptural image? Think of what August Wilhelm Schlegel once wrote about Raphael’s *Dresden Madonna* ‘the effect is so immediate that no words spring to mind. Besides, what use are words in the face of what itself with such luminous obviousness?’ (Virilio, 41-42).

As the Virilio excerpt illustrates so succinctly, political interactions have been reduced to a series images, emotions, and political feelings produced by forms of obvious spectacles.

Political subjects focus on finding symbolic images that produce the “right” feelings. Media of all ideological slants like blogs, youtube.com, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC, and many others impress images upon political subjects. Dr. Van Hagen is correct when he referred to “The World of Bodies” exhibition as being “about breaking the last taboos” (Virilio 2000, 22).

Political subjects understand interactions based on associated images. The previous excerpts

capture the move towards associating political ideas, events, and understandings to various forms of images.

Although new forms of media suggest traditional elements of interaction they are still subverted by the presence of image/expressive/impression interactions. Hans Enzensberger correctly suggests, “media...does not serve communication but prevents it. It allows no reciprocal action between transition and receiver, technically speaking it reduces feedback to lowest point capable with the system” (Enzensberger 1974, 97). When studying political communication and media it is crucial to acknowledge the mode of delivery. Physical dimensions, physical location, type of technology all play a role in understanding the message. Baudrillard goes as far to suggest that the “medium is the message” (Baudrillard 1981, 172). When Baudrillard suggests the medium is the message he encourages political subjects to think how the political message relates to the delivery system. However, when interactions are based on a series of images and spectacles the internal structures of virtual publics can be dominated by their presence. Political ideas are impressed through the exposure of series of images.

Enzensberger highlights the importance of acknowledging the structural elements associated with delivery media messages in the following excerpt:

“Every transistor radio is, by the nature of its construction, at the same time a potential transmitter: it can interact with their receivers by circuit reversal. The development from a mere distribution medium to a communications medium is technically not a problem. It is concisely prevented for understandable political reasons. The technical distinction between receivers and transmitters reflects the social division of labor into producers...” (Enzensberger 1974, 97).

Media operates in an asymmetrical power structure and is often oppressive. Even when mediums are presented as being interactive, are they really? When a medium forces information only one-way are people experiencing the media actually participating in an open process? Friedrich Kittler understands that the mode and delivery of media are directly connected to

meaning (Kittler 1986). Stephen Farnsworth and Robert Litcher go one step further and provide empirical research that indicates that most mediums have an element of impression that determines and frames political issues around political agents (Farnsworth and Litcher 2003).

Enzensberger is skeptical of an Orwellian government spying on its citizens because he sees no need; he feels that the populace is controlled through the media. Baudrillard uses Enzenberg's logic to argue that "there is no need to imagine it as a state periscope spying on everyone's private life-the situation as it stands is more efficient than that: it is the certainty that people are no longer speaking to each other, that they are definitively isolated in the face of speech without response" (Baudrillard 1981, 172). Drawing from ideas of Baudrillard and Enzensberger it is evident that notions of impression/expression create interactions that are based on images. Political agents are drawn to "democratic technologies" but fail to question how images are used within political interactions.

Description of Video Clips

Interactions on blogs are grounded in flash images connected to political ideas. The first video clip used as a basis for online posts was used on a self-proclaimed conservative blog entitled "Right Wing News."⁴⁶ The blog provides a series of video clips posted on other blogs that show images associated with waterboarding. One video clip is a waterboarding protest and the second clip is a video that is presented as being an informational video on waterboarding.

⁴⁶ According to "rightwingnews.com" the site is the "best source on the net for conservative news, views, and interviews."

This section describes the videos in detail to frame the mapping of how images are used and operate within the waterboarding blog case study.

The first link entitled “Code Pink” directs visitors of “Right Wing News” to a new blog entitled “hotair.com”. The video clip is entitled “Video: Pinkos Water board Some Poor Schlep while Diane Feinstein Walks by.”⁴⁷ The opening screen has four women clad in pink, holding up a pink sign that says, “Waterboarding is Torture Code Pink Alert”. The group is in an expansive pavilion by a large corporate building. As the film rolls, a voice is heard that explains the purpose of the group. A women’s voice explains that the group is waiting in the pavilion to direct their protest towards Senator Diane Feinstein. As the woman finishes talking the image cuts away to a man that is bound, blindfolded and screaming in pain. The agonizing screams become muffled, as a second man pours water over the bound man’s face and nose. As the man’s screams of pain are gurgled by the water, the women’s voice comes on again and explains that the group wants to tell “her [Diane Feinstein] that they want her not to vote for any person that cannot say waterboarding is torture. We [they] want to restore integrity to the Department of Justice, which seems to be in shambles. We are going for Schumer’s and Feinstein’s vote.” After the women finishes the previous sentence the audio in the clip becomes distorted and the image shows that the pavilion the group is in is by a “CNN” building. The cameras pans down from the “CNN” sign on the side of the building, to a shot of Diane Feinstein walking towards the building and a cameraperson.

As Feinstein approaches the building the group breaks up into two contingents. One group stays in the original position where the waterboarding is staged. The second group moves towards Feinstein. As the second group of protesters approaches Feinstein, it becomes apparent

⁴⁷ “Video: Code Pinkos Water board Some Poor Schlep while Diane Feinstein walks by” Available <http://hotair.com/archives/2007/11/07>. November 14, 2007

that she is uncomfortable. As the group chants, “change your mind” Feinstein is overcome by the situation and actually uncomfortably puts her arm around one of the protesters. The group begins to chant, “waterboarding is torture” while two women, ask Feinstein to stop and answer a few questions. Feinstein declines to answer any questions and begins to walk away. The group is persistent and follows Feinstein.

As Feinstein passes the waterboarding staging her attention is drawn to the struggling man. As the chanting grows in intensity, “ waterboarding is torture! Waterboarding is torture!” the man screams in pain as water is poured over his head that is now covered by a t-shirt. As Feinstein passes the tied up man, the screams intensify. The group’s chants increase incrementally while the bound individual screams create a poignant image of struggle, pain, and anxiety. Once Feinstein passes the waterboarding area the camera angle quickly changes.

The viewer can no longer hear the screams of the bound man, but can hear and see two women telling things to Feinstein. One woman tells Feinstein that “Amnesty International says that he [Mukasey] should not be confirmed” while another woman says that “Californians know waterboarding is torture, the people of California do not want Mukasey.” The voices are muffled as multiple women are talking at the same time. Feinstein seems uncomfortable and is unresponsive to the protesters’ statements or questions. As Feinstein reaches the entrance and the glass door is locked, Feinstein’s assistant quickly waves to someone on the inside to open the door. As they wait for the door to be opened, Feinstein looks to the women one last time. One woman says that she “lives on Irving Street and is a constituent.” The other woman says, “We are all counting on you.” At this time you can see a man quickly coming to the door. The door is unlocked and Feinstein gives one last hesitant smile and waves as she enters the building. As the

door closes, one woman clearly and calmly says “Human rights... rule of law.” The door closes and the women congratulate each other and begin to walk away from the building.

The video then shows the women standing by the building and zooms close to the window. As the camera zooms closer to the window, Feinstein’s image emerges through the tint of the dark window. It becomes apparent that Feinstein is giving some type of television address inside the building. As the video pans away from the window a woman holding a mega-phone begins to squawk, “Diane we need you to stand up for our reputation around the world. We do not need another Attorney General who believes it is all right to torture. Then there is a thundering boom as all the protestors begin to chant and yell “no for Mukasey is no for torture.” As the yells increase the video cuts to Feinstein giving her speech through the glass. The video viewer can see Feinstein talking but assumes the thick window prevents Feinstein from hearing the protestors. The glass of the building separates the cameraperson and Feinstein while the audio is overwhelmed by the yells of the protestors. “NO FOR MUKSAY NO FOR TORTURE! NO FOR MUSKAY NO FOR TORTURE!” The chant goes for three to five seconds and the video abruptly is cut. This portion of the video is a dramatic image of Feinstein representing the obstacle and the chants for no torture as the means to overcome that obstacle. The video producer might have been trying to symbolize the distance between the needs and wants of some citizens and how they differ from perceived needs and wants of some elected representatives. The screen goes black for a brief moment and picks up with one of the women saying, “Here she comes let’s go!” The women and the cameraperson run from the original position to behind the building.

At this new position the cameraperson shows a few protestors holding up signs. In the distant background there is an industrial garage door that is at the end of a long alleyway. The

door begins to rise and a black limousine appears. The camera angle shows the protestors holding signs and chanting “No for Mukasey No for torture! No for Mukasey No for torture!” while the limousine moves down the alley towards the protestors and the street. The car briefly pauses while a few protestors holding the original sign, mentioned earlier, move away from the vehicle. As the limousine passes the video viewers see Feinstein in the front seat looking straight ahead and avoiding eye contact with the protestors and cameraperson. Again, the producer of the video uses a sharp camera angle to emphasis perceived distance between the state decisions (Feinstein) and the governed desires or at least some of the citizens’ desires (protestors). As the driver accelerates away from the people one women’s voice raises above the clamor and says “listen to the people” as to add a nice touch to the production value of the protest. The video then cuts to the man that was bound and having water poured over his face. In this clip the man is dejected and whimpers quietly. The man’s whimpers provide a dramatic background for a woman’s voice to say, “waterboarding is definitely torture...DIAAANE!” The video then cuts to a screen that has two websites [www.dontbuybushswar.com] and [[codepinkalert](http://codepinkalert.org)] with an image of a shopping cart engulfed in flames. Next to the image the words say “Don’t Buy Bush’s War.” This final scene solidifies the tactic of the video producers to challenge the Mukasey appointment. Throughout the video the producer creates images that suggest inconsistencies with the wants of “the people” (even though the producers conception of the people might be limits to just those opposed to waterboarding/Mukasey Confirmation) wants and the government wants. The theme of separation and distance, which is suggestive of a lack of dialogue, is the main theme of the video (Hotair.com November 6, 2007).

After viewing the video clip, viewers began to post responses to the video on hotair.com. Posters quickly began to make posts about the CODEPINK video however, on

rightwingnews.com visitors were also encouraged to view a second video clip. A significant amount of the blog posts will be discussed after the second video is described. The second video attempts to provide an unbiased understanding of the waterboarding issue, but ultimately claims that the practice is torture. The link that was provided was entitled “Huffpo.”⁴⁸ When the viewers of the blog clicked on the link they were redirected to the online column of Kaj Larsen. The title of the post was a column entitled “A lesson for Mukasey: why I had myself water boarded.” A little text is provided that frames the video and by scrolling to the bottom of the page viewers can see that 274 people responded to the video⁴⁹.

The link opens a video clip that starts off with an intense 30-second introduction that includes flashing symbols, lights and noises that ends with the words “Controversial Subject.” The video continues with an artistic flashing of darkened articles that are sequentially illuminated and unfolded to show their titles. The article titles range from “Army to use Geneva Rules for Detainees,” “Outmoded interrogation Tactics Cited,” and “CIA can still get Tough on Detainees.” However, after the flashy introduction the following words are shown on the blackened screen, as a powerful drum emanates from the video: “The US has been accused of using waterboarding as a interrogation technique. Waterboarding is considered a form of torture by the internationally recognized Geneva Conventions.” The screen fades and then more words appear. “According to a 2002 memorandum from the US Attorney General, Coercive interrogation – such as waterboarding – is not “torture” because it “must be equivalent in intensity and pain accompanying serious physical injury such as organ failure...”

⁴⁸ “A Lesson for Mukasey: Why I had Myself Water-boarded”. www.huffingtonpost.com/_70651.html. November 14, 2007.

⁴⁹ As of November 9, 2007

The drum beat stops and a new image is shown of Kaj Larsen sitting on a rough iron fence explaining the details of the why he is going to be waterboarded. Larson provided basic details about waterboarding and claims that he is going to be waterboarded to “illustrate the types of techniques used to integrate terrorist suspects.” Larson also states that his purpose behind being waterboarded is to get waterboarding in the “court of public opinion.” As Larson frames the issue of waterboarding, the camera pans across the corners of an urban residential area, as to show that this issue affects all citizens. Larson frames the waterboarding issue a tension between the need for accurate information to fight terrorism and the need to act with the moral obligations of war. Larson says that he paid \$800 to former Army SERE⁵⁰ school instructors, in his words to “torture” him. As Larson gets up and moves away he turns around to the camera and says the following: “hey Mitch can you do me one more favor, can you just ask Mike if he knows where the nearest hospital is, sort of mission safety and [where] the route to the hospital [is], to be perfectly safe...just in case anything goes wrong.” This puts an eerie feeling in the viewer and provides hints on how the video might not truly be unbiased. Clearly, if he is concerned with the safety of the technique Larson must have some preconceived moral understandings of the technique.

The dramatic drum beat picks up again and Larsen is shown being led into a dark basement blindfolded and hands tied behind his back. A burly man dressed in fatigues, leads Larsen down the basement stairs. While the waterboarding process starts the video cuts back and forth to Larsen and a man explaining how waterboarding works. The man that explains the process is dressed in a black urban battle dress uniform (BDU). After the explanation is over, the video cuts to Larsen being tied down to an apparatus that raises his feet slightly above his head.

⁵⁰ Military Acronym meaning the following: Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape.

Once shackled to the wedge-shaped table, a wet rag is forced into his mouth. The two men begin to pour water over Larsen's face and body. Larsen struggles and there are clear sounds of deep gasping breaths, dripping water, and the clang of small tin bowl used to pour the water over Larsen. The struggle lasts for about 40 seconds and then the rag is removed from Larsen's mouth. Once the rag is removed the screen splits into two separate pictures. One screen continues to show the waterboarding process while the other shows a series of interviews.

The first interview is with Harvard Law Professor, Alan Dershowitz. Dershowitz suggests that if torture is going to happen empirically, regardless of its morality there needs to be mechanisms of accountability. During the interview Dershowitz suggests that the president should have to sign a "torture warrant." While the professor discussed his proposed torture warrant plan and the need for "accountability" the second screen shows Larsen struggling for air while the two men continue to pour water over his face and shove the wet rag over his nose and mouth.

After the previous scene, the video continues with Larsen interviewing a series of people who are presented as representing both sides of the waterboarding issue. One interviewee is of specific interest to this study. Professor Juliette Kayyem, Harvard School of Government, makes some insightful comments regarding the nature of the torture discussion. Kaygem argues, "The president and the Legislative is unwilling to create a new legal regime to deal with terrorists. On the one hand they say the Geneva Conventions do not apply but they do not put anything in its place...People just debate words like torture or cruel and degrading treatments. No one is specifically addressing what constitutes torture or mechanisms we ought to do. I think we need to have a debate about whether specific tactics ought to be allowed instead of debating these words

like torture. Everyone is against torture.” Interestingly, the subsequent blog posts on this video do not heed to Kaygem’s recommendations.

At the end of the video it is indicated that after 24 minutes the producers tell the interrogators to stop. The producers then ask the wet, congested and nasal sounding Larsen questions about his waterboarding experience. The series of questions make it clear that the waterboarding experience was not pleasant. Larsen also says that even though the waterboarding took place in a controlled environment he was psychologically distressed and did not feel in control. The final segment focused on Larsen’s weakened state, as a way to support his final assertion that waterboarding is a form of torture.

Theoretical Construction of Images Mapped in the Case Study

These two video clips are the basis for many of the blogs posts in the case study. This section identifies select portions of the video clips that illustrate how blog posts within the case study use and relate to images. This section maps how images are used in virtual publics and how images used in virtual publics are in some ways suggestive of oppressive situations.

A common theme among posters who support the practice of waterboarding, is to argue that the practice of waterboarding must not be considered torture if journalists are deciding to have it done to themselves. The following is a series of posts that illustrate how posters discuss images of waterboarding without identifying the significant political issues:

“I could care less if it is torture.

We are at war and last time I checked, and since the bad guys want us dead I would like to know the wheres, the hows, and the whos. If it takes waterboarding or an electric pike up their ass, Rosie O'Donnell, to get them to talk then by in large feel free!" (Corporate_Cabanna rightwingnews.com November 8, 2007 9:54 AM)

"I'm not saying it is or is not torture, but....

Have any of you ever been 'water boarded'? If not you have no idea what you are talking about, when you casually dismiss it. Be a man has it done to you then talk about it. Otherwise you argue from a point of ignorance. (BritCrit rightwingnews.com 10:16 AM)

"Good call, John Hawkins. I've thought the same thing myself for a long time. If waterboarding what really such a horrible form of torture, journalists wouldn't line up like kids at Disney land to ride and "experience it.

You do not see any journalists lining up to have their eyelids cut off, or to be buried in the sand up to their neck next to an anthill, or have their fingernails and teeth removed with a set of pillars.

Maybe it is because those types of treatment really are torture, while waterboarding is just a little meaner than usual" (President_Friedman rightwingnews.com November 8, 2007 12:37 PM)

The previous excerpt has many common elements that present themselves throughout the blog posts. The excerpt is framed around the video clip as images of torture and images not of torture. The passage shows how posters spend little time supporting or basing points with reasoned arguments or evidence. Posters that believe waterboarding is not torture primarily support their argument by evoking images from the video clips and argue that the clips do not look like torture, hence is not torture. This type of argument does not acknowledge that waterboarding still can be a form of torture even if people chose to experience the technique or the video does not evoke images associated with torture.

By framing the posts for waterboarding by citing emotional responses to the video clips, those who are against the use of waterboarding as an interrogation technique have to explain why the image did not evoke a feeling associated with witnessing torture. The pro-waterboarding posters argued that based on the image portrayed on the video waterboarding must not be torture. For example, a post made by extremewing on rightwingnews.com suggests that the

waterboarding image does not create images of torture. In reference to the video clip being an image of torture extremewing says, “Fuck no, in some cases maybe abuse. But get real, a naked pyramid, a female pointing at a guys’ wang and laughing, tying a guy to his bed, someone with panties on their head. Shit man a lot of that stuff goes on at college frat houses, I don’t hear of anyone being arrested for torturing there.” Extremewing tries to justify waterboarding as something similar, but not worse than student hazing. Extremewing attempts to shape the image of waterboarding to be interpreted and reduced to other images that do not generate feelings of torture. The post is a common example of the political instrumentality of modifying interpretations of images.

Most of the anti-waterboarding posts attempt to explain why the image did not evoke extreme images that are associated with torture. The anti-waterboarding posts connect ideas in an attempt to explain to the viewer why the image is not as disturbing as expected. The following quote by retiredseal shows one-way posters structure posts in relation to how the image should be interpreted. Retiredseal said the following:

“Kaj cannot properly demonstrate waterboarding for a number of reasons:

1. He is a voluntary “victim.” Arranging the event, hiring the former SERE instructors, and defining the parameters, he knows how far they will go.
2. He is an experience “victim” He’s been water boarded before in SERE school, so he knows what to expect.
3. He is an extensively trained former service member. He was a SEAL, trained as a combat swimmer who underwent scores of events and tests in training that conditioned him to maintain his composure and self-control under duress in the water. He could not possibly demonstrate the bone-melting trauma an otherwise inexperienced, involuntary, and uncertain detainee would display.” (retiredseal huffingtonpost.com 2:00 November 5,2007)

The posters struggle to engage in actual issues that arise when thinking about waterboarding as an interrogation technique. Instead the two camps create opposing perceptions and interpretations of how the idea of torture should look as expressed in the form of an image.

Understanding that posters' interactions are limited to whether the video images showing waterboarding fits within conceptualized understandings of torture.

Because posts begin to focus on how the image/video clip should be viewed, in relation to the understandings of torture, posts often miss basic elements of contestation. Many posters that make this type of argument also claim that waterboarding is not torture but a "meaner than usual" tactic to gain the needed information to fight terrorism. Surprisingly, very few posters even challenged the meaner than usual logic. Very few posters raise concerns about how questionable interrogation techniques might lead to misinformation. Even if waterboarding does not affect detainees as severely as other forms of torture, it seems that the practice of waterboarding would exceed some psychological and physical limits for some. For these people, waterboarding could lead to mis-information.

It is clear by the previous excerpt that most blog posts in the case study lack structured debates and arguments. Blog posts quickly become repetitions of opposing forms of rhetoric and interpretations of images. On Larsen's blog, poster huffpo said "I never thought torture was something we would be ever be debating in this country. What's next? Concentration camps and "Zyklon B' Showers?" (Huffpo November 4,2007 8:16Pm). This simple statement evokes expressive elements that attempt to re-create understanding connected to images. By emphasizing the fact the poster "never thought that torture" would be a political issue in the United States, the posters surprise of torture as a political issue connects the poster with a plethora of political ideals. After the poster connects their identity with ideals of liberalism, rule of law, and democracy they move to citing traumatic events to create certain types of images. The references to "concentration camps and Zyklon B" create images that are associated with NAZI Germany, more specifically with the death camps of World War II. The poster does not

construct an argument based on facts against waterboarding, but appeals to readers' historical memory of grotesque political images. The design is to associate the horrors of death camps to the tactic of waterboarding. Instead of critically engaging the political issue posters become stuck protecting understandings of images and rhetoric. The act of participating in political blogs can actually become de-politicized. The structures of blogs are oppressive and dramatically effect how political agents understand politics. In some circumstance bloggers' posts moved completely away from political issues. As bloggers are drawn to political spectacles and the shock value of images the interpretation of images is seen as being political even though it might not. Using understandings of Brown's process of political idealization this phenomena is explained of the insistence of protecting the group's idealization. The political subject is so concentrated on protecting the group idealization that larger political issues are not identified. Blog posts breaking down specific elements of images are in some was effectively (de) politicizing the political subjects. Instead of focusing on the political issue at hand their attention is diverted to some trivial aspect of the image or spectacle. The following excerpt from hotair.com illustrates one example of oppressive elements associated with interactions based on images.

“That was some craptastic acting by the “torture victim” he musta been a hoot on Halloween
(hotair.com [SilverStar830](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:0920 PM)

Another faked nutroots video?

If you look real close at this video, and especially at the second which is up on Michelle page, notice there is some kind of hard curved device under the towel protecting the terrorist-clown face.

Watch the water pouring onto the hard covering the towel does not conform to his face like it should if the towel was actually against his face.

The hard curved shield is not as obvious in this video but it is very obvious in the second one posted on Michelle blog post:

By Michelle Malkin
(hotair.com November 6, 2007 05:04 PM)

Question. I don't know the answer. Is this shield an integral part of actual waterboarding or simply a prop used in this video to protect the guy under the towel?

