

Myth, Memory and Militarism: The Evolution of an American War Narrative

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By

Pamela M Creed
Master of Education
University of Maryland, 1996
Bachelor of Arts
The American University, 1992

Director: Dr. Dan Rothbart
Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution

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George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to those I have loved: My father, who gave me everything, Mickey, who believed in me, Christian, who forgave me, Joel, who brought me laughter, and of course - Sir Winston.

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Abstract

MYTH, MEMORY AND MILITARISM: THE EVOLUTION OF AN AMERICAN WAR NARRATIVE

Pamela M Creed, Ph.D.

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Dissertation Director: Dr. Dan Rothbart

This dissertation uses positioning theory and narrative analysis to examine the relationship of culture, emotion and agency in the dramatic construction, mobilization and acceptance of an American war narrative and later of individual counter narratives. The study takes the events of 9.11 as a traumatic trigger, or crisis, and then demonstrates that the storylines in the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns were anchored more in American mythological constructs, public memories and militarism than content about terrorism or Iraq. In the second phase, I present micro-narratives of veterans of the Iraq War. I analyze how they understood the presenting storylines by attempting to discern the strength of the cultural influence inherent in the narrative patterns. Finally, I describe the impact of the personal experience of serving in Iraq – living the intended trajectory of the narrative. I attempt to locate shifts in attitudes or perceptions, which may have resulted in the repositioning of self or discourse. Throughout the study I examine the role of emotions, particularly anger, pride (honor), shame and humiliation.

Chapter 1: Introduction

I must say, I'm a little envious," Bush said. "If I were slightly younger and not employed here, I think it would be a fantastic experience to be on the front lines of helping this young democracy succeed. It must be exciting for you...in some ways romantic, in some ways, you know, confronting danger. You're really making history, and thanks (Post, 2008).

1.1 Background for the Study

Myth, public memory and militarism begin with language and are grounded in perceived categories of reality that constitute belief systems. In the statement above, President Bush explicitly invokes the glory and romanticism in military myths of warfare on March 13, 2008, four days before the fifth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. In direct contrast to the reconstitution of the myth of the romanticism of war were the four days of emotional testimonies from veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars at the National Labor College near Washington, DC, March 13 – 16, 2008. Five years before, on March 20, 2003, the United States invaded a sovereign nation and launched the powerful – and deadly – Shock and Awe air assault. Many of the former soldiers offering solemn testimonies of brutalities both witnessed and committed since the two

wars began revealed the personal grappling of intense and difficult questions they experienced as they journeyed not only through the physical landscape of war, but through the interior emotional landscape of personal transformation. For many of these young Americans a belief system rooted in a tacit acceptance of mythological constructs anchored in public memory that forms a powerful part of American collective conscious was shattered. They are now engaged in the critically reflective act of challenging the categories of the old belief system and of creating new ones.

The dynamic process underpinning shifts in personal and/or group understandings of perceived categories of reality can be illustrated through an analysis of speech acts, story-lines, and positions. This study uses positioning theory and narrative analysis to attempt to capture moments of change as individuals begin to challenge a hegemonic state narrative that is anchored in a specific storyline, which is in turn supported by mythical concepts of national identity, character and purpose. Through positioning theory and narrative analysis, I explore this dynamic change within a context of myths that constitute a dominant characterization of American identity and too often, our (mis)perception of others.

When the United States (U.S) used preemptive unilateral force to invade Iraq and overthrow its leader – Saddam Hussein - the justification for the invasion rested on two major assumptions: Iraq was secretly and illegally building a weapons of mass destruction (WMD) program that threatened the security of the region and Europe; and a link existed between Iraq and al Qaeda, the terrorist group responsible for the attacks on U.S. soil on September 11, 2001 (9.11). Throughout the period leading up to the war a

passionate debate regarding the legitimacy and necessity of pre-emptive invasion and regime change engulfed the U.S. and ultimately the international community.

The debate involved distinct competing discourses, which