(hotair.com Lawrence on November 6, 2007 at 10:19:20 PM)

Can someone please spare the time and call Homeland Security and let them know that Medea Benjamin is randomly taking people off the street and waterboarding because I'm afraid somebody just might get hurt.

(hotair.com canopfor on November 6, 2007 at 10:25 PM)

Come on, it's just a nutter SanFran street performance.

(hotair.com [Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:20 PM)

Agreed on the shaped object under the towel, it shows up even better in the 20 second video. About the size of a 2X4 and in the other video the water stops coming out of the jug when contact is made. Also the towel when placed on the ground when done retains the shape of the water deflector. Totally bogus."

(hotair.com CommentGuy on November 6, 2007 at 10:29:20 PM)

The previous excerpts illustrate how the image and subsequent interpretations of the image can dominate political subjects. In the larger picture it really has no consequence whether the protestor actually had a "shield" to protect his face from the water. The real issue at hand should have been whether the technique of waterboarding suspected terrorists is an appropriate government policy. It is interactions that focus on inconsequential elements of the video clips can be interpreted as being suggestive of oppressive elements operating within virtual publics.

The expressive nature of blog posts is not always limited to the use of language. Posts can

cite historical events to create images and feelings to be re-applied to new political issues. Images from the past have a political instrumentality with current political issues. The political images associated with the past can be re-packaged to modify interpretations of the political present. Abstract references to past political images contribute little to the deliberative nature of blog posts. Although expressive elements of blog posts are often hidden or abstract, traditional understandings of expression are still present. Horseface posted the following post on thehuffingtonpost.com “T-E-S-T-O-S-T-E-R-O-N-E is T-O-R-T-U-R-E” (thehuffingtonpost.com November 1, 2007). The vague expression contributes very little to the overall discussion. However, some online blog poster might consider the previous post an element of effective political participation.

Understanding that blogs posts have varying degrees of expression, it seems important to acknowledge how such expressive posts effect political interactions. If blog posts are just a series of expressions; how does that effect the democratic process? As publics form around certain political idealizations and rhetorical flourishes, political power of the sovereign is reduced.

This chapter in no way attempts to account for democratic revitalizations plans. This chapter’s main purpose was to map the use of images in the waterboarding case study. The first section of Chapter Four used Aaron Barlow’s argument that economic forces have led to the emergence of the “Celebrity Journalist” to explain why some political subjects have looked to virtual publics to supplement news media. Section two provided elements of Hannah Arendt, Mikhail Bahktin, Michael Gardiner, Tim Garvey, and Iris Young’s theoretical understandings to frame virtual publics as being image based “wild publics.” To achieve this task this section was sub-divided into three additional divisions. The first sub-division addressed the theoretical basis for understanding virtual publics as “wild image based virtual publics.” The second sub-division

focused on the theoretical understandings of virtual/virtual publics. The third sub-division outlined elements of individualistic political cultures. Section three described the CODEPINK video clip and Kaj Larsen's video clip in detail. Within the context of the whole chapter, section four used the theoretical grounding constructed in Section two to highlight how images are used and operate in the context of the video clips in the waterboarding blog case study.

Conclusion

The advent of virtual technologies has expanded and increased the communicative space available to political subjects. However, by mapping processes of political idealization and how images are used in virtual publics this thesis has illustrated some elements suggestive of oppressive tendencies of virtual publics.

Chapter 1 provided the required background information to thoroughly understand the theoretical chapters that will follow. The main purpose of the first chapter was to introduce main elements with the waterboarding issue and the various blogs that were used in the case study. In order to provide the general information regarding the waterboarding issue and its relationship to the blogs, the chapter was divided into five sections. The first section provided general details and background facts surrounding the political discussions involved in the waterboarding issue. The second section described the general characteristics of each blog included in the case study. The third section provided general findings and data of the blogs included in the case study. This section identified the number of techniques each blog demonstrated. The section also indicated the numbers of posts that supported and opposed the use of waterboarding technique for each blog. The fourth section explained how each blog was selected to be included in the case study. The fifth section described the research methods employed in the thesis. The fifth section included the research limitations associated with my research methods.

Chapter 2 mapped how elements of political idealization operate in virtual publics. The first section of this chapter outlined Wendy Brown's theories associated with political idealization. The second section used Brown's ideas associated with political idealization to map

how elements of political idealization operated in the waterboarding blog case study. The second section was broken into three additional sub-sections each representing a stage in the political idealization process.

The first sub-section outlined the first element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. The process of how groups glorify their perceived control over truth was developed in the context of the waterboarding case study. This section showed how posters referenced opposing views and used of structural elements of blogs to glorify their particular group's perceived control over truth.

The second sub-section highlighted the second element of political idealization present in the waterboarding case study. Indirect, direct, extreme, and hybrid posts were shown to be an example of how uncritical support of groups' power manifests itself in the waterboarding case study.

The third sub-section illustrated the processes associated with alienating dissent. Negative references to the "other," rank systems, and the use of satire and exaggeration was shown to contribute to the final element of political idealization in the waterboarding case study.

Chapter Three's main purpose was to map the use of images of images in the waterboarding case study. The first section of Chapter Four used Aaron Barlow's argument that economic forces have lead to the emergence of the "Celebrity Journalist" to explain some political subjects looking to virtual publics to supplement news media. Section two provided elements of Hannah Arendt, Makail Bahktin, Micheal Gardiner, Tim Garvery, and Iris Young theoretical understandings to frame virtual publics as being image based "wild publics." To achieve this task this section was sub-divided into three additional divisions. The first sub-division addressed the theoretical basis for understandings virtual publics as "wild image based

virtual publics.” The second sub-division focused on the theoretical understandings of virtual/virtual publics. The third sub-division outlined elements of individualistic political cultures. Section three describes the CODEPINK video clip and Kaj Larsen’s video clip in detail. Section four performs the textual analysis of the waterboarding video clips. Within the context of the whole chapter, section four used the theoretical grounding constructed in Section two to map how images are used and operate in the context of the video clips in the waterboarding blog case study.

By mapping processes of political idealization and how images are used in the case study, the research was suggestive of oppressive tendencies that can operate in virtual publics. The perceived forms of oppression manifested in the virtual publics are in some ways worse than a form of totalitarianism. At least forms of totalitarianism make oppression clear to political subjects. It is clear from the case study that within the context of the waterboarding blogs, the interactions between political subjects has little actual influence over political outcomes. However, interesting enough, political subjects provided a sense that their virtual publics interactions did matter. As Chapter 2 indicated, the discussion mattered more in terms of preserving individual political identities and group idealizations rather than being an element of a function democracy.

Future research needs to theorize and account for these hidden forms of oppression in the context of Virilio’s “Spectacle based Democracy.” If the goal is to level the playing field between virtual and physical publics, scholars need to identify the specific structures and arrangements that preclude effective democratic dialogue. Davis’s research identified weakness within virtual publics but failed to provide direct ways to improve the situation. Issues of

rationality, understandings of deliberation, and various model of democracy need to be constructed in a framework of image-based interactions.

From a more practical standpoint future research also needs to address the disparity of political influence between virtual publics and physical publics. Currently, elements of online speech and expression go largely unregulated. The lack of guidelines creates the conditions for a political free for all that is not conducive to various conceptualizations of deliberation. Issues of defamation, libel, and the creation of false data to support arguments are rampant in online discussions. If legally questionable acts are not addressed it is not reasonable to conceptualize virtual publics that effectively contribute to various forms of democracy.

A second issue that Sandra Braman addresses in her book entitled Change of State is the presence of government surveillance of online discussions and activity. In order for virtual publics to be effective spaces for democratic dialogues they need to be free from extreme amounts of both perceived and actual government surveillance that is not guided by a transparent legal regime (Braman 2006). There is a need to further develop constitutional theory to account more adequately for the limitations and protections of speech and expression online. The constitutional issues also quickly became very complicated knowing that virtual publics can overlap across traditional political borders of the United States.

In its current form virtual publics can only influence major political outcomes in rare situations. Although this research has not provided a glowing endorsement of the emancipatory power of virtual publics, it does not mean there is no hope. There are many more questions that must be addressed before completely disregarding the democratic effectiveness and potential of virtual publics.

APPENDIX ONE: hotair.com waterboarding blog interaction

From: Subject: =?Windows-1252?Q?Hot_Air_BB_Blog_Archive_BB_Video:_Code_Pinkos_waterboa?= =?Windows-1252?Q?rd_some_poor_schlep_while_Diane_Feinstein_walks_on_by?= Date: Wed, 5 Dec 2007 17:01:32 -0500 MIME-Version: 1.0 Content-Type: multipart/related; type="text/html"; boundary="----=_NextPart_000_0000_01C83760.7C4F2990" X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V6.00.2900.3198 This is a multi-part message in MIME format. -----_NextPart_000_0000_01C83760.7C4F2990 Content-Type: text/html; charset="utf-8" Content-Transfer-Encoding: quoted-printable Content-Location: http://hotair.com/archives/2007/11/06/video-code-pinkos-waterboard-some-poor-schlep-while-diane-feinstein-walks-on-by/ =EF=BB=BF
=20

- [Home](#)
- [The Vault](#) =
- [Gear](#)
- [About](#)=20

Video: Code Pinkos waterboard some poor schlep while Diane Feinstein = walks=20 on by

posted at 7:59 pm on November 6, 2007 by Bryan
Send=20 to a Friend | printer-= friendly=20

The humanity of it all! Code Pink waterboards people on both coasts. = Medea=20 Benjamin is now officially a war criminal.

I mean, there is a war on. And they keep saying that waterboarding is = illegal. Ergo, Medea Benjamin, Code Pink capo, is a war criminal. Lock = her=20 up!

Blowback

Note from Hot Air management: This section is for = comments=20 from Hot Air's community of registered readers. Please don't assume that = Hot Air=20 management agrees with or otherwise endorses any particular comment just = because=20 we let it stand. A reminder: Anyone who fails to comply with our terms of use may lose their = posting=20 privilege.

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Comments

wow this is the closet most of these moonbats get to a bath .

Mojack420 on November 6, 2007 at 7:5= 9=20 PM

Did it confess?

HerrMorgenholz on November 6, 2007 at 8:01 PM

I imagine wearing all pink and walking around Washington is enough to = spook=20 our elected officials today.

[gabriel sutherland](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:02 PM

HerrMorgenholz on November 6, 2007 at 8:01 PM

yes but only after they broke out a bar of soap

Mojack420 on November 6, 2007 at 8:03 PM

Funny how the guy on the ground is screaming like he is dying, but = noone is=20 holding him down. He seems pretty relaxed.

Anyway=E2=80=A6.what a protest. What=E2=80=99d they have 6 = moonbats?

BacaDog on November 6, 2007 at 8:03 PM

Code Pink, to stay true to their color theme, should have used Peptol = Bismol=20 instead of water. Bismol Boarding!

Weebork on November 6, 2007 at 8:05 PM

That poor schlep put up a good act.

I want so much to say watching that was torture, but I can=E2=80=99t = stop laughing!=20 @=C2=BF@

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:06 PM

Fetch the comfy chair

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:07 PM

I call b.s.! The water is landing on his forehead, not his mouth, and = he=E2=80=99s=20 acting like it=E2=80=99s killing him. They need to go back and do it = right.

[Tony737](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:10 PM

Diane is walking by with a =E2=80=9CPlease don=E2=80=99t kill = me=E2=80=9D look on her face.

GoodBoy on November 6, 2007 at 8:14 PM

Code Stink! Pretty bad acting. I=E2=80=99ve made worse sounds than = that after a night=20 of drinking.

sonnyspats1 on November 6, 2007 at 8:15 PM

HAhahahaaa there are *your* people Diane! You=E2=80=99re stuck with = =E2=80=98em! hahaha

Did ya see her? The look on her face looked like =E2=80=9CWill = somebody PLEASE open=20 this f#cking door and get me away from these loons?!=E2=80=9D

A minute ago she had her arm wrapped around one of =E2=80=98em, now = she can=E2=80=99t get=20 away fast enough.

See how they think they speak for the whole state?

[Tony737](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:15 PM

This is San Francisco and I believe this is a perfectly acceptable = sex act=20 for that city. Goes on all the time, cept they wear leather = sometimes.

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:18 PM

Dance with the ones wot brung ya, Diane.

[CrimsonFisted](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:18=20 PM

As others have pointed out. That isn't waterboarding.

[bnelson44](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:20=20 PM

Two waterboarding videos in as many hours? Is there a hidden message here?

[RedWinged Blackbird](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:20=20 PM

I wonder how much money George Soros pays these girls to aggravate the shit out of dihhmicraps? If the money is right, it might not be that bad of a gig.

[abinitioadinfininitum](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:21=20 PM

PALAMINO!

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:22=20 PM

I still don't get it. Didn't they stop waterboarding, after 3 people, back in 2003?

[JetBoy](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:22=20 PM

I wish I were there to yell CYeeeeeeehaaawh! Drown that sumb*tch!

[Dork B.](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:25=20 PM

Diane didn't want any water on her hair-spreyed helmet hair.

[SouthernGent](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:25=20 PM

In the end, all this does is make them look silly and emphasizes that they have the emotional maturity of a 13 year old. I'm sure that is not lost on most people. (except, possibly, in San Francisco?)

[jeanie](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:27=20 PM

My bar for thinking well of a Democratic Senator is so low that I actually have warm feelings for Feinstein simply for ignoring the wishes of the leftards.

[thuja](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:28=20 PM

More that! Sooo funny. I need the laugh!

[ronsfi](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:29=20 PM

This is San Francisco and I believe this is a perfectly acceptable sex act for that city. Goes on all the time, cept they wear leather sometimes.

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:18 PM

Hilarious! Diane gettin' nasty!

[Dork B.](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:32=20 PM

Well, it has finally begun. I just heard my first Christmas song = jingle off of a TV commercial.

I know, this isn't part of the discussion of the thread, but = somehow I thought this was more interesting!

[Weebork](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:33=20 PM

When you are waterboarded, you lock up, and can't scream. It cuts off the flow of air.

The pinkos are intentionally deceptive.

[Mazztek](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:36 PM

I asked my wife to waterboard me tonight; my sinuses have never been so clear. I'm gonna do it every week!

[lorien1973](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:38 PM

Unparodiabile.

[shick](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:38 PM

Perfect. Does that Benjiman broad have a job? They were pouring water on the guys forehead.

[LtE126](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:48 PM

Everyone's responses here are way more entertaining than the video is. More more!

[Bob's Kid](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:51 PM

How IDIOTIC!

So, basically, the guy got nearly drowned for nothing!

Only moonbats.

Too bad he didn't drown in reality. One less moonbat in the world

[ToddonCapeCod](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:52 PM

call b.s.! The water is landing on his forehead, not his mouth, and he's acting like it's killing him. They need to go back and do it right.

[Tony737](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:10 PM

Yeah!!! I was thinking the same thing. Jack-offs even do torture wrong.

[Andy in Agoura Hills](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:53 PM

Wait a second, Feinstein who is MY Senator too, puts her arm around Benjamin like they're two old buddies, but when I sent her a carefully worded well-thought-out letter I get some stupid form letter response!!!!!! WTF!!!!!! I have to be some whacko-beotch to get her attention???? = Man, democracy sux.

[Andy in Agoura Hills](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:57 PM

I swear that is the same suit she has worn for 20 years.

[bnelson44](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:00 PM

Yep, they're pouring the water on his forehead and he's screaming like he's being killed.

[Buzzy](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:04 PM

I still don't get it. Didn't they stop waterboarding, after 3 people, back in 2003?

[JetBoy](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:22 PM

Jetboy has it. This is a moot point. Even if waterboarding was torture, we don't do it anymore - so I don't quite know the point these loons are trying to make. They aren't even good actors.

[nailinmyeye](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:04 PM

Don't these people have jobs? Or a family that they could be caring for?

Are their lives so empty and useless?
How pathetically = sad=E2=80=A6.

Suggestion: more water.

[Tru2my2](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:0= 4=20 PM

While he was in the position, why didn=E2=80=99t they just behead him = humanely like=20 our enemies do?

Amnesty International thinks it=E2=80=99s torture? They think cop and = FBI agent=20 murderers are political prisoners, too.
Quite the credible = organization.

[peacenprosperity](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:0= 9=20 PM

Now,THAT was hilarious!

[bloggless](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:1= 2=20 PM

Tru2my2,

Suggestion: more water.

Also, hilarious!!! LOL!

[bloggless](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:1= 3=20 PM

Chump Chick: At least she saw it

Media: She didn=E2=80=99t see it

Love it

- The Cat

[MirCat](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:1= 5=20 PM

If torture =E2=80=9Cdoesn=E2=80=99t work=E2=80=9D, how does violent = crime work?

[profitsbeard](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:2= 2=20 PM

Hahaha.

I wish I was walking by so I could have really started waterboarding = that ass=20 clown.

Don=E2=80=99t =E2=80=98board me bro!

[reaganaut](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:2= 4=20 PM

Nice to see the =E2=80=9Cdon=E2=80=99t taze me bro=E2=80=9D dude got = a new gig.

[fogw](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:2= 4=20 PM

Oops. Same wavelength there, reaganaut.

[fogw](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:2= 6=20 PM

Just kill them on the battlefield. Apparently capturing the = enemy=E2=80=A6 the ones=20 who flew planes into our towers is tantamount to locking up Marin Luther = King=20 Jr. to these sods. At least that is how these liberals seem to portray = poor=20 little khalid down in gitmo. You know khalid, the one who gains weightt = and gets=20 sick satisfaction seeing GIs gloving up to handle the =E2=80=9Choly = qu=E2=80=99ran=E2=80=9D

I am so sick of this upside down world I am living in. The media and = the left=20 are frenzied about some mythical global

warming BS and they kowtow to our enemies every needs and desires. The enemy doesn't need soldiers on the ground here in America (though they do and probably have lawyered up), they have the ACLU, Code Pink, and the Democrat party doing everything and more than they ever dreamed of.

I say these lefties go ahead and offer free room and board to one of these terrorists and let's see how long that lasts.

James on November 6, 2007 at 9:28 PM

They ran out of water!!!! Next time they should just hook up a hose.

bloggless on November 6, 2007 at 9:32 PM

Was this sponsored by Miller Beer?

bloggless on November 6, 2007 at 9:35 PM

They were pouring water on his freakin' forehead for God's sake. Somebody call the whambulance.

robbefarian on November 6, 2007 at 9:37 PM

Kini on November 6, 2007 at 8:18 PM

Yes but they are not using water

Mojack420 on November 6, 2007 at 9:37 PM

I really get a kick out of these waterboarding videos. Kinda makes me think, =E2=80=9CEh.=E2=80=9D

[km](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:42 PM

Yes but they are not using water

Mojack420 on November 6, 2007 at 9:37 PM

Are you suggesting a golden shower-boarding?
I mean, it's San Fran, anything goes.

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:47 PM

probably works better if they do it properly =E2=80=A6

towel and face shield aren't used in that manner while waterboarding.

Canadian Imperialist Running Dog on November 6, 2007 at 9:53 PM

That was some craptastic acting by the =E2=80=98torture = victim =E2=80=98 =E2=80=A6 he musta been a hoot on Halloween

[SilverStar830](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:09 PM

Another faked nutroots video?

If you look real close at this video, and especially at the second which is up on Michelle's page, notice there is some kind of hard curved device under the towel protecting the terrorist-clown's face.

Watch the water pouring onto the hard covering =E2=80=A6 the towel does not conform to his face like it should if the towel was actually against his face.

The hard curved shield is not as obvious in this video but it is very obvious in the second one posted on Michelle's blog post:
Creepy videos of the day

By Michelle Malkin
November 6, 2007 05:04 PM

Question. I don't know the answer. Is this shield an integral part of actual waterboarding or simply a prop used in this video to protect the guy under the towel?

Lawrence on November 6, 2007 at 10:19 PM

Can someone please spare the time and call Homeland Security and let them know that Medea Benjamin is randomly taking people off the street and waterboarding because I'm afraid somebody just might get hurt.

canopfor on November 6, 2007 at 10:25 PM

canopfor on November 6, 2007 at 10:25 PM

Come on, it's just a nutter SanFran street performance.

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:28 PM

Agreed on the shaped object under the towel, it shows up even better in the second video. About the size of a 2=C3=974 and in the other video the water stops coming out of the jug when contact is made. Also the towel when placed on the ground when done retains the shape of the water deflector.

Totally bogus.

CommentGuy on November 6, 2007 at 10:29 PM

HAhahahaaa there are *your* people Diane! You're stuck with 'em! hahaha

Did ya see her? The look on her face looked like 'Will = somebody PLEASE open this f#cking door and get me away from these loons?!=D

A minute ago she had her arm wrapped around one of 'em, now = she can't get away fast enough.

See how they think they speak for the whole state?

Tony737 on November 6, 2007 at 8:15 PM

If DiFi had the courage of her convictions, she would have volunteered to be next.

[91Veteran](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:33 PM

Too bad he didn't drown in reality. One less moonbat in the world

ToddonCapeCod on November 6, 2007 at 8:52 PM

I know what you are saying but, it would never happen as those on the left are too busy avoiding reality.

[91Veteran](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:35 PM

probably works better if you do it properly=A6.

Canadian Imperialist Running Dog on November 6,2007 at 9:53PM.

I'm going to take a stab(no pun intended)of what that shield could be,could it be a womans jock strap,er cup I mean. And if so = wouldn't that be worse tortue to a Muslim,than waterboarding.

canopfor on November 6, 2007 at 10:35 PM

Not only that, but they're pouring the water where that guy's eyes would be, not where his mouth or nose would be under that towel.

Fake and inaccurate.

James on November 6, 2007 at 10:37 PM

This is awesome.

We need to waterboard Ted Kennedy and John Kerry just to make sure.

Please!!!!

Hening on November 6, 2007 at 10:38 PM

As further evidence, there's nary a splutter to be heard on any of these videos. No coughing, no obstructed gurgling= nothing but faked mewling.

James on November 6, 2007 at 10:40 PM

come on.

Kini on November 6, 2007 at 10:28 PM.

Kini: Hehe, street performance, a liberal artist at it = finest.

canopfor on November 6, 2007 at 10:42 PM

I thought waterboarding was an extreme sport.

radjah shelduck on November 6, 2007 at 10:46 PM

We need to waterboard Ted Kennedy and John Kerry just to make sure.

Please!!!!

Hening on November 6, 2007 at 10:38 PM

I'm sure Teddy used to it already.

[91 Veteran](#) on November 6, 2007 at 10:59 PM

At least they are not using carbonated water. Can you imagine the nose-tickling that would ensue?

[nottakingsides](#) on November 6, 2007 at 11:04 PM

At least they are not using carbonated water. Can you imagine the nose-tickling that would ensue?

[nottakingsides](#) on November 6, 2007 at 11:04 PM

Oh, make it Champagne! Waterboard me with Champagne, I'll resist the best I can for nose tickling. Make it Korbel!

[Kini](#) on November 6, 2007 at 11:22 PM

I wish someone would just beat the crap out of these people once and for all.

D2Boston on November 6, 2007 at 11:54 PM

I wish someone would just beat the crap out of these people once and for all.

D2Boston on November 6, 2007 at 11:54 PM

No, no no, the entertainment value is priceless.
Afta All, deys = huntin=20 democqats.

It=E2=80=99s comedy GOLD BABY!

[Kini](#) on November 7, 2007 at 12:= 10=20 AM

Kini on November 6, 2007 at 9:47 PM

It was probably perspiration.

Sweat boarding.

csseven on November 7, 2007 at 12:= 21=20 AM

Once again, a little wood under the towel to keep the water = off.
Looks=20 like they have developed a system. A towel hiding a piece of wood that = covers=20 their mouth and nose. Then they tilt the guy back so the water runs to = his=20 forehead. And they pour water never below eye level.

right2bright on November 7, 2007 at 12:= 35=20 AM

Once again, a little wood under the towel to keep the water = off.

right2bright on November 7, 2007 at 12:35 AM

Haha, hey your woody is showing!

[Kini](#) on November 7, 2007 at 1:0= 4=20 AM

Kini on November 6, 2007 at 9:47 PM

Yes and sponsored by miller beer

Mojack420 on November 7, 2007 at 2:0= 4=20 AM

Mojack420 on November 7, 2007 at 2:04 AM

Explains the screams of delight, I guess.

[Kini](#) on November 7, 2007 at 2:1= 1=20 AM

I wish they=E2=80=99d all demonstrate how suicide is wrong.

[Jim=20 Treacher](#) on November 7, 2007 at 2:1= 6=20 AM

A good paint ball gun would do good. Excuse me but what kind of = parent would=20 name a child Medea? What a joke and what a joke.

[mjkazee](#) on November 7, 2007 at 3:1= 3=20 AM

Would they really like to be subjected to a little bit of torture? = Just join=20 a frat during the seventies. That guy is a wimp. Oh let me scream let me = scream.=20 Give me two minutes with them and we could have a great time together, = no=20 lesbian, no quitting, no acting, just straight out busting = you=E2=80=99re ba\$\$s. Of=20 course Medea would have to lose hers too.

[mjkazee](#) on November 7, 2007 at 3:2= 6=20 AM

They were waterboarding HIS EYES!

You libs can=E2=80=99t elect a president=E2=80=A6.and now you = can=E2=80=99t even do a waterboarding=20 right.

Notice it=E2=80=99s all BOTTLED water.

Latte liberals=A6sissies.

[Black Adam](#) on November 7, 2007 at 4:40 AM

Anyway=A6.what a protest. What=99d they have 6 = moonbats?

[BacaDog](#) on November 6, 2007 at 8:03 PM

And zero audience. Oh except for the senator and the other 2. Where = were=20 they? It looked like a ghost town, who were they yelling to?

[4shoes](#) on November 7, 2007 at 8:23 AM

Ahahaha!

That is some funny stuff. I mean, it=E2=80=99s just so immature and = infantile=E2=80=A6

Do most liberals have some sort of emotional / rational stunted = growth? It=E2=80=99s=20 just so pathetic.

What=E2=80=99s also amusing is that you can tell that Feinstein is = sick of these=20 idiots. She has to play along with them, but she can=E2=80=99t = stand them=20 either.

[Nineball](#) on November 7, 2007 at 9:00 AM

I wish they=E2=80=99d all demonstrate how suicide is wrong.

[Jim Treacher](#) on November 7, 2007 at 2:16 AM

Winner! hahahahaha.

[kcluva](#) on November 7, 2007 at 9:03 AM

I swear that is the same suit she has worn for 20 years.

[bnelson44](#) on November 6, 2007 at 9:00 PM

It looks like Marge Simpson=E2=80=99s \$5 Chanel suit.

[James](#) on November 7, 2007 at 9:30 AM

The more I look into Code Pink membership, the more I am finding that = the=20 membership of Code Pink were failures as Mary Kay sales reps and never = were=20 awarded the Cadillac.

[MSGTAS](#) on November 7, 2007 at 10:38 AM

That=E2=80=99s what happens to you in Code Pink if you let it slip = that maybe the=20 violence is down in Iraq.

[smellthecoffee](#) on November 7, 2007 at 10:55 AM

I=E2=80=99m wondering if we can=E2=80=99t maybe compromise with the = terrorists. We=E2=80=99ll let=20 them attack certain west coast and northeast cities such as Seattle, San = Fran,=20 LA, NY, Bahston, and anyplace in northeast Illinois or industrial = Michigan, with=20 only token response so they can get out their anti-American rage on = actual=20 targets. Any islamo-fascist captured for attacking these liberal = bastions of=20 stupidity and knee-jerking will NOT be tortured in any way, WILL be = provided=20 with first class lodging in the city attacked, and and WILL be released = in said=20 city after 3 demonstrations on their behalf in said city. Liberals love=20 themselves a good demonstration - the more anti-American the better.

Any attack outside of these designated cities would of course result = in=20 hunting down the perpetrators like dogs, repeated water-boarding and use = of any=20 other interrogation technique that may be deemed necessary to elicit any = information aiding us in preventing any further attacks in non-liberal=20 designated areas, and a summary execution by firing squad or hanging = after=20 interrogation.

That should make everyone happy.

deepdiver on November 7, 2007 at 11:56 AM

Thing is, if you look, it's a complete act. They are pouring the water on the victim's forehead.

[PJ Emeritus](#) on November 7, 2007 at 11:59 AM

Thing is, if you look, it's a complete act. They are pouring the water on the victim's forehead.

PJ Emeritus on November 7, 2007 at 11:59 AM

That's what it looks like to me as well, but this whole thing is insane. How can they keep saying something is torture when they're so willing to do it to themselves?

These stupid people who claim to know it's torture because they've done it to themselves, what do they know about torture? Have they been subjected to other things that are commonly considered torture? Did they rip out their own fingernails?

Esthier on November 7, 2007 at 2:08 PM

What a waste of water. Its good this type of thing isn't being done at the CNN center here in atlanta seeing is how we are on a level 4 watering ban. Think of the florida mussels that could have been saved, if only they had used their own urine.

Mofugger on November 7, 2007 at 2:13 PM

Do all these hags have screeching voices?

RobCon on November 7, 2007 at 3:54 PM

You must be logged in to post a comment.

DUer Gets Waterboarded to Prove It's Torture

Posted by [Kim Priestap](#)

Published: October 29, 2007 - 9:05 PM

A [DUer and his brother](#) waterboarded each other to prove that it is torture. The first time, he lasted 9 seconds and he said it was terrifying. But then he went back *three more times* to see if he could last longer and longer. In his fourth final go around he lasted 20 seconds. His brother lasted even longer.

Do we really need to explain to this guy that waterboarding isn't torture if he kept voluntarily going back for more for the purpose of challenging himself. Lordy, what an idiot.

Hat tip: [Hot Air](#)

Note: Hot Air link fixed.

Currently 3.2/5

Rating: 3.2/5 (72 votes cast)

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[Comments](#) (80)

It is really torture, 'do it to me again'. Let me bring a half inch hammer drill and some bits and show them what torture is. Bet they won't want a do over. We now have the most stupid population in the history of the world. Hey folks, it was designed as a training tactic and never harmed anyone. Get a life and don't let any politician that opposes using the tactic to get information that will save thousands of lives near the white house. Goodbye McCain, you whimpering, back stabbing POS. The NVA broke him bad.

1. Posted by Scrapiron | October 29, 2007 9:17 PM |    Score: 11 (17 votes cast)




You can't make up shit like this. Unbelievable.

No logic, no rationality, no thought with that crowd.

2. Posted by Mitchell | October 29, 2007 9:21 PM |    Score: 10 (16 votes cast)




Al Quedain Iraq are known to use: Blowtorches, pliers on teeth, fingers, and toes; electric shock to the nads, scourging, garden variety beatdowns with fists/feet, drills to the knees/shoulders; hammers, etc.

When the person getting tortured pleads he will tell the secrets to what the torturers are seeking, they (the torturers) look at each other like "Secrets?... what secrerts? Nobody said anything about trying to get secrets out of these mopes"




3. Posted by Chris G | October 29, 2007 9:27 PM |    Score: 10 (10 votes cast)

"Do we really need to explain to this guy that waterboarding isn't torture if he kept voluntarily going back..."

That was a rhetorical question wasn't it?

4. Posted by marc | October 29, 2007 9:34 PM |    Score: 9 (11 votes cast)

There are people having done to themselves or doing to others exactly the things y'all have listed, and oh so much more, *just* for sexual gratification. Does that mean none of it can be considered torture, just because insane assholes keep coming back for more? I would think that this kind of "fun" can still be torture to a sensibly rational human being.




5. Posted by ijosha | October 29, 2007 9:48 PM |    Score: -13 (15 votes cast)

ijosha:

"...because insane assholes keep coming back for more? I would think that this kind of "fun" can still be torture to a sensibly rational human being."

And of course we know all jihadist-cut-throats all fall under the category of "sensibly rational human beings."




OH WAIT! They're not.

6. Posted by marc | October 29, 2007 9:57 PM |    Score: 10 (12 votes cast)




Did they also bring in some chicken wire to prove fire can't melt steel?

7. Posted by [DoubleU](#) | October 29, 2007 10:19 PM |    Score: 8 (10 votes cast)




Sorry for the double post, your hat tip to HotAir brings you to the DU.

8. Posted by [DoubleU](#) | October 29, 2007 10:20 PM |    Score: 1 (3 votes cast)

I-josh-ya. I get it.




9. Posted by [wavemaker](#) | October 29, 2007 10:44 PM |    Score: 3 (7 votes cast)

The "torture" aspect for moonbats is that it is too close to bathing....




10. Posted by [Master Shake](#) | October 29, 2007 10:48 PM |    Score: 10 (18 votes cast)

A better man than I might tell them that waterboarding was recently made illegal.

Well, I'd hate to spoil their fun.




11. Posted by [Eric Forhan](#) | October 29, 2007 10:55 PM |    Score: 3 (7 votes cast)

Quick, somebody call Lindsey Graham's office and tell him we've got some domestic torturin' goin' on. Shamesful, absolutely shmaeful. What will the rest of the world think of us. /sarc off

12. Posted by [ODA315](#) | October 30, 2007 12:16 AM |    Score: 3 (7 votes cast)




"The first time, he lasted 9 seconds and he said it was terrifying. But then he went back three more times to see if he could last longer and longer. In his fourth final go around he lasted 20 seconds. His brother lasted even longer."

My brother and I had the same experience on a tilt-a-whirl in 1960.

13. Posted by [jim](#) | October 30, 2007 12:27 AM |    Score: 5 (11 votes cast)

Try underwater egress training. Much more scary and you really are deep underwater and risk drowning. 20 Seconds - HA! Baby times.




Wimps.

14. Posted by [epador](#) | October 30, 2007 2:31 AM |    Score: 5 (7 votes cast)

I'd like to prove that electric shock is torture. First, I'll need a few volunteers from the DU.




15. Posted by Anon Y. Mous | October 30, 2007 3:15 AM |    Score: 5 (9 votes cast)

What I consider torture is listening to lefties justify their positions. Maybe we should send about 3 of the trolls on this board to Guantanamo Bay to explain their political and life positions. The terrorists will be yelling for us to stop them. They will tell us all. ww

16. Posted by WildWillie | October 30, 2007 7:23 AM |    Score: 7 (11 votes cast)




"...waterboarding was recently made illegal."

You just can't [make this stuff up](#), Eric.

17. Posted by wavemaker | October 30, 2007 7:36 AM |    Score: 3 (5 votes cast)




Abuse of prisoners by any nation or organization to get information is both immoral, unethical and unreliable. A prisoner will often say anything to stop the abuse, leading to useless information. And abuse of prisoners reflects poorly on a society and only encourages abuse by other ruthless rival nations or organizations.

I know that many Palestinian prisoners began to feel some empathy with their Israeli captors, and this mutual respect often results in an open dialogue of information. In hostage situations, captives often began to feel some empathy with their captors known as "The Stockholm Syndrome" and begin to share their feeling once fear levels have decreased. Many of these examples give better clues into gaining more information in more humanitarian ways that is more likely accurate than information gained under prisoner abuse where any answer to avoid more pain is often the rule.

18. Posted by Paul Hooson | October 30, 2007 8:25 AM |    Score: -12 (16 votes cast)

Scrap,

I agree. Maybe next time, in an effort to illustrate the "we're no better than they are" moral equivalence argument, they'll decide to try burning the skin off each other's back with a blowtorch, or gouging each other's eyeballs out with a rusty screwdriver. Or at least the tried-and-true car battery to the genitals. I wonder how many times they would subject themselves to that one.




19. Posted by Mike | October 30, 2007 9:34 AM |    Score: 5 (7 votes cast)

The accuracy of information obtained from terrorist prisoners can be evaluated as reliable or not. However, as shown in Iraq, it has produced a lot of useful and actionable information that has led to many terrorist deaths.

Morality is an intangible point that should not be used in regards to interrogation techniques that could be considered abusive, but not meet the definition of torture. There is a hell of a lot the USA allows that many consider immoral and unethical, but that is not stopping liberals from allowing it and doing




it. Think of abortion, the ultimate immoral/unethical abuse of unborn American life. If that is ok, water boarding terrorist prisoners is sure ok.

What the USA does or does not do with regards to prisoners makes no difference in what its enemies have done for the last 50 years with American prisoners. Water boarding terrorists has little if no impact on the treatment of American prisoners.

20. Posted by [civildisobedience](#) | October 30, 2007 9:44 AM |    Score: 7 (9 votes cast)

We could only pray that jihadists would waterboard our guys.

It would be a step up.




21. Posted by [drjohn](#) | October 30, 2007 9:54 AM |    Score: 6 (8 votes cast)

Abuse of prisoners by any nation or organization to get information is both immoral, unethical and unreliable. A prisoner will often say anything to stop the abuse, leading to useless information. And abuse of prisoners reflects poorly on a society and only encourages abuse by other ruthless rival nations or organizations.

Yeah, well, you'd be able to figure that out soon enough, would you not? The info you get is either good or no good. I cannot imagine that this practice would continue if it did not yield useful results.

OK, so here it is again- if some badass has information that could save your kid's life and waterboarding was the only way you would get it from him, would you or would you not condone it?

That is the only question one need ask.

22. Posted by [drjohn](#) | October 30, 2007 10:02 AM |    Score: 6 (8 votes cast)

Abuse of prisoners by any nation or organization to get information is both immoral, unethical and unreliable.

Without any kind of definition of "abuse", this statement is just sanctimonious blather.




A prisoner will often say anything to stop the abuse, leading to useless information.

Perhaps. On the other hand, we waterboarded KSM for about 2 minutes and he coughed a royal boatload of actionable intelligence. So this is another empty statement.

And abuse of prisoners reflects poorly on a society and only encourages abuse by other ruthless rival nations or organizations.

What an utterly incompetent claim. Newsflash: A-Q and its allies already torture its enemies and in far worse ways than we would ever dream of doing. And that's not anything they started because of Gitmo, that's just who they are. In fact, outside of the US, Europe, and Australia, that's just about all who anybody is.

You have a silly and naive view of the world.

23. Posted by [OregonMuse](#) | October 30, 2007 10:13 AM |    Score: 9 (11 votes cast)

Kim, you don't get to decide when to stop when you're being waterboarded.

Anyway, I think I'll defer to an [expert of the subject](#):




In fact, waterboarding is just the type of torture then Lt. Commander John McCain had to endure at the hands of the North Vietnamese. As a former Master Instructor and Chief of Training at the US Navy Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School (SERE) in San Diego, California I know the waterboard personally and intimately. SERE staff were required undergo the waterboard at its fullest. I was no exception. I have personally led, witnessed and supervised waterboarding of hundreds of people. It has been reported that both the Army and Navy SERE school's interrogation manuals were used to form the interrogation techniques used by the US army and the CIA for its terror suspects. What was not mentioned in most articles was that SERE was designed to show how an evil totalitarian, enemy would use torture at the slightest whim. If this is the case, then waterboarding is unquestionably being used as torture technique.

The carnival-like he-said, she-said of the legality of Enhanced Interrogation Techniques has become a form of doublespeak worthy of Catch-22. Having been subjected to them all, I know these techniques, if in fact they are actually being used, are not dangerous when applied in training for short periods. However, when performed with even moderate intensity over an extended time on an unsuspecting prisoner - it is torture, without doubt. Couple that with waterboarding and the entire medley not only "shock the conscience" as the statute forbids -it would terrify you. Most people can not stand to watch a high intensity kinetic interrogation. One has to overcome basic human decency to endure watching or causing the effects. The brutality would force you into a personal moral dilemma between humanity and hatred. It would leave you to question the meaning of what it is to be an American.....




There is No Debate Except for Torture Apologists

1. Waterboarding is a torture technique. Period. There is no way to gloss over it or sugarcoat it. It has no justification outside of its limited role as a training demonstrator. Our service members have to learn that the will to survive requires them accept and understand that they may be subjected to torture, but that America is better than its enemies and it is one's duty to trust in your nation and God, endure the hardships and return home with honor....





Read it all, as they say.

24. Posted by mantis | October 30, 2007 10:38 AM |    Score: -2 (18 votes cast)

The problem is defining torture and what's acceptable. The point I believe Kim was driving at is *where* waterboarding falls in the range of things you're lumping in with 'torture'. I'd lump waterboarding in the same range as the treatment of nerdy, pimple faced middle school kids by their peers... or stupid college hazing stunts (i.e. inducing mental stress). Although, I'd guess that more have died or suffered permanent injury as result of the latter two. A drill through the knee cap or shoulder or beheading would fall at the other end of the range.




25. Posted by _Mike_ | October 30, 2007 11:10 AM |    Score: 1 (7 votes cast)

Whether water boarding is or is not defined as torture is irrelevant. It is an ok method to get terrorists to divulge useful information. What is a good reason not to use it on terrorists?

26. Posted by civildisobedience  | October 30, 2007 11:12 AM |    Score: 2 (8 votes cast)




read it, mantis. A real expert would be able to define why waterboarding, which is disorienting and short-term in effect, is equivalent to actual torture, i.e severely painful and potentially long-term in effect. Instead we get a bunch of appeal to emotion, ad hominem, and flag-waving.

If that's all you got for a real expert, I suggest you don't use the same technique to pick your family doctor or mechanic. The shady ones are always better at making an emotional case, but likely to leave you in the lurch, much as this guy did.

27. Posted by John Irving | October 30, 2007 11:16 AM |    Score: 3 (15 votes cast)

The people against water boarding are the same that thinks it is cruel and unusual punishment not to mention very painful to inject a needle to a person (ask any 3 year old who has had a shot) that has hacked, raped, tortured and murdered innocent people.

In both instances it is a measure to help right a wrong and is only used in extreme cases.




28. Posted by KB | October 30, 2007 11:40 AM |    Score: 2 (12 votes cast)

Foreigner, I'm predicting that either your vowels or you will be gone soon, so I'll make this a general observation.




Torture is not identified as something no typical person would undergo voluntarily. Then interrogation, imprisonment, paying taxes, or getting a speeding ticket would all be thereby defined as torture.

However, the converse isn't necessarily false. If even a sufficient minority of rational people are willing to undergo an ordeal, it should not, if it does not otherwise impinge on the narrowest definition of torture as physical harm with long-term effects, be considered torture.

There are websites dedicated to people who play with water bondage, which often includes scenes similar to waterboarding. The difference is only in the consensuality, as any interrogation of a prisoner would lack, but continues to carry the safety and rationality, as the technique is used to disorient to extract actionable intelligence, something you cannot obtain from a deceased prisoner.

29. Posted by John Irving | October 30, 2007 11:50 AM |    Score: 5 (5 votes cast)

Madame, you're an idiot.




30. Posted by Bruce | October 30, 2007 12:03 PM |    Score: -8 (8 votes cast)

It's good to have a discussion on just what defines torture, but people like Foreigner and Bruce quash such discussion. It's pretty sad, since I'm sure they'll also claim in Orwellian ways to be the ones who wish to ~promote~ discussion.




On one hand, Kim's point is clear: With torture, you don't go back for seconds. You don't say, "Hey, pulling that tooth hurt like hell -- do it three more times so I can make sure."

On the other hand, Chinese water torture may seem innocuous at first, but (I understand) eventually becomes maddening.

Debate is something we should have. Misogyny and name calling are not.

31. Posted by Eric Forhan | October 30, 2007 12:24 PM |    Score: 4 (8 votes cast)




I actually enjoy the name-calling. It's our electronic version of "don't taze me, bro!"

32. Posted by Mitchell | October 30, 2007 12:50 PM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)




Right, so the foremost expert on waterboarding in America writes a detailed, reasoned plea to classify waterboarding as torture, and none of you even seem to read it. You just hand wave away that A. It is torture. And B. It is the US surrendering the moral high ground, so we can get questionable intelligence and expose our troops to greater risk.

Waterboarding is torture. If the guy in charge of teaching SERE, says waterboarding is torture, IT IS!!!! No amount of handwaving from armchair, chickenhawk, keyboard commandos will change that.

You people make me ashamed to be an American.
Sincerely,
ashamed




33. Posted by Ashamed | October 30, 2007 1:09 PM |    Score: -2 (10 votes cast)

Sorry folks but waterboarding is torture. I saw the video and had to turn it off even before they really got going. Paying someone to do this in a completely controlled setting is not even vaguely close to the real thing. Any nation that claims to aspire to some higher calling, some greater good would never do this.




34. Posted by tballou | October 30, 2007 1:47 PM |    Score: -4 (8 votes cast)

Having the moral high ground got us bombed in Pearl Harbor. Having the moral high ground had us lose Vietnam. Having the moral high ground got the World Trade Center, Beirut Marines, the USS Cole, Somalia and the like killed. So, where did having the moral high ground achieve anything? HOW about beheading our citizens? Did we cause that? No, but in the Middle East, they have the "moral" high ground. Seems like a relative term to me.

Paul Hooson, the Stockholm Syndrome has more to do with the complete helplessness of the victim and the total power the person has over the victim that effects the victim. You putz. How could you use that for an example? ww

35. Posted by WildWillie | October 30, 2007 1:50 PM |    Score: 2 (6 votes cast)

Irving, you are an insult to your namesake.

36. Posted by mantis | October 30, 2007 2:07 PM |    Score: -6 (6 votes cast)

WW : "Having the moral high ground got us bombed in Pearl Harbor."

So by your logic, we should be torturing people all the time, even when not at war. Sweet. Have you ever read 1984? Have you ever lived in Soviet Russia, because you are advocating a totalitarian regime on par with these. Who could we have tortured to avoid Pearl Harbor? The Japanese Ambassador? Japanese Americans?

You are a psychopath.




Also, I seem to remember the moral high ground was elemental in our winning the Cold War and WWII. I seem to recall stories of KGB defectors and Nazi troops, being in awe of the honor with which the US conducted itself, so much so that it caused these enemies of ours to change sides and provide us information.

Regan said : "Tear down this wall" He didn't say it because the wall was ugly, he said it because it was a tool of an evil totalitarian regime that practiced torture kept secret gulags, and suspended habeas corpus. Remind you of anyone?




Lastly, isn't it great that after six years of surrendering the moral high ground, we've won the war on terror. Our cup runneth over with allies, our homeland is safe and secure.

Glad to see that we traded away our nation's soul for so much in return.

As before,
ashamed

37. Posted by Ashamed | October 30, 2007 2:23 PM |    Score: 0 (10 votes cast)

Ashamed, with hyperbole and misstatements like that, you very well SHOULD be "ashamed".

38. Posted by Eric Forhan | October 30, 2007 2:47 PM |    Score: 2 (6 votes cast)




Misstatements like what? I didn't say that not torturing people caused Pearl Harbor. Now that is a misstatement.

As for hyperbole? Anyone who can advocate that we adopt the tactics of Hitler, Stalin and Pol Pot, ought to be able to stomach a little hyperbole. After all, it's not like I held your head underwater until your gag reflex failed, causing your stomach to fill with fluid and your brain to accept death, repeatedly, for days, with no access to the rule of law, no summary of charges, and no hope of escape.




You think that's not torture, but you got a problem with hyperbole.

Poor you.

ashamed

39. Posted by Ashamed | October 30, 2007 2:55 PM |    Score: 1 (9 votes cast)




You people are animals. Congratulations on surrendering your humanity to the terrorists.

40. Posted by Singularity | October 30, 2007 3:29 PM |    Score: -1 (11 votes cast)

boy, you torture supporters are really disgusting.




yes, it does make it easier to stomach torturing someone if you've managed to dehumanize them with statements such as those I've seen on this thread.

you are the subhuman ones. I'm so glad I'm getting out of this country. you people make baby jesus cry.

41. Posted by prozacula | October 30, 2007 3:42 PM |    Score: -1 (9 votes cast)




Congratulations on surrendering your humanity to the terrorists.

The only ones surrendering their humanity are the yellow conservatives who seem to see bogeymen around every corner. I find it ironic that liberals are the ones taking flak for being "weak."

42. Posted by Gilty | October 30, 2007 4:30 PM |    Score: -1 (5 votes cast)

I find it ironic that liberals are the ones taking flak for being "weak."




Yeah, cuz hiding under your covers is much more brave than fighting back.

43. Posted by Veeshir | October 30, 2007 4:46 PM |    Score: 1 (3 votes cast)

And torturing people for information is the definition of bravery, right? That's why John McCain, George Washington, Dwight Eisenhower, and George Patton were against torture. They were gutless pussies. I distinctly remember Eisenhower hiding under his covers on D-Day and George Washington changing his mind so he could hook up Ben Franklin's kite to some Red Coats genitals.




Thanks for showing me the true meaning of courage.

ashamed

44. Posted by Ashamed | October 30, 2007 4:55 PM |    Score: 0 (6 votes cast)

Dude, I'm against torture too.

I just have a different definition than you.

45. Posted by Veeshir | October 30, 2007 4:56 PM |    Score: 2 (4 votes cast)

"Dude, I'm against torture too.

I just have a different definition than you."




A definition that also differs from the one used by George Washington, John McCain, Patton, Ike, The Geneva conventions, the Nurenborg Commision, Amnesty International, Jesus, Pope John Paul, Mother Theresa, and every US President prior to Bush II, and so on, and so forth.

People who agree with your definition. Hitler, Pol Pot, the VC, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Saddam, Osama, the Taliban...




What fine, heroic company, you've cast your lot with. Good luck with that, tell me how it works out for you.

Meanwhile, I will assume that if the people in the US military who study torture call waterboarding torture, then their definition carries more weight than yours. You may have a different definition of what rain is, but that doesn't mean you're not pissing on my leg.

ashamed




46. Posted by Ashamed | October 30, 2007 5:07 PM |    Score: 2 (6 votes cast)

Eric Forhan, I'm not "quashing" anything, you little dick, I simply stated that the lady is an idiot. I'm not calling for anyone to stop expressing their opinions. So try sitting on your straw man and rotating.

47. Posted by Bruce | October 30, 2007 5:09 PM |    Score: -1 (5 votes cast)

"Dude, I'm against torture too.
I just have a different definition than you."




And here I thought you were just a sociopath. I mean, what with waterboarding being classified as torture up until literally George Bush decided he wanted to do it to people.

48. Posted by Jody | October 30, 2007 5:14 PM |    Score: 0 (6 votes cast)

Irving, you are an insult to your namesake.

mantis, you have no idea who I was named after, and once again digress from reasonable debate to spout ad hominem.

You've been steadily working on ending your reputation as a reasonable dissenter. Makes me curious as why you've swung leftward and downward into Wizblue-level territory.

49. Posted by John Irving | October 30, 2007 6:05 PM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)

Oregon Muse: "Perhaps. On the other hand, we waterboarded KSM for about 2 minutes and he coughed a royal boatload of actionable intelligence. So this is another empty statement."




Is that really how it went? No. Everything KSM "confessed" to everything was in the past. He's been in custody for years. Actionable, therefore? No. Grandiose, perhaps. Here are some references. Try to refine your thinking on these matters:

http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/IC23Ak02.html




http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2007/03/exclusive_pearl.html

50. Posted by Guy in Jersey | October 30, 2007 6:20 PM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

People like Ashamed, prozacula, Jody et al demonstrate that you can't have a serious conversation about this. Not to mention the brazen misrepresentation of the previous history on the issue by those who are only in this debate because of BDS.

51. Posted by SPQR | October 30, 2007 6:38 PM |    Score: -1 (3 votes cast)




Let me know when Foreigner has been banned and the namecalling and hyperbole die down. I'd sure like to have an honest discussion about this.

52. Posted by Eric Forhan | October 30, 2007 6:40 PM |    Score: -1 (3 votes cast)

god, foreigners are envious.

PJ O'Rourke did a riff explaining why foreigners acted like jerks in a desperate attempt to be noticed by americans: he compared it to the wild longings of a 13-year-old boy frantic to get the attention of a magnificent 24-year-old babe.

not a bad analogy. foreigners will of course angrily deny this. "we're GLEDD we don't hev as much money and powwair as you stupid americans! we LAHK being impotent and ignored!"

53. Posted by vespasio | October 30, 2007 6:41 PM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

SPQR:

"People like Ashamed, prozacula, Jody et al demonstrate that you can't have a serious conversation about this. Not to mention the brazen misrepresentation of the previous history on the issue by those who are only in this debate because of BDS."

This is my favorite all the world. A person makes a real argument about something that is obviously wrong with USG policy, and a bush supporter says it's just Bush derangement syndrome. HA!

For the record, SPQR, I made a number of salient points above that had little to do with Bush. You can address them or not, but you can't ignore them and then act like I just scream BUSH SUCKS over and over. I didn't do that. You know it. Therefore you are dodging the issue.

If your torture is really so great, then defend it. But you didn't. If you want a real discussion, join on in. But you don't need to address my arguments. Start with this.

<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/10/waterboarding-is-torture-perio/>




It's the definitive argument on them matter and it is unaddressed anywhere on this thread. That means you guys dont' care at all about a real discussion.

Game set match.




Now go watch Anne Coulter complain about how uncivil those Libs are in the same breath that she calls Edwards a fag.

What color is the sky on your planet?




ashamed

54. Posted by Ashamed | October 30, 2007 6:55 PM |    Score: 0 (6 votes cast)




wow you have got to be one of the stupidest people in the world.
if anyone ever does anything painful voluntarily, that means it's not painful?
"lordy what an idiot" i couldn't have said it better myself.

55. Posted by [joe](#) | October 30, 2007 7:16 PM |    Score: 1 (3 votes cast)





Yeah, cuz hiding under your covers is much more brave than fighting back.
I really shouldn't bother responding to the yelping monkey, but I can't seem to look away.
You and your ilk are like the kid in The Sixth Sense, except you see imaginary enemies all around, which I guess is more Quixotian, actually. I don't feel compelled to hide under covers, because the "monsters" under your trundle bed aren't visible to me.
The lesser animals on the planet also lash out when they perceive danger and their fear instinct kicks in. Congratulations...you've graduated to the status of rabid mutt.

56. Posted by [Gilty](#) | October 30, 2007 7:41 PM |    Score: 0 (2 votes cast)





For all the "waterboarding is not torture" people, show some guts behind that statement and submit yourself to waterboarding, with the agreement that 1) you cannot control when it will be done to you, 2) you cannot control how long it will be done to you, and 3) you cannot control how many times it will be done to you.
Any takers, tough guys?

57. Posted by [Bill Templeton](#) | October 30, 2007 9:01 PM |    Score: 0 (4 votes cast)

Yeah Bill, I have been through a version of it in SERE training. I can see where some could consider it torture and I don't have a problem with their point of view. That said, I have no problem with it being applied to terrorists. There is no "good" reason for not using it against terrorists when critical information is needed from them. The quality of the info can be confirmed, it does not change how American prisoners will be treated, and issues of morality/ethics are not material.

58. Posted by [civildisobedience](#)  | October 30, 2007 9:16 PM |    Score: 1 (3 votes cast)




Also, Petty Officer Nance is entitled to his opinion. I respect his service, but disagree with his opinion that water boarding should not be applied to terrorists. Terrorists are not soldiers of another nation and they are not criminals. They are terrorists, and they have no rights of any kind except those we are willing to bestow them. I am willing to not allow cutting them up, beating them, or killing them, but water boarding is ok.

59. Posted by [civildisobedience](#)  | October 30, 2007 9:31 PM |    Score: 2 (2 votes cast)




For all the "waterboarding is not torture" people, show some guts behind that statement and submit yourself to waterboarding

I'll bite, as stipulated. You get to volunteer for a real form of torture, though, to demonstrate the equivalency.

What will you choose, electric shocks, bamboo shoots under the fingernails, beating, flaying, branding, broken fingers, etc?

60. Posted by John Irving | October 30, 2007 11:36 PM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)




John Irving, the problem with your proposition is that your opponent is not advocating for the other forms of torture, the way you are advocating for water boarding. If you think water boarding is ok, then you should be willing to submit to it without your stipulations. Are you?

61. Posted by Sarah | October 30, 2007 11:53 PM |    Score: -1 (1 votes cast)

If you think water boarding is ok, then you should be willing to submit to it without your stipulations. Are you?

Yes, and would so even without the stipulations.

However, as the definitions being given here by the opposition are simply "torture is torture" and "volunteering makes it not torture," then my willingness to undergo one such procedure opens up all the others to be voluntarily tried, which none of the 'brave' souls of the opposition seem to be willing to do.

62. Posted by John Irving | October 31, 2007 12:08 AM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

civdis: "That said, I have no problem with it being applied to terrorists."

Now that is an answer worth discussing. And I would say that you provide the best counter argument in your next comment.

civdis: "Terrorists are not soldiers of another nation and they are not criminals. They are terrorists, and they have no rights of any kind except those we are willing to bestow them."

And how do we know who are the terrorists? With information coerced via the water boarding of other "terrorists?" Are all the Iraqi insurgents terrorists? Are all the suspects we pick up anywhere in the world automatically terrorists? Are American suspects eligible for torture? So far the term terrorists seems to be decreed by an unaccountable, secret bureaucrat. Is that really the kind of power you want government to have? Will you be okay with Hillary having the power to torture anyone she says, with no oversight?

The "we must torture them because they're just that bad" argument falls apart when subjected to this test. We have rules against water boarding and torture, not because we feel that our enemies are too good for it, but because the world is imperfect, and we can never be certain who our enemies really are. Moreover, under the present USG policy, terrorist is an intentionally vague, shifting definition. A policy of torture presupposes that innocent people will be tortured.

The world isn't like 24. The interrogators at Abu Grhaib weren't trying to stop a bomb in Times Square with that human pyramid. Torture as policy means people are being water boarded every day, without an urgent threat. Some of whom are innocent, all of whom are human beings.




Lastly, the studies on torture show that it is of limited value. The information gleaned is weak. People will say anything in those situations.

It may seem like the terrorists are a perfect evil, deserving of such treatment, but the truth is that the perfect evil is torture itself. If we commit ourselves to using it we turn our backs on the shining light to the world that America used to be and, I believe, should be.

I'm sorry that you don't feel the same way.

But I'm glad you posted a substantive comment.




Respectfully,
ashamed

63. Posted by Ashamed | October 31, 2007 12:16 AM |    Score: -1 (1 votes cast)

Lastly, the studies on torture show that it is of limited value. The information gleaned is weak. People will say anything in those situations.

Well said. Since waterboarding has been documented as being extremely effective at producing accurate information, as the disorientation makes it harder to dissemble than severe pain does, you have just provided yet another solid reason why waterboarding should not be considered a torture technique.

Of course, you basically admitted this with the statement *We have rules against water boarding and torture*. Even you acknowledge the distinction.

64. Posted by John Irving | October 31, 2007 12:37 AM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)


Wow, such dim-bulbery among the torture apologists.

Do me a favor, no, do yourselves a favor, and go read:

<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2007/10/waterboarding-is-torture-perio/>

Pay careful attention to his bullet points.




Now go hang your head in shame for dragging our country into that moral sewer in which you dwell, you despicable people.

65. Posted by Jody | October 31, 2007 1:48 AM |    Score: 0 (2 votes cast)

Thanks, Jody, you should hang your head in shame for linking to that tripe, it's been linked already, read, and accurately identified as a mishmash of ad hominem, appeal to emotion, and phony flag-waving.

If you actually find a link to a rational article on waterboarding, and why it, with all that makes it distinct from the classic definition of torture (lack of physical injury, lack of long-term consequences, high accuracy, low mortality), still qualifies as torture, then feel free to link it.

Otherwise, thanks for the token effort, save the appeals to emotion without reason, but really we need you to get off the cross, we need the wood for something useful.

66. Posted by John Irving | October 31, 2007 2:15 AM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

Ashamed, thank you for the rational reply. A few points in response.

A foreign AQ fighter in Iraq or Afghanistan could rationally be seen as a terrorist. For example, an armed Saudi national caught in a raid of a site with enemy explosives and containing AQ materials could be considered a terrorist. Someone identifies the Saudi as a cell leader who communicates with higher ups. Water boarding him if necessary would be ok. But an Iraqi Shia milita member we are fighting would be not be considered a terrorist, they are actually more like criminals or gangsters.





Water boarding has been rather effective at getting useful information from terrorists. Plus, it does not cause physical damage, just pain and panic.

I never said "we must torture them because they're just that bad". I said it is ok to use water boarding on terrorists. As you state, the next issue is getting a good understanding of terrorist vs. enemy military combatant vs. criminal. I would support that any member of a declared terrorist organization could be considered a terrorist, such as AQ.

Abu Ghraib was not about terrorists or water boarding. It was a case where soldiers untrained in any techniques, unsupervised by their local leadership, abused non-terrorist prisoners through humiliation and some physical acts for no apparent reason or objective. It was stupid, wrong and an embarrassment, but has nothing to do with this discussion.

I am ok if the whole world knows we water board terrorists, but not enemy military combatants or common criminals. They are relatively easy to distinguish.




Finally, morality doesn't have a role in this decision process. America legally protects a number of acts many consider immoral and even cruel. This is no different.

67. Posted by civildisobedience  | October 31, 2007 4:10 AM |    Score: -1 (3 votes cast)

CivilD:




... abused non-terrorist prisoners through humiliation and some physical acts...

I recall that a few prisoners where abused and humiliated to death at AbuGrape. The Yoo memos punted the GCs and redefined torture as organ failure or death (unless it was accidental!). The policy put in place by the admin (and the existing policies that the admin punted) led to confusion as to what is acceptable treatment. I dont believe you can argue that the AbuGrape treatment happended in a bubble.

68. Posted by Kluster | October 31, 2007 10:09 AM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)




There are people having done to themselves or doing to others exactly the things y'all have listed, and oh so much more, just for sexual gratification. Does that mean none of it can be considered torture, just because insane assholes keep coming back for more?

Steve Martin as the Dentist in the movie Little Shop of Horrors!!!

69. Posted by ExSubNuke | October 31, 2007 12:48 PM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)

No wait, that was Bill Murray's character as his patient.

Funny stuff, though.

70. Posted by ExSubNuke | October 31, 2007 12:49 PM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)




god, foreigners are envious.

PJ O'Rourke did a riff explaining why foreigners acted like jerks in a desperate attempt to be noticed by americans: he compared it to the wild longings of a 13-year-old boy frantic to get the attention of a magnificent 24-year-old babe.

not a bad analogy. foreigners will of course angrily deny this. "we're GLEDD we don't hev' as much money and powwair as you stupid americans! we LAHK being impotent and ignored!"




When we want to be noticed by Americans, we'll blow up your soldiers with IEDs. If you don't like it, stay out of our countries.

And we know who has the money and power these days - the Chinese and the Saudi Arabians respectively. The first has Wall Street and the latter has your President dancing to their tune. You are such rubes.

71. Posted by Anonymous | October 31, 2007 1:28 PM |    Score: -1 (1 votes cast)




So what if waterboarding is torture? We need to be doing more than that to get these bastids. "They're animals anyway--they can afford to lose their souls."

BTW: Does DU stand for Dipshit Underground?

72. Posted by moseby | October 31, 2007 3:25 PM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

Goalpost-moving DS Moseby:

If its torture, then its a crime... so you cant move the goalposts as you suggest. Persons authorizing & conducting torture would be subject to legal actions as a result (until Shrub, his rubberstamper, and the spineless Dems again passed retroactive legislation to precluded those who participated in the illegal actions from being responsible for their actions.)

73. Posted by Kluster | October 31, 2007 3:49 PM |    Score: -1 (1 votes cast)

mantis, you have no idea who I was named after, and once again digress from reasonable debate to spout ad hominem.

A namesake isn't necessarily the person you are named for, but can simply be someone with whom you share a name. As for reasonable debate, it is very clear you're not interested in such. To wit,




read it, mantis. A real expert would be able to define why waterboarding, which is disorienting and short-term in effect, is equivalent to actual torture, i.e severely painful and potentially long-term in effect.

First of all, Nance is a "real" expert, and your claim that he is not with absolutely no basis and totally ignores his qualifications. Reasonable debate, my ass. Second, your claim that something can't be torture because it doesn't fit the definition of torture that you just invented is ridiculously stupid. Third, the idea that waterboarding is not painful reveals an extremely limited view of what is and is not pain. Fourth, waterboarding is "potentially long-term in effect" in at least one way: the person being waterboarded could *drown to death*. I guess that's not long-term enough for you.

Instead we get a bunch of appeal to emotion, ad hominem, and flag-waving.

Total bullshit. Nance gives a very detailed explanation as to why waterboarding should not be allowed based on his personal experience, the history of the procedure, and research. It's a worthy argument from a person with unique insight into the matter. That is not to say that it can't be debate, but you don't bother to do that, do you. You dismiss it because your arguments are weak, when they exist at all.

As for my supposed "leftward" turn, I am and have always been a liberal; I have not turned left at all. The fact that I'm critical of the arguments that come from the left and that I find the Democratic Party to be full of idiots does not have anything to do with my opposition to US use of torture, in any form. This is not a liberal position, it is a civilized one. We will not defeat barbarian enemies by becoming barbarians ourselves.

74. Posted by mantis | October 31, 2007 3:55 PM |    Score: -1 (1 votes cast)

Jl: Instead we get a bunch of appeal to emotion, ad hominem, and flag-waving.

MANTIS: Total bullshit.

Well put. But I would go a step further. It calls into question whether or not Jl can read, or knows the definition of Ad-hominem.

As to CIVDIS. I find your perfect world formulation of good vs. evil unrealistic. But what is downright incorrect is your description of Abu Graib. What we saw there was the USG torture apparatus at work. Or do you believe that a group of borderline illiterates (I've seen Lyndie England interviewed) could have come up with a group of techniques specifically target at Arab men, simultaneously, but separate from the group at GITMO. It's an assertion that is self evidently false.




Indeed, that's why the ADMIN is so keen to not define waterboarding as torture. They have been practicing it and the "enhanced interrogations" at Abu Graib as policy. There is not clean, safe, or moral way to torture.

Fianlly, I don't know where yall get your data, but the stuff I see says that torture doesn't produce good results, waterboarding included. I have yet to see a study that demonstrates otherwise. However, given the ADMIN's utter failures at convicting terrorists in court, their terrible record at getting OBL, their disastrous WMD intel, and most of all, their failure to provide even one real example of data derived from torture that saved lives, despite the fact that they are defending the use of torture tooth and nail... I find those thing terribly compelling evidence that our experience with torture has reaffirmed what people said in the past. It doesn't work.

AND PLEASE, DON'T BRING UP KSM. As far as anyone can tell the data retrieved from KSM was historical, of low value, and it required a prolonged period of outright TORTURE. And again, the ADMIN has never released even one chickenfeed detail of a vital piece of INTEL coerced from him. Until they do, and given the thrashing they've received in congress, they have every reason to, I won't buy.

Finally, have you guys looked at our record of getting terrorists? It SUCKS. And yet every Jose Padilla (an Al Queda wannabe, with nil operational potential) or Airline Liquid Bomb (An utter fantasy that a trained chemist in a lab would have a hard time making, let alone a layman in an airplane bathroom) that they uncover, they hype like it's the second coming. If torture really worked so well, that wouldn't happen. They would have better Tango's to parade in front of us.




ashamed

75. Posted by ashamed | October 31, 2007 4:31 PM |    Score: -1 (1 votes cast)

I'm not watching this conversation as closely as I am my own threads, but I got two full postings out of Nance's article -- and I have found at least one discrepancy with his description of the waterboarding procedure with what I've read elsewhere.





And we actually managed to have a serious discussion about the subject, in the thread called "Troubled Water."

J.

76. Posted by Jay Tea | October 31, 2007 5:11 PM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

Thanks for the reply. Most of the stuff still has nothing to do with water boarding terrorists.

I still don't see a good reason why we should not use water boarding against terrorists if necessary to gain important information.

77. Posted by civildisobedience  | October 31, 2007 9:22 PM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)

mantis, the trouble with your link, and your attitude, is summed up very well in a comment in JT's "Troubled Waters" post.

If waterboarding is so bad, why can't you make an argment against it without using loaded words like "torture?"




And no, mantis, you have been liberal in past threads, but now you're taking a turn for the leftroid, using the commenting styles of the trolls instead of a reasonable person.

You, and "ashamed," read something confirming your beliefs, and ignore the flaws. Nothing in that essay was a rational discussion of why waterboarding should be considered torture, it was all "it's bad, mmkay, unAmerican, against mom and apple pie, we're better than this, if you disagree with me you're a bad bad person." Sure, that's how you wish it to be, but wishing doesn't make it so.




If a former expert speaking out against something was all it took to convince you, then very belief you claim to hold is subject to the random whims of individuals, rather than your personal judgement. Maybe you recognize that yours is lacking, but if you don't have the judgement to make the determination for yourself, you lack the judgement to determine who to trust on the matter as well.

Oh, and by the way, according to the American Heritage dictionary:
Namesake n. One that is named after another.

Maybe you should reconsider making commentary on my name until you have the guts to use your own. Of course, your complete lack of ability to rationally debate this topic leaves you with no choice but to make ignorant personal attacks, doesn't it?




78. Posted by John Irving | November 1, 2007 2:02 AM |    Score: 1 (1 votes cast)

Good one John Irving.

79. Posted by Veeshir | November 1, 2007 1:29 PM |    Score: 0 (0 votes cast)

Put your money where your mouth is, Kim. Undergo waterboarding. A blogger of your stature should have no difficulty finding a competent, qualified team who can do it safely. Record it on video, and when it's done, smile and declare you'd have no problem doing it again.

If it's not torture, if it's no more than mildly unpleasant, then PROVE IT.

80. Posted by Hieronymous Coward | November 1, 2007 2:58 PM |    Score: 0 (2 votes cast)

APPENDIX THREE: thehuffingtonpost.com waterboarding blog interaction

[Kaj Larsen](#) | [BIO](#) | [I'M A FAN OF THIS BLOGGERS](#)



[A Lesson For Mukasey: Why I Had Myself Water-Boarded](#)

Posted October 31, 2007 | 05:48 PM (EST)

Read More: [Michael Mukasey](#), [Mukasey Torture](#), [Mukasey Waterboarding](#), [Breaking Politics News](#)



As a journalist for Current TV, a former military officer, and a student of public policy I have been involved in the debate about the War on Terror from the frontlines in Afghanistan to the policy discussions of academia. In the spring of 2006 a battle was brewing between the Bush Administration and some influential members of Congress over the use coercive interrogation techniques. The conflict over what techniques were legally and morally permissible had been a subtext of the War on Terror for years, but for the most part the debate was occurring inside of the intelligence community, the human rights community, and in small legal circles. It was outside the purview of the American public.

[Make your point at current.com](#)

By April of 2006 the debate about coercive interrogation and its most controversial technique, water-boarding, had started to spill into the headlines. I was in graduate school at the time. As I watched the debate unfold, and listened to both pundits and policymakers give their opinion on whether this technique constituted torture, I was struck by the strangeness of the debate. All of these people were lobbying opinions about a subject they had never seen or witnessed, and that struck me as problematic in a healthy democracy. See, in full disclosure I had a unique knowledge of water-boarding. I had the technique performed on me during my time in the service as part of my SERE training (Survival Evasion Resistance Escape). I, like all Special Forces operatives who deploy overseas, was sent to a training camp where we learned to resist interrogation and survive captivity, god forbid that ever happened to us overseas. Ironically, one of the many techniques we learned during this training was to assert our rights as told under Article III of the Geneva Convention. So, because I was familiar with water-boarding, I was intrigued by this national conversation that was going on about this thing that few people really understood. But, like many Americans, the pre-occupations of everyday life, for me the pressure of mid-terms and exams, pushed the controversy to the back of my mind.

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Buzz up! on Yahoo!

Then, in mid March I traveled to Cambodia for Spring Break. While there I visited the Tuol Sleng (also known as S-21) prison in Phnom Penh. The Tuol Sleng prison had been converted to a museum and memorial for the victims of the Cambodian Genocide under the Pol Pot regime. As I walked through the museum and saw the photographs of the victims of the genocide, I was shocked to see a picture of the Khmer Rouge Water-boarding a Cambodian villager. At that moment I saw a throughline between the debate we were having domestically and the picture I was standing in front of. I was spurred into action, and upon my return to the United States, I decided to have myself water-boarded, this time on national TV, as a public service, so that this controversial technique could be judged in the court of public opinion.

Kaj Larsen's water-boarding video airs Wednesday at 7pm PST/10PM EST in a one hour special report on [Current TV](#).

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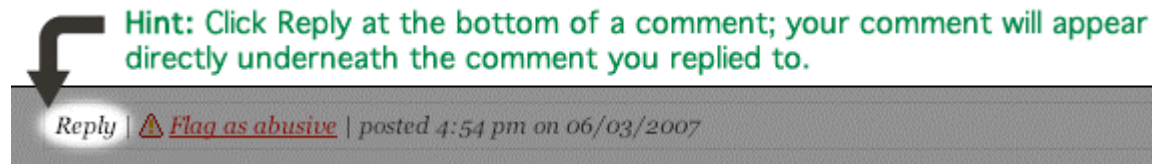
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▼ [retiredSEAL](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of retiredSEAL)

Kaj cannot properly demonstrate waterboarding for a number of key reasons:

1. He is a voluntary "victim." Arranging the event, hiring the former SERE instructors, and defining the parameters, he knows how far they will go.
2. He is an experienced "victim." He's been waterboarded before in SERE school, so he knows what to expect.
3. He is an extensively, thoroughly trained former service member. He was a SEAL, trained as a combat swimmer who underwent scores of events and tests in training that conditioned him to maintain his composure and self control under duress in the water. He could not possibly demonstrate the bone-melting trauma an otherwise inexperienced, involuntary, and uncertain detainee would display.

Kaj was one of my students at the Naval Academy. He was an exceptional swimmer, water polo player, and an excellent SEAL. His calm endurance throughout the staged waterboarding event is a textbook response for what he was trained to do in those situations, but few are. Be assured anyone else would have responded in greater distress. For better examples, check out Jeanie Moss's piece on waterboarding on CNN. Then you'll see what happens to amateurs, and they are still volunteers for the procedure!

| posted 02:00 pm on 11/05/2007

▼ [Newsguy](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of Newsguy)

I never thought torture was something we would ever be debating in this country. What's next? Concentration camps and Zyklon B "showers"?

| posted 08:16 pm on 11/04/2007

▼ [Necron99](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of Necron99)

In our time, political speech and writing are largely the defence of the indefensible.

...

Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness. Defenceless villages are bombarded from the air, the inhabitants driven out into the countryside, the cattle machine-gunned, the huts set on fire with incendiary bullets: this is called pacification. Millions of peasants are robbed of their farms and sent trudging along the roads with no more than they can carry: this is called transfer of population or rectification of frontiers. People are imprisoned for years without trial, or shot in the back of the neck or sent to die of scurvy in Arctic lumber camps: this is called elimination of unreliable elements. Such phraseology is needed if one wants to name things without calling up mental pictures of them.

George Orwell

<http://www.k-l.com/Orwell/index.cgi/work/essays/language.html>

| posted 01:40 pm on 11/04/2007

▼ [.ohjaygee](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of ohjaygee](#))

Reading the responses to Kaj Larson's blogs on 'waterboarding' and being exposed to the ongoing, although too often glossed over, debate about what constitutes torture and what doesn't, what's morally acceptable or what isn't, whether 'times of war' or 'the pursuit of global terror' can be regarded as exceptional circumstances demanding similiar techniques, etc., etc. is all somewhat bizarre and more than a little surreal - especially to one who is neither an American citizen nor lives in the USA, but rather in Africa (South Africa to be precise), the continent where such abuses to one's fellow human beings are invariably regarded or often assumed by those in 'the first world' to be the norm, rather than the exception. I am not for one moment suggesting that it doesn't and hasn't and isn't taking place in Africa, it's totally unacceptable in whatever form, reasons or circumstances. Torture is torture is torture, period, irrespective of the cute labels, clever words and disingenuous arguements expended on this topic. Ironically we in the 'third world' still recognise these principals, thanks in no small part to the leadership of the likes of Mandela and others, despite convenient perceptions to the contrary. As I said all of this '...is somewhat bizarre and more than a little surreal...'

| posted 01:26 pm on 11/04/2007

▼ [.Ramirez](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Ramirez](#))

Fortunately there have been more Americans volunteering for waterboarding than there have been detainees waterboarded for information.

From ABC News:

"For all the debate over waterboarding, it has been used on only three al Qaeda figures, according to current and former U.S. intelligence officials.

As ABC News first reported in September, waterboarding has not been used since 2003 and has been specifically prohibited since Gen. Michael Hayden took over as CIA director.

Officials told ABC News on Sept. 14 that the controversial interrogation technique, in which a suspect has water poured over his mouth and nose to stimulate a drowning reflex as shown in the above demonstration, had been banned by the CIA director at the recommendation of his deputy, Steve Kappes.

Hayden sought and received approval from the White House to remove waterboarding from the list of approved interrogation techniques first authorized by a presidential finding in 2002."

<http://blogs.abcnews.com/theblotter/2007/11/exclusive-only-.html>

| posted 12:50 pm on 11/04/2007

▼ [.Arielman](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Arielman](#))

In the Ossining, New York State Urban Cultural Park (there's 14 in New York state, i.e., Buffalo Theater District, Sackett's Harbor, Erie Canal Lock in Syracuse, NY, etc.) next to the Sing Sing prison, there's a small museum of the prisoner treatment in the past. One artifact is a stone basin that fit around a prisoner's neck and then was filled with water until the prisoner could drown in a "puddle". This might be the original water torture technique. A small former cell is shown and other artifacts, including a current bag of "shanks" tagged with evidence tags in current cases apparently. On some days one can visit the inside of the original Croton Aqueduct, running nearby, which with the Bronx Historical Society we hiked many sections of on Saturdays. It was what made NYC thrive and erroneously attributed to the cause of the presence of the cockroach or "water bug". I would have thought this form of water torture, i.e., simulated drowning, had been left in the museums of the world.

| posted 09:00 am on 11/04/2007

▼ [_girlgoneriled](#) (See profile | [I'm a fan of girlgoneriled](#))

I think this is a brilliant piece, a concise gem. Larsen's shown us this particular technique (waterboarding), along with the arguments for and against torture (without leaving any weasel room for the neocon crowd to pretend this somehow ISN'T torture.)

Those of you who think it was a "stunt", and those of you who whine that it doesn't go far enough because the real thing is even worse, are all missing the point. The point is, this is what's going on, in the name of our government. Stop playing with words; call it what it is (torture), and face the questions raised.

And Larsen is absolutely right: It's not about who "they" are. It's about who we are. And who we want to be.

| posted 02:07 am on 11/03/2007

▼ [_drlenamarie](#) (See profile | [I'm a fan of drlenamarie](#))

The underlying theme of the literal definition of empathy is the strongest component in this piece of work. Through feeling and experiencing another's pain, we may become more tolerant and understanding of them. Hopefully, that was the intention behind this clip--

That being said, I'm not sure if we get the clearest picture of what waterboarding really is. There is a difference between a trained Navy SEAL and your average person, and what they are able to physically handle, for multiple reasons. The circumstances are also quite different. Paying someone to 'torture' you versus being held against your will in a prison and interrogated mercilessly by your enemies aren't exactly situations within the same context.

The debate that should be spawned from what we've watched here is not necessarily the credibility or intent of the journalist, or his knowledge on the subject matter based upon his life experiences, but rather where are we empathically as a society? Can we learn from the simple, yet trite saying, 'you don't know someone until we've walked in his shoes?' Can we apply this to why conflict is happening all over the world and in our own backyards?

If you are against waterboarding or torture in general, no matter who it is used upon, apply the same rules to your own life and start readjusting your own pre-conceived biases and judgments about who is 'good' or 'bad.' We need to look at our similarities as people rather than our differences and see that if we don't start respecting another person's basic human rights or start approaching individuals or groups of people from a place of empathy then the world will continue to head in a downward spiral.

| posted 09:22 am on 11/02/2007

▼ [_rboylem](#) (See profile | [I'm a fan of rboylem](#))

There's all this talk that these enhanced interrogation techniques (torture) have yielded a ton of information about terrorists and God only knows what else. We have yet to see one shred of evidence that this is true. Torture is just plain wrong and it never produces the results expected. We've known this since the days of the Spanish Inquisition; but Bush and his chum Dick "The Darkness" Cheney seem to have forgotten their history lessons.

| posted 02:33 am on 11/02/2007

▼ [_Ragtimer](#) (See profile | [I'm a fan of Ragtimer](#))

Torture for what? Waterboarding or not! Is or isn't it torture?

It seems to me everyone has been distracted again by the media hype and their protesters themselves with this torture concern. It all just buys more time for Bush to bait and switch the core concern which is Why are they torturing anyone....for some alleged "intelligence"... about what?

The torturers are lead to believe they are trying to get vital information on.....what? "Anything?"

Here's what I think. The only reason to force anyone to give up "secrets", "intelligence" is to find out "who" knows the truth about George's relationship with the perpetrators of 9/11 and where they are, so they can be silenced. Those are the ones that will put the nail in Bush's coffin.

It is only these people that Bush is scared of, for they can turn the whole United States credibility straight into the toilet. Any other "intelligence" is of no use, because the Bush machine wants an endless war. Therefore what and why do we need torture people for "intelligence" for?

The only answer is to hide the truth.

| posted 01:56 am on 11/02/2007

▼ [.knosiswar](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of knosiswar)

The ultimate question seems to be, and I would like other's points of view. Are you willing to say, that you would rather give/sacrifice your life, and the life of friends and family, children, parents, siblings and co-workers before you would allow your government to waterboard one person who if given the chance, (regardless of his reasons and/or motivations), would see to the destruction of those things dear to you.

If you had captured an individual, on September 10th, 2001, and you had intelligence that was leading you to believe that a major attack that had the potential to kill thousands, and effect the lives of tens of thousands of victims family and friends, and rob the country of its peace and security, that you would be opposed to waterboarding an individual who could save those lives if he was so inclined, but instead he is anticipating the carnage and destruction that is to be inflicted by his hands and those of his co-conspirators. If you walked into your child's room with your loaded shotgun to find an intruder has killed or assaulted your child, would you spare him any pain or suffering?

I think the war was wrong, but we could accept this technique with OVERSIGHT, and get this AG into office, and straighten out the Justice Department. We have to make Bush find a way out, but this 'TECHNIQUE' is not painful or intentionally fatal, it sucks but so does terrorist attacks that kill and maim, but this a distraction if we are not going to IMPEACH this President, we will ultimately have to allow an AG that's not going to prosecute the President.

| posted 01:00 am on 11/02/2007

▼ [.nighthawk808](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of nighthawk808)

"If you had captured an individual, on September 10th, 2001, and you had intelligence that was leading you to believe that a major attack that had the potential to kill thousands, and effect the lives of tens of thousands of victims family and friends, and rob the country of its peace and security, that you would be opposed to waterboarding an individual who could save those lives if he was so inclined, but instead he is anticipating the carnage and destruction that is to be inflicted by his hands and those of his co-conspirators. If you walked into your child's room with your loaded shotgun to find an intruder has killed or assaulted your child, would you spare him any pain or suffering?"

Ah, the old Bush/Dukakis debate technique. Legislate (or, in the case of the TV show "24", make a whole series) based on whims of the imagination rather than a rational examination of reality. After all, reality is boring, but the monsters and demons one can make up out of thin air have limitless "scare the little voter-sheep into supporting the indefensible" potential.

| [Parent](#) | posted 07:20 am on 11/03/2007

▼ [.CaseyBabes](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of CaseyBabes)

Apparently you are capable of attacking the writer but not the writings. Kinda makes YOU the boring one.

| [Parent](#) | posted 10:56 am on 11/03/2007

▼ [.neoconjob](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of neoconjob)

actually, it's "the writings" that got "attacked" here... the fantasy-fetishized what-would-jack-bauer-do approach to public policy, along the lines of the death-penalty question thrown at Dukakis in the 88 debates... the one he flubbed by trying to be logical. unless of course the writer is so deeply connected to the subject that to criticize one is to criticize the other...?

| [Parent](#) | posted 08:54 pm on 11/06/2007

▼ [.HawkInUsAll](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of HawkInUsAll)

Waterboarding is without a doubt an important "technique" that needs further attention and examination, especially in light of Mukasey's recent comments. However, I felt this demonstration was rather self-indulgent. Giving the world a vague picture of what water boarding looks like is a noble endeavor, but staging it is simply misleading and irresponsible. Is this what passes for journalism at Current TV? Looks more like an ex SEAL looking for an alternative to working for Blackwater.

| posted 10:57 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.splashy](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of splashy)

The key is that you get much farther with creating friends than you do creating enemies. You get farther with gaining truth by connecting with others than you do by frightening others. ANYONE would say ANYTHING to get torturers to stop, so it is all suspect information. All torture is about is intimidating others, not getting information.

Want the truth? Be friendly, relaxed, encourage others to relax and feel like they can say anything and you will understand why they do what they do and have done. It may SEEM to take longer, but what you get is far more useful.

| posted 09:26 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.Bob Egan](#) (See profile | I'm a fan of Bob Egan)

It is interesting that we often criticize other countries while ignoring our own crimes! All we need is one more administration like this one and we will be able to witness public executions. Maybe they will hold them in "Arenas" with our hired mercenaries doing the job like the "Gladiators". Of course, we would have to admit to torture, as the "subjects" condition would be a dead giveaway!! (Pun intended) The way to correct most of this is to join "The World Court". This will never happen because shortly after joining, a lot of our government officials would probably be facing war crimes charges.

| posted 09:01 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_llozano](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of llozano](#))

It is one thing to do it when you are in a protected environment and know that you will be safe and quite another when the people inflicting the torture are unknown to you and are trying to force some type of admission from you. Waterboarding is torture. Whether we use it or make it legal is the real question. The current nominee for AG should be able to answer that question. If he cannot he should not be Attorney General.

| posted 08:46 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_tbone99](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of tbone99](#))

Context is everything

| posted 06:26 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_xenoploid](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of xenoploid](#))

This "simulation" actually hurts the argument against torture because you have portrayed waterboarding in such a tame manner that most ignorant people will think the real technique isn't that bad. You have to do phase 3: wrap cellophane around the face, poke a hole in it, then pour the water in. Showing you last for 24 minutes, and then laughing afterwards is an extreme media distortion of the truth, and a disservice to the public.

| posted 05:28 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_TimN](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of TimN](#))

You seem to know a lot for someone who hasn't a clue of what he's talking about.

| [Parent](#) | posted 09:00 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_horseface](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of horseface](#))

T-E-S-T-O-S-T-E-R-O-N-E IS T-O-R-T-U-R-E

| posted 05:20 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_TheLar](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of TheLar](#))

Kaj - FANTASTIC! Reminds me of the training I had before snorkeling the first time - the dude told us if we didn't go about gradually, our body would think we were drowning no matter what our minds thought and we would hyperventilate. Even with the greatest care, among loved ones, in a beautiful tropical paradise, the feeling of terror was primal. Fortunately, it soon wore off - my point - those tortured have none of those advantages. I can't imagine their fear.

Mucho Kudos to you Kaj for the simple wisdom of this project: to walk a mile in another's shoes.

Lots of people are advocating things (torture, war, prisons) they've never seen or endured. Unfortunately, I think some people, even after walking a mile in another's shoes, let greed take over anyway. Not that any war advocate anywhere would have the courage you do, but a few might change.

Keep up the great work. With much admiration,

Larry Nocella

<http://www.LarryNocella.com/>

| posted 03:57 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_Kungfublood](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Kungfublood](#))

He forgot to mention how many times he was tazed, kicked in the balls and punched in the stomach and throat before the "boarding" like all the rest of them are.

| posted 02:06 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.helonias](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of helonias](#))

Why not try the Lodivico technique from A Clockwork Orange.
That seemed to work.

| posted 01:33 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.nighthawk808](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of nighthawk808](#))

That's been renamed FOX News, and some people seem to enjoy it instead of considering it a horrible form of torture.

| [Parent](#) | posted 07:25 am on 11/03/2007

▼ [.NKM](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of NKM](#))

Sir Francis Walsingham, head of Elizabeth I's secret service in the 17th century England knew that torture does not work as a means of getting accurate information. What we are seeing is something truly demonic.

| posted 01:25 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.CaseyBabes](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of CaseyBabes](#))

I wonder if Larsen would be laughing after suffering the implements of torture employed during Elizabeth I's rule. Anyway, I agree with Walsingham's assessment as he was commenting on the use of severe pain being non productive. Waterboarding, on the other hand, is on a level with the ancient technique used in China with the intermittent dripping of water on the head of a bound prisoner. Yes, some call it the Water Torture Technique, but as I recall reading somewhere, it did not result in pain or lasting damage to the prisoner (other than his fear in not wanting to go through it again). Perhaps that explains Larsen's ability to laugh after undergoing today's feature of water torture. Kinda curious, ain't it, about all the fuss because the roughing up of non uniformed combatants, not representing a country, nor under any pretense of honoring the Geneva Convention, who embrace the effectiveness of killing their innocent men, women and children as well as those at other world locations, and who employ the most ghastly forms of murder to their prisoners. I'm sure that the high and mighty will decry we shouldn't do it because they do it, well, we don't. Waterboarding ain't nice, but then, if you think about it, it goes right up to the line not to cross.

| [Parent](#) | posted 02:33 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.mddragon](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of mddragon](#))

It's not about "them" Casey, it's about us and what we stand for. I respectfully disagree.

| [Parent](#) | posted 05:32 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.neoconjob](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of neoconjob](#))

me too, minus the "respectfully" part.

| [Parent](#) | posted 08:57 pm on 11/06/2007

▼ [.BushSunkOurShip](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of BushSunkOurShip](#))

But this lets the dark vador and the cowboy build their courage up, replacing the fact that they were to chickhawk to serve when it was their turn in the military.

| [Parent](#) | posted 07:28 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.RSOlive](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of RSOlive](#))

Some of the otherwise powerful effect of this episode is lost when Mr. Larsen comes up laughing and joking about his experience. It would not take a great stretch for pro-waterboarding people to say "it ain't torture if you can laugh it off a couple of minutes after it ends," particularly since it is unlikely that these folks haven't been trained as Mr. Larsen was when he was in Special Forces. In this day and time, we shouldn't have to read between the lines, where we should (but many won't) see that he is a self-effacing stalwart from a rare group of people that are a step above most of us in inner strength and courage. I'd still like to see Mr. Bush waterboarded so he can give an intelligent assessment of whether or not it is torture, and then move on to the debate of whether it should be used.

| posted 01:11 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.splashy](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of splashy](#))

Sometimes people laugh in relief after a horrible experience when they realize they don't have to do THAT again. I have done so after surgery or other very painful and traumatic experiences. It relieves the stress of the experience. Him laughing is actually, to me, a sign of just how horrible it WAS.

| [Parent](#) | posted 09:36 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.magicmary](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of magicmary](#))

It is really a sad and sorry time in America when my fellow Americans can be accepting of any kind of coercive and traumatizing treatment aka torture and yes, it's torture.

My God, how did we get to be such Ugly Americans? Water boarding, Abu Ghraib. I'm ashamed of all of this but I am more disturbed and ashamed of people who are in denial about how outrageous this is and how damaging it is for our country to be okay with it. People in this forum. When you can in your mind justify even a tiny expression of inhumanity or a slight infraction of the Geneva convention now, will you be assisting me onto a train going to a concentration camp later? This is how evil comes to power.

We will only defeat our enemies by being better people whom no one can hate. We reap what we sow.

| posted 12:37 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.CaseyBabes](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of CaseyBabes](#))

Right, got it.....we can kill 'em, but not rough 'em up a little. Guess that roughing up, laughingly called "torture" in today's PC environment, shouldn't be used against those dark-minded gentlemen indulged in the mass killings of the innocent at worldwide locations. Got it, we'll just sit on our hands and wait for the next BOOOOMMMMMMMMMM....gotta be better.

| [Parent](#) | posted 02:39 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.mddragon](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of mddragon](#))

My respectfully disagree is no longer in play with this kind of fear mongering. Of the people being waterboarded, you know for sure they are all dark-minded gentlemen, you don't know that now do you. Nice Condi Rice impression at the end.

| [Parent](#) | posted 05:36 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.CaseyBabes](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of CaseyBabes](#))

What ticked you off? I'm only being mildly sarcastic about political correctness. And no, I do not know that all dark-minded gentlemen are being waterboarded....what's the point? Should I have dropped my PC pretend for the correct Islamofascist label? You lost me on the Condi Rice impression. When did she ever say BOOM, or whatever? Hey, if you can't stand sarcasm just pass me up. Sheeeeshh (oops, before you get ticked off again, sheeeeshh just means "golllyyyy!")

| [Parent](#) | posted 10:09 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.MajorKong](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of MajorKong](#))

Reverse-engineering Communist interrogation methods is not the best way to get useful information. The Communists found these methods much more useful for coercing false confessions (for propaganda).

I suspect you're more concerned with the feel-good revenge aspects of mistreatment than gaining useful intelligence.

| [Parent](#) | posted 10:34 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [.CaseyBabes](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of CaseyBabes](#))

Uh King, I guess there's a point in there somewhere, beside the goofy insult, but I was merely highlighting the absurdity of PC warfare. "Reverse-engineering Communist interrogation methods....." Golly, ain't we clever.

| [Parent](#) | posted 11:05 am on 11/02/2007

▼ [.neoconjob](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of neoconjob](#))

if it's good enough for the KGB it's good enough for CaseyBabes.

| [Parent](#) | posted 08:58 pm on 11/06/2007

▼ [.CaseyBabes](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of CaseyBabes](#))

Sorry King, I'm not impressed with your insulting accusation nor your point about false confessions. That all you got? That the best you can do?

As I understand it, Khalid al Whatshisname gave up quite a bit of info about terrorism that probably has saved many, many lives. Saving lives, now that's a feel-good form of revenge I'll gloat by. ivqii

| [Parent](#) | posted 04:04 pm on 11/02/2007

▼ [_nighthawk808](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of nighthawk808](#))

And you know he wasn't making up stuff on the spot just to get it to end, how? Because Billo said so?

| [Parent](#) | posted 07:29 am on 11/03/2007

▼ [_deminmo](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of deminmo](#))

What if this waterboarding technique becomes the accepted way to deal with anything that Bush designates as a threat?

| [Parent](#) | posted 08:31 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_clintonius](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of clintonius](#))

Good piece until the biggest liar in our nation was used as some sort of authority. Derschowitz is a blight on Harvard and a very dangerous person to the security of the United States. Kaj should have done his homework before going to him as a source of objective analysis. He's a serial liar.

| posted 10:11 am on 11/01/2007

▼ [_wrabbitt](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of wrabbitt](#))

torture? have them watch Television during prime time. no wonder our kids need mind altering medications.

| [Parent](#) | posted 11:51 am on 11/01/2007

▼ [_ricr](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of ricr](#))

Really? I think Derschowitz is one of the more brave and interesting commentators we have today; I don't always agree with him, but he isn't afraid to take a politically incorrect position, or a position that isn't in vogue; maybe that's why you seem so vitriolic in your distaste for him - I think he's one of our great minds and glad he's around.

| [Parent](#) | posted 11:54 am on 11/01/2007

▼ [_Balzac](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Balzac](#))

Derschowitz makes a valid point, which is how I understood him the first time he made this point. eHe makes the point that if torture is to be used, the government should be required to get a warrant and Bush should, as Commander in Chief, sign his name to the torture warrant.

Derschowitz could make this same point while being opposed to torture, but instead he does a disservice by not opining against torture with or without a warrant.

Still, if his opinion on documenting torture and signing torture warrants were implemented, torture would probably never be done because so few of the people who want to torture people would be willing to sign their names to a torture warrant.

| [Parent](#) | posted 01:40 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_splashy](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of splashy](#))

That is a good point. What has to happen is those that ORDER it done should pay the price!

| [Parent](#) | posted 09:38 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_Economike](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Economike](#))

Torture also produces a lot of disinformation because people will say what they think the Torturer wants to hear even if it is false.

| [Parent](#) | posted 01:27 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [_splashy](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of splashy](#))

Absolutely! That is only ONE of the problems with torture.

The ONLY reason to torture is to be sadistic and intimidate, not to get information.

I bet there are recordings of torture that the folks that ordered the torture like to watch, just to get their jollies.

| [Parent](#) | posted 09:42 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [. TimN](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of TimN](#))

Actually torture is very effective at corroborating other testimonies. In other words, if you took three Liberals and told them to hide their beloved signed copy of "An Inconvenient Truth" somewhere in the U.S., torture (more accurately cohersed interrogation) would assuredly cause them to reveal the location of their book no matter how resolved our progressive heroes wished to be.

| [Parent](#) | posted 10:30 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [. Economike](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Economike](#))

Bush and Co. are like the person who gets decked in a barroom fight and punches the person laughing at them because they can't find the real perpetrator.

| [Parent](#) | posted 01:29 pm on 11/01/2007

▼ [. nighthawk808](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of nighthawk808](#))

Actually, they would go to the bar across the street and start punching random people there instead. After the first random punching, they'd get up on a table and scream, "Mission Accomplished!", then spend the rest of the night getting their asses kicked by everyone else.

| [Parent](#) | posted 07:37 am on 11/03/2007

▼ [. TomR](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of TomR](#))

Demsrnuts, trying to change the subject? Perhaps you don't care for Republicans who support waterboarding being compared to the communist Khmer Rouge. Maybe you don't care for your beloved George W. Bush who embraces totalitarianism, "If this were a dictatorship, it'd be a heck of a lot easier, just so long as I'm the dictator."

Yes, you are wise beyond words. Please regale us with more of your infinite wisdom.

- Tom

ps. The Dems may be throwing some of their own out during the primaries. But, that doesn't mean the end of support for a Democratic majority in Washington. It just means better Democrats in power.

| [Parent](#) | posted 08:06 am on 11/01/2007

▼ [. Henk](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of Henk](#))

The discontent with the congress may be bad for the Dems, but it's horrible for the Repigs. They register an even lower number than the Dems.

| [Parent](#) | posted 10:22 am on 11/01/2007

▼ [. MikeDu](#) ([See profile](#) | [I'm a fan of MikeDu](#))

Hey, demsrnuts, was Hitler ever tried for warcrimes? So what's your point? Hard to try a man under the law when he places himself above the law, isn't it?

I guess 1 million dead, a region in flames and the U.S. military in a shambles isn't enough carnage for you. Maybe when they start raising your taxes to *finally* pay for the second-most-expensive war this nation has ever undertaken - maybe then you'll start to feel a little sympathy pain. A recent study showed conservatism is a form of mental retardation.

| [Parent](#) | posted 09:57 am on 11/01/2007

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APPENDIX FOUR: rightwingnews.com waterboarding blog interaction

November 08, 2007

So, If Waterboarding Is Supposed To Be Torture...

The latest liberal trend seems be getting waterboarded and then declaring that it's torture.

[Code Pink](#) has done it.

Some of the posters at the [Democratic Underground](#) have done it.

One of the columnists at the [HuffPo](#) has done it.

...which begs a question.

If waterboarding is really torture, why are so many people happy to publicly endure it?

I mean, consider other techniques that everyone can agree constitute torture. For example...

- * Is anyone willing to have bamboo shoots driven under their fingernails?
- * How about having their feet severely beaten and then being forced to stand for hours?
- * What about having your toes broken, one right after the other, with a hammer?

Why is that the very same people who will happily endure a waterboarding and then write about it would never agree to do the same thing with the tortures mentioned above?

Simple: because waterboarding, unpleasant though it may be, isn't torture. It's not fun, but it doesn't take very long, it's not humiliating, and it doesn't do any permanent damage. The very same people who were getting waterboarded in public and calling it a "war crime" were probably drinking a coke, eating a tofu hot dog, and yukking it up with their friends 20 minutes later.

That's why the whole debate over waterboarding is silly, frivolous, and trivial -- particularly given that Al-Qaeda tortures our soldiers to death and dumps their bodies in the desert.

If the worst thing that our enemies did to our troops was waterboarding, it would be like a dream come true.

John Hawkins | 06:01 AM |   (108)  (0)

[Email this](#)

Note: Comments and Trackbacks for this entry closed on November 13, 2007 06:01 AM

[Comments \(108\)](#)

Once again liberals making up lies and repeating them. Anything they can do to help our enemies.

Posted by RAA

[November 8, 2007 8:20 AM](#) |

I've asserted before, and will continue to maintain, that waterboarding does nothing more damaging than frightening the subject to the point of hysterics. That ain't torture.

Now if Code Pink et al want to volunteer to experience some *real* torture I can arrange for them to get acquainted with the jumper-cables and spare car battery in my garage. ;)

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy

[November 8, 2007 8:49 AM](#) |

Another excellent point, Mr. Hawkins!

Of course, our liberal friends could just be proving how tough they are to withstand such horrible torture...I doubt any of those brave Code Pink soldiers screamed "DON'T WATERBOARD ME BRO!" while being so horrifically harmed. But god FORBID one of them break a nail!

Posted by gwgmer

[November 8, 2007 9:20 AM](#) |

I could care less if it is torture.

We are at war the last time I checked, and since the bad guys just want us dead I would like to know the wheres, the hows, and the whos. If it takes waterboarding, or an electro pike up their ass, or Rosie O'Donnell, to get them to talk than by in large feel free!

Posted by Corperate_Cabana
[November 8, 2007 9:54 AM](#) |

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Posted by Corperate_Cabana
[November 8, 2007 9:57 AM](#) |

I'm not saying it is or it is not torture, but...

have any of you ever been 'waterboarded'? If not you have no idea what you are talking about, when you so casually dismiss it.

Be a man and have it done to you then talk about it. Otherwise you argue from a point of ignorance.

Posted by BritCit
[November 8, 2007 10:16 AM](#) |

Posted by Corperate_Cabana November 8, 2007 9:57 AM

Come on now, Rosie? They just want us to either die or submit to their 7th century death cult. Do you really think that deserves being subjected to Rosie?

Posted by bjlillo
[November 8, 2007 10:22 AM](#) |

Good call, John Hawkins. I've thought the same thing myself for a long time. If waterboarding was really such a horrible form of torture, journalists wouldn't line up like kids at a Disney ride to "experience" it.

You don't see any journalists lining up to have their eyelids cut off, or to be buried in the sand up to their neck next to an anthill, or to have their fingernails and teeth removed with a set of pliers.

Maybe it's because those types of treatment really are torture, while waterboarding is just a little meaner than usual.

Posted by [President Friedman](#)
[November 8, 2007 12:37 PM](#) |

Posted by BritCit
November 8, 2007 10:16 AM

So, how's that Islamic assimilation going for y'all over there? Heh. You should worry about keeping your own house in order.

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
[November 8, 2007 12:49 PM](#) |

I've asserted before, and will continue to maintain, that waterboarding does nothing more damaging than frightening the subject to the point of hysterics. That ain't torture.

And if it *were*, then final exams would also fall under the definition of "torture".

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 12:53 PM](#) |

Come on. It's been considered torture for centuries, since it was first used. It has become a political football is the difference now.

Some don't want to catch our president in an obvious lie. "We do not torture" If only he had said "Read my lips" first, there would have been an elegant symmetry to it!

Posted by BrightHorizons
[November 8, 2007 12:55 PM](#) |

Our anti torture law is written in a very vague manner. Quite subjective. Nothing that causes permanent mental or physical duress. To some loud music and sleep deprivation is torture, to others it's a college party. I don't consider pissing on the Koran torture, but Ahmed might. Simulated drowning doesn't seem like torture to me, but to you it does. Panties on the head sound great to me, but not to ahmed. It's not like we are doing this b/c we are bored, it's to get info that they wouldn't voluntarily give up to us. You lefties know what real torture is and we don't do it. Nobody comes from our captivity physically harmed. We are at least letting them live. Uniformed enemy combatants deserve and would otherwise get death on the battlefield, but we would rather extract terror info from them and set them free.

Posted by tblrk2006
[November 8, 2007 1:00 PM](#) |

have any of you ever been 'waterboarded'?

Actually at least two people on RWN have been waterboarded as part of their SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape) training in the US military. You can read their opinions [here](#).

Also, at least two people at Rachellucas.com have also been waterboarded (again, as part of SERE training). Their opinions can be found [here](#).

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:02 PM](#) |

have any of you ever been 'waterboarded'?

Actually at least two people on RWN have been waterboarded as part of their SERE (Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape) training in the US military. You can read their opinions here:

www.rightwingnews.com/mt331/2007/11/waterboarding_is_not_torture_b.php?comments=show#comments

Also, at least two people at Rachellucas.com have also been waterboarded (again, as part of SERE training). Their opinions can be found here:

<http://rachellucas.com/?p=388#comments>

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:04 PM](#) |

Posted by BrightHorizons
[November 8, 2007 12:55 PM](#)

Please. Nobody that really advocates torture....like our enemies would waste time waterboarding. Try cutting off toes and fingers, breaking bones, burning, fingernail removal, rats, harming captured friends and family. BH, under current, loose, defanition i am under torture reading your crap. Thinking that you can vote with that little brain is ceratinly torture.

Posted by [tblrk2006](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:04 PM](#) |

Come on. It's been considered torture for centuries, since it was first used.

Whether it's been "considered" torture has no bearing on whether it is or not.

I might consider a 20-page research paper to be "torture", but I don't think Amnesty International is going to start investigating my professors.

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:06 PM](#) |

"Some don't want to catch our president in an obvious lie." That's because it isn't an obvious lie, Bright Horizons, unless you proceed from the template that Bush = lie.

You are correct to point out that it is a political football, but "torture?"

That's what Hawkins' point is. The folks in those lib groups did waterboarding to themselves with no problems. That ain't real torture. When done on a prisoner, it screws with the mind, sure. But it does no damage.

Real torture is what our enemy does. Real torture is what happens to prisoners who emerge with physical and mental wounds that will never heal.

Posted by [Big_Mo](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:06 PM](#) |

You know, of all the people who post on this board, Lester is the one I'd love to meet personally.

Posted by [jimg](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:30 PM](#) |

Don't Lester_Craven me, bro.

Posted by [MrAlwaysRight](#)
[November 8, 2007 1:40 PM](#) |

And once again Lester spews soo much crap and still does not have one intelligent thought. Either he is a complete moron, a child, or just mentally handicapped.

Ohh and Jesper if your an American than why the fuck are you still here if you hate it so much go somewhere else. And if your nto an american i can say for myself that no one cares what you haev to say.

Posted by [bokchoy](#)
[November 8, 2007 2:06 PM](#) |

Whether it's been "considered" torture has no bearing on whether it is or not.

What does then?

It has been outlawed?

Posted by BrightHorizons
[November 8, 2007 2:12 PM](#) |

It has been outlawed? Posted by BrightHorizons November 8, 2007 2:12 PM |

Could you please show us the law, passed by the congress, that says that "water boarding" is illegal in the USA.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 2:17 PM](#) |

Bright Horizons - an update to what I wrote earlier. There is an interesting and quite heated (meaning: mean) debate over at Evangelical Outpost on this very subject that got picked up at RedState. Been going on for two days.

Someone posted the U.S. code on torture which makes me rethink what I wrote earlier, and also because there seems to be a lot of debate on what actually constitutes waterboarding. So, in light of the following, I withdraw what I wrote above, and color myself undecided/confused:

US Code, Title 18, sect. 2340:

- (1) "torture" means an act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering (other than pain or suffering incidental to lawful sanctions) upon another person within his custody or physical control;
- (2) "severe mental pain or suffering" means 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;

Posted by [Big Mo](#)
[November 8, 2007 2:20 PM](#) |

Posted by BrightHorizons
November 8, 2007 2:12 PM

What the heck are you talking about, BH? Much to the chagrin of Islamofascist apologists everywhere, waterboarding has not, to the best of my knowledge, been outlawed by the American legal system.

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
[November 8, 2007 2:24 PM](#) |

US Code, Title 18, sect. 2340:

- (1) "torture" means an act committed by a person acting under the color of law specifically intended to inflict severe physical or mental pain or suffering (other than pain or suffering incidental to lawful sanctions) upon another person within his custody or physical control;

Not waterboarding.

- (2) "severe mental pain or suffering" means the prolonged mental harm caused by or resulting from - (A) the intentional infliction or threatened infliction of severe physical pain or suffering;

Waterboarding definitely does not cause prolonged mental harm.

(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;

Nope

(C) the threat of imminent death; or

Hmm...with a doctor and an expert strap in/strap out team, this does not describe waterboarding.

(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;

Posted by Big_Mo

November 8, 2007 2:20 PM

Also not waterboarding. By definition of law, it is absolutely not torture.

Posted by bjililo

[November 8, 2007 2:46 PM](#) |

Posted by Lester_Craven

November 8, 2007 2:35 PM

Ah, what a lovely group of herring, Lester.

Here, let me clear soemthing up for you: ALL of those grisly little fantasies you dreamed up and listed would, indeed, be considered legitimate forms of torture. They all inflict severe physical pain/suffering and in some cases could result in death. They also all cause permanent physical damage.

How exactly does pouring water over a fanatical bomb-maker's face cause severe pain/suffering, death or the slightest bit of permanent physical damage?

Posted by Good_OI_Boy

[November 8, 2007 2:52 PM](#) |

bjililo - mind supporting the "waterboarding definitely does not cause prolonged mental harm" claim? You can't do it, but if you're gonna make a claim like that, you had best back it up.

Also, read this, from a Navy SEAL.

Really, you give dissembling and sophistry a really, really bad name.

Posted by Lester_Craven

[November 8, 2007 2:53 PM](#) |

Sorry, read this: <http://www.tpmuckraker.com/archives/004659.php>

Posted by Lester_Craven

[November 8, 2007 2:57 PM](#) |

Lester, if the use of the waterboarding were to be banned, what interrogation techique would you suggest take its place?

Follow up question: Do you even recognize the fact that the men who're being subjected to this interrogation techique are actually avowed blood-enemies of all Americans, yourself included? I mean, you do acknowledge that, don't you?

Posted by Good_OI_Boy

[November 8, 2007 3:04 PM](#) |

Oh, btw, you never answered my earlier question:

How exactly does pouring water over a fanatical bomb-maker's face cause severe pain/suffering, death or the slightest bit of permanent physical damage?

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy

[November 8, 2007 3:07 PM](#) |

Posted by Lester_Craven

November 8, 2007 3:07 PM

Coming from you, an overly-emotive child? LOL. You'll forgive me if I don't break down and weep.

Mr. McCain was also subjected to some real torture. You know, starved nearly to death, had multiple bones broken repeatedly, etc.

Btw- You broke Godwin's Law: I win. :)

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy

[November 8, 2007 3:23 PM](#) |

Oh, I hate to interrupt your bleating on behalf of the head-cutters, Lester, but you never answered my questions:

If the use of the waterboarding were to be banned, what interrogation technique would you suggest take its place?

Follow up question: Do you even recognize the fact that the men who're being subjected to this interrogation technique are actually avowed blood-enemies of all Americans, yourself included? I mean, you do acknowledge that, don't you?

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy

[November 8, 2007 3:27 PM](#) |

Hi all - I'm new to this board, but I've been reading this site for quite a while. I will go ahead and put out there the fact that I am of a more left-wing persuasion (does that mean liberal? I don't know.) I read right-wing blogs because it's interesting to know what other groups are thinking - I take them seriously, as they make up a large portion of this country's population. But I gotta admit, on the question of torture, I'm a bit stumped. I just can't imagine that Dwight Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan would've approved of American use of these tactics against people. We may support people who torture, but we always managed to be above the fray when it came to this subject. Evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, seems to acknowledge that torture does not work all that often. Is it worth sacrificing all of our soft power (key liberal phrase!) in order to have a small chance of punishing someone into coercion? I believe that if this isn't already a clear-cut choice (and to me, it is), then we need to have a serious debate about it. We should stop throwing around phrases like "it's not torture" or "it depends on what your definition of torture is," and have a serious public debate on it. I think that most Americans would be abhorred to find out that their country tortures individuals - I know that poll results have said as much over the past 4 days. However, let's not muddy up the waters with definitions and redefinitions, etc. Let's be honest and clear with Americans. What is the pro-torture right afraid of?

Posted by BGDaniels

[November 8, 2007 3:30 PM](#) |

Posted by BGDaniels November 8, 2007 3:30 PM

How do you have a serious debate on something when you can't agree on the basic definitions of what you are debating? You make a statement of fact in your paragraph that we are torturing people, I and the law say we are not torturing people. When you have your own set of facts to back up your arguments, and those "facts" are not supported by reality, how are we supposed to have a serious debate?

Posted by bjlillo

[November 8, 2007 3:35 PM](#) |

Everybody's so quick to call it torture (which it isn't) and say we're not allowed to do it, but I've yet to hear anybody say what it is they think we're supposed to do? Ask them nicely? Threaten to take away their Playstation?

Me, I have a plan involving a PVC pipe, a jar of fire-ants, and a cigar. If anybody here knows somebody from the CIA who would like to contact me about it, lemme know.

Posted by [The Muck Man](#)
[November 8, 2007 3:36 PM](#) |

I think that most Americans would be abhorred to find out that their country tortures individuals ...

And I think more than most Americans would be apoplectic if thousands - if not millions - of innocent deaths could've been avoided if we were able to collect information before the event.

By using whatever means necessary.

I know plenty of average Joes and Janes who don't pay much attention to politics, polls or the latest outrages. And you know what most of them think and say? They could care less about the hang-wringing that's going on about how our captured enemies are being treated.

What they do care about is getting the job done in Iraq and getting out of there, continuing to take the fight to the Islamic jihadis and that we're being far, far too soft when it comes to the current war we're in.

Posted by [jimg](#)
[November 8, 2007 3:41 PM](#) |

Posted by [BGDaniels](#)
[November 8, 2007 3:30 PM](#)

Mr. Daniels, welcome to RWN. (Btw- having read your post I would say, yes, you are indeed a liberal.) If you would be so good as to answer the questions I posed in my 3:27 post I'd appreciate it. These are key, IMhO, to the discussion. If you can't acknowledge that an enemeies exists, then what's the point of having any debate at all? Also, if you cannot produce any realistic alternative to the current techniques that you find objectionable, the debate is, once again, rendered pointless.

Posted by [Good_Ol_Boy](#)
[November 8, 2007 3:44 PM](#) |

Again, it just seems to me, and maybe I'm wrong (I'm sure all of you think so) that most people oppose the war in Iraq (68%), most people think waterboarding is torture (69%) and that most people oppose torture (58%). We can have disagreements on what torture is (though historically, we have always maintained that waterboarding and its ilk is torture), but the majority of Americans believe it is, and the majority of Americans don't want us to do it. Those are the facts. I don't believe the law says we aren't torturing people. I believe that if it did, George W. Bush would not have added a signing statement to it. I also know that the Geneva Conventions (which we signed on to) hold us accountable for these sort of things as well. So why don't we just pull out of them? Because it's bad policy. So why don't we uphold them?

Posted by [BGDaniels](#)
[November 8, 2007 3:49 PM](#) |

sigh Ok, so you're obviously not here for any "serious debate", BGDaniels. You should've been -how'd you put it?- "honest and clear" about that from the beginning.

You know, now that I'm comparing your writing styles, it wouldn't surprise me in the slightest if you were a sock-puppet for Lester.

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
[November 8, 2007 3:58 PM](#) |

BGDaniels - where do you get that "most people oppose the war in Iraq (68%)" from? And how was the question that produced that result asked?

I'm always highly suspicious of such poll questions, because they never seem to be asked in an honest fashion.

Please let me know.

Posted by Big_Mo
[November 8, 2007 4:02 PM](#) |

that most people oppose the war in Iraq (68%),

Depends on how the question is asked. If the question is "do you want the troops to come home" of course, who wouldn't? You need to use some critical thinking when deciphering poll results. They are typically crafted in order to evoke a specific response.

most people think waterboarding is torture (69%)

Where do you get that figure from?

that most people oppose torture (58%)

Strange that only 58% oppose torture when it is illegal, don't you think?

I don't believe the law says we aren't torturing people.

Your belief is incorrect. The definition, from our law, for torture is above. Waterboarding doesn't meet any of the criteria.

I also know that the Geneva Conventions (which we signed on to) hold us accountable for these sort of things as well.

The Geneva Conventions only apply to the countries that have signed it. AQ is not a signatory to the Geneva Conventions and therefore are not protected by it. Also, there is a special place in the Geneva Conventions for people who don't wear uniforms and hide among civilians. If I remember my Conventions properly, they are to be rewarded with execution.

So why don't we uphold them?

I'm all for upholding them. After we are done with the terrorists we capture on the battle field, they should be rewarded with one in the head and two in the chest instead of release or a perpetual vacation at Gitmo on the dime of the US taxpayer.

Posted by bjlillo
[November 8, 2007 4:03 PM](#) |

I also know that the Geneva Conventions (which we signed on to) hold us accountable for these sort of things as well.

You need to go back and reread those Conventions. Especially the part that defines who is legally covered by them.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 4:03 PM](#) |

Posted by BGDaniels November 8, 2007 3:49 PM

First, welcome to the board. We are always happy to have a well-spoken and on-topic poster join us, no matter which side of the debate you choose.

Second, let me offer one small correction for you. You said "most people oppose the war in Iraq (68%)". That should actually be 68% **of those polled**. With about 2,000 people usually included in these polls (chosen completely at random *of course*), that is a small number of people being allowed to dictate our foreign policy and military strategy.

Please continue.

Posted by StanW
[November 8, 2007 4:17 PM](#) |

Posted by StanW
November 8, 2007 4:17 PM

And 68% of those people polled dont like the war AS PRESENTED by the polling authority. I can get any response i need just by asking the right question.

Posted by tblrk2006
[November 8, 2007 4:24 PM](#) |

It was a CNN/Opinion Research Poll that came out today. The question is stated simply "Do you favor or oppose the war in Iraq." No tricks there. As far as accusing me of not wanting a serious debate...why wouldn't I? I'm not here to make enemies or belittle anyone or anything. I just want to debate the issues and facts - nothing more, nothing less.

Posted by BGDaniels
[November 8, 2007 4:24 PM](#) |

Incidentally that poll didn't find out who opposed Iraq. All it found out was of the people polled, most of them thought it was an error. Not that we should leave, or that we should abandon it, but that it was a mistake.

The poll that shows a group that want us to pull out does not indicate they want us to leave immediately or without success. I want our troops to come home. Just not yet.

And finally: don't trust polls. Any polls, ever, seriously. The only "poll" you should trust is when there's an election. Then you get the actual bulk of the country giving their final say on subjects rather than on the way and time and location the questions are asked.

Polls are crap, they are like reading entrails and astrology. They are part of man's endless quest to know the future. Abandon them for your own sanity.

Posted by [Christopher Taylor](#)
[November 8, 2007 4:25 PM](#) |

Thanks StanW, I appreciate the kind words. I'm really not a troll or anything of the ilk - in fact, I've never posted a comment on a blog before...and I read quite a few of them. I like to get a mix of more progressive/liberal sites like washingtonmonthly (andrewsullivan?) with the instapundits/powerlines/etc. that make up the right of the blogosphere. My favorite right-wing blog would probably have to be Captains Quarters because he seems to look at things from the right the same way I would if I happened to agree with them. I would say Sullivan was my favorite right-winger, but he's clearly not one by the definition most conservatives give themselves.

Posted by BGDaniels
[November 8, 2007 4:28 PM](#) |

It was a CNN/Opinion Research Poll that came out today. The question is stated simply "Do you favor or oppose the war in Iraq." No tricks there. As far as accusing me of not wanting a serious debate...why wouldn't I? I'm not here to make enemies or belittle anyone or anything. I just want to debate the issues and facts - nothing more, nothing less.

Posted by BGDaniels November 8, 2007 4:24 PM

OK, but think about the answers you could get from that question, BG...

LIBERAL: I oppose the war. War is always wrong, and if we were not so evil and running around the world lying about WMD, making everyone mad, none of this would have happened.

CONSERVATIVE: I oppose the war. The soldiers are not being allowed to fight to win. Let them fight, destroy our enemy, and then they can come home victorious.

See what we mean? One question, Same answer, two completely different and opposite reasons.

It's like asking "Do you still beat your wife?" or "Does your momma know you're stupid?" and expecting a simple "YES/NO" answer.

Posted by StanW
[November 8, 2007 4:30 PM](#) |

Posted by BGDaniels
November 8, 2007 4:24 PM

That is all trick....same as me asking "Do you like war?" Does anybody favor war?

Posted by tblrk2006
[November 8, 2007 4:31 PM](#) |

Did you approve moving the WOT to Iraq? Did you approve of the WOT to begin with? Do you approve how the WOT is being waged in Iraq? Much better questions that can be used to see who opposed the war from the get go and who has been turned from the war. Why have they been turned? That's another set.

Posted by tblrk2006
[November 8, 2007 4:40 PM](#) |

Does anybody favor war?

Unfortunately, there are indeed a lot of folks who would answer 'yes' to that, tblrk2006: AQ and Taliban fighters, radical Imams, the majority of Palestinians... well, you get the point.

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
[November 8, 2007 4:41 PM](#) |

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
November 8, 2007 4:41 PM

yeah, i should have said does anybody favor war(as THE means to an end) that isn't a war mongering muslim.

Posted by tblrk2006
[November 8, 2007 4:43 PM](#) |

Posted by tblrk2006
November 8, 2007 4:43 PM

I know, dude, I was just poking a little fun at our sworn enemies.

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
[November 8, 2007 4:48 PM](#) |

BGDaniels - thanks. As others have pointed out, the polls are all in how the questions are asked.

That question says nothing. Even one from back in late 2001 that would have asked "do you approve of how President Bush is doing his job" and 90% said "yes," I'd still say, so what? because it doesn't tell me what that sample of people is actually approving.

Liberals make the mistake of thinking that all rightees are bloodthirsty warmongers who want to kill, kill, kill and destroy to no end. Nope. We want the troops home too -- but when the job is done. (Likewise, many conservatives make the mistake of thinking that all liberals who are against the war are against America, etc.)

Posted by [Big_Mo](#)
[November 8, 2007 4:55 PM](#) |

(Likewise, many conservatives make the mistake of thinking that all liberals who are against the war are against America, etc.)

Posted by [Big_Mo](#) November 8, 2007 4:55 PM |

Well Big Mo they kinda do that themselves. I mean, being against a war is one thing, but look who the Libs. vote into power. Joe Lieberman had to switch parties to be re-elected. The same guy who just six years prior was the Dems. V.P. candidate. Look, I know people hate war, but sometimes we have to do it. But when the Libs. and their allies intentionally try to subvert our troops, hoping that we lose in Iraq or anywhere else for that matter, has to be viewed as rooting against America. I know we have a few moderate Dems. ?Libs. that post here and support the war effort. But they really are the minority voice in the Party.

Put another way...Not all Muslims are terrorists, but damn near all terrorists are Muslim. Kinda the same thing goes for the Libs. today..where is the outcry from the moderates in either of these groups?

/cue the crickets chirping.

Posted by [xtremewing](#)
[November 8, 2007 5:38 PM](#) |

Disagreeing with the lot of you doth not a sock puppet make.

Posted by [Lester_Craven](#) November 8, 2007 5:33 PM

Craven, you are the next-to-LAST peron on the planet that should be saying anything about civility in debate.

Posted by [StanW](#)
[November 8, 2007 5:49 PM](#) |

I can't work out where these people are coming up with the idea that waterboarding is centuries old somehow. This isn't Chinese water torture, do you even have a clue what you're talking about?

Posted by [Christopher_Taylor](#)
[November 8, 2007 6:09 PM](#) |

The point is, waterboarding, when done by journalists, is in a controlled environment. They know they can stop it at any time. Really takes off the whole psychological edge of "Holy crap, I might die!"

Torture isn't just physical pain. In the case of waterboarding, which IS unequivocally torture, it's the combination of the physical effects of drowning with the emotional trauma of your body slowly being deprived of oxygen.

It's torture.

Posted by [jackbauer](#)
[November 8, 2007 6:16 PM](#) |

Posted by Christopher_Taylor
November 8, 2007 6:09 PM |

I know what you mean. By the way Les Craven describes it,I harken back to seventh grade,when reading about the Spanish Inquisition.

I remember a picture of a guy strapped down,with a funnel in his mouth while water is poured in,and some guy tightening the straps.

That would definatly be considered torture,because the guy always died.

Water boarding, not even close.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 6:22 PM](#) |

That would definatly be considered torture,because the guy always died.

So it's only torture if the guy dies? Explain that to John McCain, please.

Further, waterboarding does come close to killing its victims. If done for long enough, and we're talking a matter of minutes here, it WILL kill them.

PS, Do you consider what happened at Abu Gharaib torture?

Posted by jackbauer
[November 8, 2007 6:24 PM](#) |

with the emotional trauma of your body slowly being deprived of oxygen.

It's torture.

Posted by jackbauer
November 8, 2007 6:16 PM |

UH-huh, says you.

Some people actually call that pleasure. There are many women that enjoy being choked during sex. Slowly cutting off oxygen to the brain.

You gonna tell me that they are in for long term duress because of that, or should we just have someone banging the terrorists while we're depriving them of air?

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 6:29 PM](#) |

The point is, waterboarding, when done by journalists, is in a controlled environment.

And the environment is not controlled when military interrogators use this technique?

They know they can stop it at any time.

As do the people that are being interrogated.

Really takes off the whole psychological edge of "Holy crap, I might die!"

Of course, it also takes the whole edge off of anything when people say "this is torture" and then try to make all sort of rules to define it as such without knowledge of the technique.

In the case of waterboarding, which IS unequivocally torture, it's the combination of the physical effects of drowning with the emotional trauma of your body slowly being deprived of oxygen.

Yet as has neem pointed out many times, waterboarding is used during SERE training for men and women in the military. Are you claiming that we torture our own citizens? Are you claiming that those who have gone through the training are wrong when they say it is not torture? Are you saying that you have more experience than those who have actually experienced the training?

You see Jack, you can't make "unequivocal" statements and expect people to bow to your opinion when there are true experts out there that disagree with you.

But thank you for playing.

Posted by gitarcarver
[November 8, 2007 6:32 PM](#) |

PS, Do you consider what happened at Abu Gharaib torture?

Posted by jackbauer
November 8, 2007 6:24 PM |

Fuck no,in some cases maybe abuse. But get real, a naked pyramid, a female pointing at a guys' wang and laughing,tying a guy to his bed,someone with panties on their head.
Shit man alot of that stuff goes on at college frat houses,I don't hear of anyone being arrested for torturing there.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 6:35 PM](#) |

I'm not altogether sure that Hawkins's arguments that torture can be identified by people's unwillingness to endure it (like, having their arms broken, having the bamboo driven under their fingernails, etc.).

After all - some people actually watch *Rosie* while it was on, didn't they?

Posted by CoolCzech
[November 8, 2007 6:36 PM](#) |

Disagreeing with the lot of you doth not a sock puppet make.

Actually you are correct.

However previously posting under the name "Scrappy" does, punk.

Why is this clown's posts not killed on sight like those of Martha? Maledicta? Maleddicta? Beuller?

"Trench Raider"

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 8, 2007 6:48 PM](#) |

Maledicta?
Posted by trenchraider
November 8, 2007 6:48 PM |

What did Maledicta do? I must've missed that.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 7:00 PM](#) |

What did Maledicta do? I must've missed that.

Posted by xtremewing
November 8, 2007 7:00 PM

Nothing. That's the point. :-)

You may have missed it because I have not called on him individually in a while. Maledicta is one of the moderators of this site. There are a couple more that I suspect are, but he's the onlt one I am 100% certain on.

I'm not trying to put him on the spot. I just feel that it's more effective to apeal directly to a person rather than to call on an ill-defined group by asking the moderators as a group to do something.

"Trench Raider"

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 8, 2007 7:07 PM](#) |

Posted by trenchraider
November 8, 2007 7:07 PM |

Ah,ok, I thought you meant Maledicta's posts were being deleted. Now I understand(did I mention getting old sucks.)

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 7:18 PM](#) |

Torture is something that seems to be irreconcilable with right wingers like all of you respectable folks, and people like me, with brains (joke). But my opposition to terror is more of a practical one. Am I trying to defend terrorists? Hell no! If I had Osama bin Laden in custody, waterboarding would be the LEAST of his troubles! There are just several problematic aspects of torture that I see.

A) It takes the moral high ground away from us. Atrocities like what Mr. McCain went through made us know, as Americans, that we were truly higher than them. We placed ourselves on a higher moral plane.

B) It can result in misinformation. If someone was about to shove bamboo shoots under your fingernails, and you either didn't have the information they wanted or did not want to give it to them, wouldn't just say, "Well, it was so-and-so who's going to do this at this place at this time!" It inundates our system with red herrings.

C) The perceived moral depravity of our actions at Abu Gharaib (which was torture--we attached electrodes to their testicles. If that's not torture, what is?) does not help us in the world. It doesn't. It gives something Osama bin Ladin and Mahmoud Ahmawhateverthefuckhisnameis to scream about. The youth movements in Iran, where the majority of the population is under 30 years old, is who we need to reach out to. They want democracy. Doing undemocratic things like extraordinary rendition and torture does not give American values and the purpose of democracy a good name.

4) I do not trust the current administration (nor would I trust a Clinton administration, for that matter) with such powers. They have a funny habit of turning anything towards nefarious means.

So whether or not you want to call waterboarding torture, you have to think of who waterboarding effects. It effects you, and me, and the image of the United States. We found out that the "20th hijacker" was just some idiot with an identity crisis... Through the justice system!

Posted by jackbauer

[November 8, 2007 7:35 PM](#) |

So whether or not you want to call waterboarding torture, you have to think of who waterboarding effects. It effects you, and me, and the image of the United States. We found out that the "20th hijacker" was just some idiot with an identity crisis... Through the justice system!

Waterboarding doesn't affect you or me. What does affect you or me is people like yourself running around screaming that waterboarding is torture without any expertise, knowledge or experience to make such a claim.

We both agree that the moral high ground is important. So why are you running around trying to destroy that high ground? It is you and people like you that are destroying the high ground by screaming that waterboarding is torture when experts and those who have experienced say that it is not.

Despite your protestations to the contrary, it is not the government that is causing the harm to this country's reputation....

..... it is you.

Posted by gitarcарver

[November 8, 2007 7:48 PM](#) |

Waterboarding doesn't affect you or me. What does affect you or me is people like yourself running around screaming that waterboarding is torture without any expertise, knowledge or experience to make such a claim.

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Despite your protestations to the contrary, it is not the government that is causing the harm to this country's reputation....

..... it is you.

So by your estimation, when I see my government doing something reprehensible, I should just shut my mouth. Keep quiet, 'cause if I speak out, it emboldens the terrorists. Gotcha. So when did America not just become morally depraved, but also democratically depraved?

Next time I'll make sure to curtail my blog posts. I know Osama is in his cave, checking up on Right Wing News right now!

By using democracy and telling my constituents that I think waterboarding is torture, it's me participating in a quaint notion called democracy. I think you've forgotten that the way to make yourself heard isn't about screaming the loudest, it's about not having your head buried in the sand when you speak.

Oh, and by the way, you say I don't have any experience on the issue. May I respectfully ask what personal knowledge you have? I base my conclusions on the opinion of a person who was tortured. I base my conclusions on the opinion of a true American hero. Yes, that's right. John McCain. If anyone knows what torture is, it is HIM.

Posted by jackbauer

[November 8, 2007 8:06 PM](#) |

Am I trying to defend terrorists?

You may not be *trying* to defend them, but you still are.

If I had Osama bin Laden in custody, waterboarding would be the LEAST of his troubles!

So it's okay to torture certain people, but not others?

There are just several problematic aspects of torture that I see.

A) It takes the moral high ground away from us. Atrocities like what Mr. McCain went through made us know, as Americans, that we were truly higher than them. We placed ourselves on a higher moral plane.

Oh please. When the terrorists capture our soldiers they **CUT THEIR FUCKING HEADS OFF**. We could be standing at the bottom of the Marianas Trench and still have the high ground.

B) It can result in misinformation. If someone was about to shove bamboo shoots under your fingernails, and you either didn't have the information they wanted or did not want to give it to them, wouldn't just say, "Well, it was so-and-so who's going to do this at this place at this time!" It inundates our system with red herrings.

Which is why we don't shove bamboo under people's fingernails.

Waterboarding does not cause extreme pain or psychological damage, and is thus not as prone to misinformation.

And even if it were, so what? All we have to do is check out the information or find a corroborating source. That's what our intelligence agencies are for, after all.

C) The perceived moral depravity of our actions at Abu Gharaib (which was torture--we attached electrodes to their testicles. If that's not torture, what is?)

Electrodes that were never live. He was never electrocuted.

does not help us in the world. It doesn't. It gives something Osama bin Ladin and Mahmoud Ahmawhateverthefuckhisnameis to scream about.

So what? If we weren't doing this, then they'd just find another thing to scream about. Or just make up something to scream about.

The youth movements in Iran, where the majority of the population is under 30 years old, is who we need to reach out to. They want democracy. Doing undemocratic things like extraordinary rendition and torture does not give American values and the purpose of democracy a good name.

Neither does pussy-footing it around and treating terrorists with kid gloves.

The Muslim world is not like the Western world. They respect strength more than they respect compassion.

4) I do not trust the current administration (nor would I trust a Clinton administration, for that matter) with such powers. They have a funny habit of turning anything towards nefarious means.

Oh really? Like what, exactly? What "nefarious" (i.e., illegal) things has this administration done?

So whether or not you want to call waterboarding torture, you have to think of who waterboarding effects.

Yes, like the American soldiers and civilians who are alive today because a captured terrorist succumbed to waterboarding and gave us vital intelligence that helped us prevent a terrorist attack.

Lets think about those people for a second, shall we?

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 8:15 PM](#) |

So by your estimation, when I see my government doing something reprehensible, I should just shut my mouth.

When you have absolutely no idea what you're talking about, that's exactly what you should do.

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 8:18 PM](#) |

Notice that absolutely none of the lefties today were able to point out which part of the legal definition of terror waterboarding meets. I think that's pretty telling.

Take it from someone who has had it done. It's not torture.

Posted by [bjlillo](#)
[November 8, 2007 8:28 PM](#) |

Oh please. When the terrorists capture our soldiers they CUT THEIR FUCKING HEADS OFF. We could be standing at the bottom of the Marianas Trench and still have the high ground.

Well that's brilliantly mature, I must say. "But they started it!! Wahhh!!! Wahh!!!"

Which is why we don't shove bamboo under people's fingernails.

Waterboarding does not cause extreme pain or psychological damage, and is thus not as prone to misinformation.

And even if it were, so what? All we have to do is check out the information or find a corroborating source. That's what our intelligence agencies are for, after all.

I'll assume you didn't hear the report that just came out, which said that one of the cornerstones of (mis)information that led to the war in Iraq was coerced from someone who after being tortured, claimed that Iraq and 9/11 had a connection. He said he didn't know anything--we buried him alive for 17 hours, then beat him, and afterwards, LO AND BEHOLD, he's got that information for us! Well what do you know, no harm, no foul, right? That'd be the case... if his story wasn't a LIE.

I also completely disagree with your assumption that it does not cause "physical or emotional harm". Come on. The thought that you might drown to death? You think that's a pleasant feeling, physically OR emotionally? Malcolm Nance said himself that waterboarding is, indeed, "controlled death." He's an expert, no?

So what? If we weren't doing this, then they'd just find another thing to scream about. Or just make up something to scream about.

So you're alright with verifying their attacks on America? Some true American.

The Muslim world is not like the Western world. They respect strength more than they respect compassion.

Well that's damn near the most ethnocentric, idiotic, myopic thing I've ever heard. You can't just make claims like that. Well, you can. If you want to look like a fool.

Yes, like the American soldiers and civilians who are alive today because a captured terrorist succumbed to waterboarding and gave us vital intelligence that helped us prevent a terrorist attack.

Anddddd when has this happened?

Posted by [jackbauer](#)
[November 8, 2007 8:28 PM](#) |

When you have absolutely no idea what you're talking about, that's exactly what you should do.

What do you know? What's your experience?

McCain says it's torture. Nance says it's "controlled death". I believe Mukasey called it "reprehensible". It's not something we should be doing.

Posted by jackbauer
[November 8, 2007 8:31 PM](#) |

"terror" should be "torture" above of course.

Posting and listening to your wife should be mutually exclusive things...

Posted by bjilillo
[November 8, 2007 8:33 PM](#) |

The Muslim world is not like the Western world. They respect strength more than they respect compassion.

Well that's damn near the most ethnocentric, idiotic, myopic thing I've ever heard. You can't just make claims like that. Well, you can. If you want to look like a fool.

Despite what those who spout the PC dogma would like you to believe all cultures and all peoples are NOT alike. There are deep and profound differences between the west and the muslim world. difference in the way they see things, differences in what they respond to, and yes even differences in the way they think. If you think otherwise, then you are terribly naive. But you are a 19 year old kid who just got out of the PC ridden goverment indoctrination center (aka public school). You have spent years being taught that is the only way to think and to recognize that there are differences between people is "ethnocentric", "bigoted", or *gasp!* "racist". Let alone actually make decisions based upon those differences...

In any event, your care and compassion for terrorists is quite touching. *rolls eyes*

But why am I (or anyone here) wasting my breath even bothering to reply to a little weasle who got caught in at least three lies? Go to your room and let the adults discuss this, boy.

"Trench Raider"

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 8, 2007 8:41 PM](#) |

Posting and listening to your wife should be mutually exclusive things...

Posted by bjilillo
November 8, 2007 8:33 PM

Especially when the wife in question is a leftist like Mrs. Trench Raider!! 8-p

TR

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 8, 2007 8:43 PM](#) |

I also completely disagree with your assumption that it does not cause "physical or emotional harm". Come on. The thought that you might drown to death? You think that's a pleasant feeling, physically OR emotionally?

They are terrorists and we're trying to get information out of them. Why do you want to make it pleasant? You do know that when we waterboard someone that we have a doctor, a psychologist, and a highly-trained strap-in/strap-out team present, correct? Why do you suppose that team is there? To make sure that physical and emotional harm are not caused. God you lefties are whiny bitches. We bend over backwards not to do what you're complaining about and even when it never happens you whine about what might happen.

Malcolm Nance said himself that waterboarding is, indeed, "controlled death." He's an expert, no?

What does that phrase even mean? Think about it. It's completely meaningless. There is no death caused by the way we waterboard hence "controlled death" is just a stupid buzzword meant to get your panties in a bunch.

Anddddd when has this happened?

See Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, AQ member and waterboarded canary. He divulged information on several plots to attack interests in this country. The Brooklyn Bridge is still there today because of waterboarding.

Posted by bjlillo
[November 8, 2007 8:44 PM](#) |

I'm still wondering what "three lies" I've told are. I remember one misleading action, which I think you're making way too big a deal of. One. Can you please list the other three? Thank you.

I'm not against calling different regions of the world different. To say the world lives under hegemony would be irresponsible. But saying that these people "respond to dictators" is to say that they are less civilized, less than humans, and deserve worse treatment than us. If you'd actually ever been anywhere out of your cozy little Texas enclave, you'd know that Middle Easterners are different than us, but not barbarians; to think as such would be to commit the ignorance of orientalism.

Posted by jackbauer
[November 8, 2007 8:53 PM](#) |

When you have absolutely no idea what you're talking about, that's exactly what you should do.
Posted by mightysamurai

Good advice.

Take it.

I suspect trenchraider as being a moderator. Well TR. Wanna deny of fess up?

Posted by BrightHorizons
[November 8, 2007 8:57 PM](#) |

Well that's brilliantly mature, I must say. "But they started it!! Wahhh!!! Wahh!!!"

As opposed to your argument.

"We can't make terrorists feel bad! It's mean!! You big meanie!! WAAAAAAAH!!!"

I'll assume you didn't hear the report that just came out, which said that one of the cornerstones of (mis)information that led to the war in Iraq was coerced from someone who after being tortured, claimed that Iraq and 9/11 had a connection. He said he didn't know anything--we buried him alive for 17 hours, then beat him, and afterwards, LO AND BEHOLD, he's got that information for us! Well what do you know, no harm, no foul, right? That'd be the case... if his story wasn't a LIE.

And how exactly does this prove that **WATERBOARDING** is unreliable?

I also completely disagree with your assumption that it does not cause "physical or emotional harm". Come on. The thought that you might drown to death? You think that's a pleasant feeling, physically OR emotionally?

So the fact that it's "unpleasant" is the new standard by which we judge something as torture?

Well, I think paying my credit card bill is *extremely* unpleasant. I guess that means I don't have to pay it, since that would be "torture".

Malcolm Nance said himself that waterboarding is, indeed, "controlled death." He's an expert, no?

"Controlled death"? What does that even mean?

Setting aside the fact that waterboarding isn't intended to cause death and doesn't when applied properly, what exactly is calling it "controlled death" supposed to prove?

So you're alright with verifying their attacks on America? Some true American.

"Verifying" their attacks?

I assume you mean "justifying". In which case, **YOU'RE** the one at fault here, not me. You're the one who wants to bitch and moan about "torture", not me. Therefore, **YOU'RE** the one "justifying" their attacks.

Well that's damn near the most ethnocentric, idiotic, myopic thing I've ever heard. You can't just make claims like that. Well, you can. If you want to look like a fool.

I notice you didn't actually refute what I said there.

Anddddd when has this happened?

I'll tell you, just as soon as you tell me when waterboarding has given us unreliable intelligence.

What do you know? What's your experience?

What's yours? All you have is the word of other people who say that waterboarding is "torture". Coincidentally, I **also** have the word of other people who say that waterboarding is NOT torture.

McCain says it's torture. Nance says it's "controlled death". I believe Mukasey called it "reprehensible". It's not something we should be doing.

So then what *should* we be doing? What interrogation techniques do you suggest we use to gain intelligence on our enemies?

Posted by [mightysamurai](#)
[November 8, 2007 9:27 PM](#) |

Posted by jackbauer November 8, 2007 8:53 PM |

Look jack, you are nothing more than a sack of shit in my book. You said you'd really put the screws to bin Laden, but then you say that the world will look at us as a people that lost the moral high ground.

Seriously, I could give a fuck what the rest of the world thinks of us. If our safety is at risk I want the government to do their main responsibility and protect us by all means necessary. If that includes AQ's number 3 guy, (or any asshole trying to do harm to us) getting his face wet, well so be it.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 9:28 PM](#) |

I'm still wondering what "three lies" I've told are. I remember one misleading action, which I think you're making way too big a deal of. One. Can you please list the other three? Thank you.

Actually mis-typed and should have said "two".

First was that stunt you pulled trying to make up fake blog pages to back up your point. That was not "misleading". That was a calculated and poorly thought out attempt at deception. Sadly for you it was poorly executed and easily caught. The second lie

was when you flat out denied that you had ever tried to pass that article off as someone else's work. The quickly produced time stamped quote from the 21st pretty much killed that one. I'm sorry, but two deliberate attempts at deception pretty much damn you in my book and say much about your character...or lack thereof.

But saying that these people "respond to dictators" is to say that they are less civilized, less than humans, and deserve worse treatment than us.

I'm hate to break it to you, but some regions of the world are indeed less civilized than others. The "less than human" part is your words, not mine. I do feel that you should take the characteristics of the region in question into account when forming opinions.

If you'd actually ever been anywhere out of your cozy little Texas enclave, you'd know that Middle Easterners are different than us, but not barbarians; to think as such would be to commit the ignorance of orientalism.

Wow.

Boy, you know nothing about me or where I have been or what I know. Just for your information I have been in the Middle East twice. The first time was during the first Gulf War and the second was a brief stint as a security contractor in Qatar working for DynCorp. (never, ever take a job with a government contractor right before the fiscal year ends and the contract is up for renewal!)

Gee, looks like Trenchie is not just an ignorant, backward, redneck who's never been outside of his rural backwater town! I bet your crushed.

You should really stop and think before you spout off, son.

I suspect trenchraider as being a moderator. Well TR. Wanna deny or fess up?

Not me.

I applied for the job back when Hawkins put out the call for moderators but he never contacted me. I'm experienced in moderating forums and have a very good nose for sniffing out sock puppets and other trolls. But I'm probably a little harsh and over-zealous in troll hunting for what he wanted.

Luckily for you, really. Although it's sock puppets like Tom Wark/Bright Horizons and Scappy/Lester that would get posts killed on sight if I had the job.

Hey Hawkins! I'm still up for the job if you have any openings! ;-)

"Trench Raider"

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 8, 2007 9:28 PM](#) |

So by your estimation, when I see my government doing something reprehensible, I should just shut my mouth.

You have the right to speak out. In this case, however, you make the leap that waterboarding is reprehensible. That isn't the case. So what you are doing is lying about your government and in doing so, emboldening those who stand against us.

So when did America not just become morally depraved, but also democratically depraved?

Since people like you started spreading rumors and unfounded lies about it. After all, lying is a sign of moral depravity.

Next time I'll make sure to curtail my blog posts. I know Osama is in his cave, checking up on Right Wing News right now!

Nice strawman, but of course it doesn't have anything to do with the topic at hand. Do you not think that people outside this country read your drivel and drivel from those of your ilk and think "gee, if their own citizens feel this way, it must be true?" Or are you so limited in your thinking that you believe that no one else watches what the US does?

By using democracy and telling my constituents that I think waterboarding is torture, it's me participating in a quaint notion called democracy. I think you've forgotten that the way to make yourself heard isn't about screaming the loudest, it's about not having your head buried in the sand when you speak.

Once again, you have shifted the goalposts. You aren't telling people that you **think waterboarding is torture, you are telling them that it "unequivocally torture."**

I base my conclusions on the opinion of a true American hero. Yes, that's right. John McCain. If anyone knows what torture is, it is HIM.

I am unaware that McCain was waterboarded. I could be wrong, but I don't think he has been. However, I am basing my opinion on personal experience, as well as discussions with others that have actually been waterboarded.

Face it, you don't have a clue about this and in trying to defend the indefensible position you have taken, you have to keep shifting the goalposts to make it seem like you are being reasonable when all you are doing is aiding those who despise this country.

Posted by gitarcarver
[November 8, 2007 9:28 PM](#) |

I'm not against calling different regions of the world different. To say the world lives under hegemony would be irresponsible. But saying that these people "respond to dictators" is to say that they are less civilized, less than humans, and deserve worse treatment than us.

Well then it's a good thing nobody said that Muslims "respond to dictators".

Posted by mightysamurai
[November 8, 2007 9:28 PM](#) |

I suspect trenchraider as being a moderator. Well TR. Wanna deny of fess up?

Posted by BrightHorizons November 8, 2007 8:57 PM

If either TR or I were moderators, your posts would never see the light of day, BH.

Posted by StanW
[November 8, 2007 9:31 PM](#) |

Good advice.

Take it.

After you, sir.

Posted by mightysamurai
[November 8, 2007 9:32 PM](#) |

*Actually mis-typed and should have said "two".
First was that stunt you pulled trying to make up fake blog pages to back up your point. That was not "misleading". That was a calculated and poorly thought out attempt at deception. Sadly for you it was poorly executed and easily caught. The second lie was when you flat out denied that you had ever tried to pass that atricle off as someone elses work. The quickly produced time*

stamped quote from the 21st pretty much kiled that one. I'm sorry, but two deliberate attempts at deception pretty much damn you in my book and say much about your character...or lack thereof.

So that's part of ONE lie. The second part is BS, because I specifically remember saying "I don't think I ever put it forward as something other than my own", hence, not a lie, just a false recollection of the facts.

But hey, through all your BS, you still haven't told me why I'm wrong. Why don't you come up with a substantive attack? I'm beggin ya, man.

Posted by jackbauer
[November 8, 2007 9:36 PM](#) |

So that's part of ONE lie. The second part is BS, because I specifically remember saying "I don't think I ever put it forward as something other than my own", hence, not a lie, just a false recollection of the facts.

I would say "nice try" in reference to you trying to clean that one up. (does anyone here really think this guy just didn't recall what he tried to do?) But that would be a lie. Lying is what you do, not what I do. Even my worst critics here don't accuse me of that.

But hey, through all your BS, you still haven't told me why I'm wrong. Why don't you come up with a substantive attack? I'm beggin ya, man.

Translation:
"I'm a troll who thrives on negative attention. Please pay attention to me!"
Look son, you have been discredited by the other more skillful debaters (Mighty Samurai, et al) here ever time you hit that post button. Do you really want MORE of a verbal beating?
In any event your status as a known liar means that it really does matter what you say at this point.

By the way, I noticed you stepped away from that "Texas enclave" sh-- real fast. That's pretty damned amusing.

Now go play in traffic or something.

"Trench Raider"

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 8, 2007 9:44 PM](#) |

I don't think I ever put it forward as something other than my own", hence, not a lie, just a false recollection of the facts. Posted by jackbauer November 8, 2007 9:36 PM |

That's the biggest load of horseshit and you know it.
You were answering me when you posted that link. I'd go back in the archives and dig it up, but it is seared into my memory. You said that the link was from someone else.

Now do you see why it's not a good idea to lie. It's real hard to keep all of them straight.

Posted by xtremewing
[November 8, 2007 9:46 PM](#) |

I love how the lefties keep shrieking "it is torture! It is! It is!!" Just insisting something is true doesn't make it so.

Remember: torture has to be worse than what we'll do to our own soldiers in their training, it has to be worse than what people will pay for voluntarily. It has to be worse than hazing at your local university frat house.

It has to be worse than just "oh, I wouldn't want that to happen." No matter how much you *feel* its awful, it's not torture just because you insist it is.

Posted by [Christopher Taylor](#)
[November 8, 2007 10:19 PM](#) |

That's the biggest load of horseshit and you know it. You were answering me when you posted that link. I'd go back in the archives and dig it up, but it is seared into my memory. You said that the link was from someone else. xtremewing
November 8, 2007 9:46 PM

I was there for that exchange. jackbauer said, "I found this..."

Clearly he was claiming that the work was not his, and supported his claims.

Gary, give it up.

Posted by JannyMae
[November 8, 2007 11:19 PM](#) |

I don't disagree that waterboarding is a useful tool against the scum, I just take offence that our new AG Mukasey won't just say it's a technique we currently use, true it could be a something our enemies would train in, but regardless they would anyway.

Yukio Asano

Posted by yasanoz
[November 8, 2007 11:24 PM](#) |

Maybe he forgot that he'd written it in the first place and forgot the link was to his own stuff! Or maybe not heh...

Posted by [Christopher Taylor](#)
[November 8, 2007 11:29 PM](#) |

P.S. Did you know that if someone comes in here, as BGDaniels has, very politely stating they think this is an issue that really needs maximum debate, it's really pathetic to accuse that person (who's been polite, again) of not possessing their own brain, their own thoughts.

Posted by Lester_Craven
November 8, 2007 5:33 PM |

Yes, Lester, and guess who welcomed him...StanW. If he remains polite and argues his case he will be treated politely. That's not a free pass, but he will be treated differently than you, as a matter of politeness.

Posted by rmiller
[November 8, 2007 11:32 PM](#) |

Really takes off the whole psychological edge of "Holy crap, I might die!"
It's torture.

Posted by jackbauer
November 8, 2007 6:16 PM |

I thought about that too...CodePink's demonstration really isn't anything more than bobbing for apples.
But then, if I thought seriously about 'holy crap, I might die' I would never drive.

Posted by rmiller
[November 8, 2007 11:38 PM](#) |

So that's part of ONE lie. The second part is BS, because I specifically remember saying "I don't think I ever put it forward as something other than my own", hence, not a lie, just a false recollection of the facts.

Posted by jackbauer

November 8, 2007 9:36 PM |

Ya know jackbauer, I'm not too tech savvy, don't have my own blog, etc.

But you were caught passing off your own opinion as some kind of objective resource. I didn't want to believe it, as this site could always use some intelligent liberal input. Trenchraider found you out, and I am not just taking his word for it. I followed the link and he was correct.

Until you admit it, and stop trying to justify an indiscretion, you won't get anywhere here. And believe me, this site craves honest, intelligent liberals. They'll give you a mulligan...just fess up.

Posted by rmiller

[November 8, 2007 11:57 PM](#) |

I have no doubt a lot of you would like to see us banned, but really wouldn't it be a little boring w/o us to kick around? I'm going to tell you something you might not believe, but in real life I'm one of the nicest guys you'll ever meet. I don't carry my politics on my sleeve and I'd be willing to bet if we met and you didn't know who I was, we'd get along great. I guess I come here to be that politically charged part of my persona.

Thanks for listening.

Posted by BrightHorizons

[November 9, 2007 12:09 AM](#) |

hence, not a lie, just a false recollection of the facts.

But hey, through all your BS, you still haven't told me why I'm wrong. Why don't you come up with a substantive attack? I'm beggin ya, man.

Posted by jackbauer

November 8, 2007 9:36 PM |

Not a lie? A false recollection of facts? "All your BS"?

Who's BS are we talking about here?

OK, I'm piling on...15 yd. penalty on me.
jackbauer, get the point yet?

Posted by rmiller

[November 9, 2007 12:15 AM](#) |

I have no doubt a lot of you would like to see us banned, but really wouldn't it be a little boring w/o us to kick around?

Posted by BrightHorizons

November 9, 2007 12:09 AM |

Banned? You have no clue, do you? Conservatives want cogent arguments... not talking points.

Q: Why were the surpluses of the Clinton administration not surpluses at all, and why is the current questioning of Bush deficits hypocritical for liberals?

A: Depends on who you vote for.

All parties raid the SS accounts for current expenses. Are Republicans worse than Democrats in this area? They both use strange accounting practices to make their points.

Conservatives recognize this. We liberals ought to also. It would facilitate dialogue.

Posted by rmillor
[November 9, 2007 12:49 AM](#) |

No one in their right mind can think this is not torture, you can argue it is "acceptable" torture, but only if you think that future mental impairment is ok, and the ends justifies the means. As a staged moronic demonstration, the only issue here should be what these people are portraying the US as. I would be willing to bet they think the US is the only country in history that has ever held a prisoner let alone questioned her (I get points for the "her"), or that all other countries are past that now.

Posted by nowingnut
[November 9, 2007 2:20 AM](#) |

rmiller-
I must say I'm impressed. It's good to see that sort of honesty. Sadly, leftist here who will actually come out and criticize the behavior of someone on their side of the issues are about as rare as moderate muslims condemning terrorists. We have a record here of some of our resident leftists refusing to even admit that blatant trolls like Martha and mr_tom/wino/tom wark are involved in trolling. (yes D-Vega, sadly I am talking about you here...)

My respect for you (which is pretty high away given your reasonable nature) just went up a couple of notches.

"Trench Raider"

Posted by [trenchraider](#)
[November 9, 2007 7:21 AM](#) |

No one in their right mind can think this is not torture

Lots of people in their right minds do, and with plenty of backing and evidence.

Posted by [Christopher Taylor](#)
[November 9, 2007 1:58 PM](#) |

I would be willing to bet they think the US is the only country in history that has ever held a prisoner let alone questioned her (I get points for the "her"), or that all other countries are past that now.

Posted by nowingnut
[November 9, 2007 2:20 AM](#) |

Yes, you get points for using 'her'.
And I agree that waterboarding, as now used, might be torture, no matter that our military personell are trained in how to resist the effects of torture that might be inflicted on them.
Personally, I think that 'fake drowning' someone is torture.
On the other hand, we are in a war. And there is no 'fake killing'. Waterboarding, as liberals understand it, is just being mean and nasty. I don't oppose that. Mean and nasty is good when defending my way of life. I'll side with conservatives everytime, when it comes to that.

Just like....I don't own a gun, but if people are going to start shooting at me, damn right I'm going to go out and get one. And thankfully, there are some who defend that right.

The alternative is submission. And no American submits.

Posted by rmillor
[November 9, 2007 2:11 PM](#) |

That's one of the things I've never understood. In a war it's permissible to blow people to bits, to shoot them dead, to mangle and maim them... but don't make them uncomfortable or afraid! That would be wrong!

Posted by [Christopher Taylor](#)
[November 9, 2007 2:35 PM](#) |

Posted by rmler
November 9, 2007 2:11 PM

golf clap Once again you prove yourself to be a rational, responsibly-minded adult; the very antithesis of the common moonbat. Kudos.

Posted by Good_Ol_Boy
[November 9, 2007 2:35 PM](#) |

APPENDIX FIVE: Video Clip – “A Lesson for Mukasey: Why I had myself Water-boarded”

The video clip entitled “A Lesson for Mukasey: Why I had myself Water-boarded” can be found on the Virginia Tech Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) web page.

APPENDIX SIX: Video Clip – “CODEPINK Shows Senator Feinstein Waterboarding”

The video clip entitled “CODEPINK Shows Senator Feinstein Waterboarding” can be found on the Virginia Tech Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) web page.

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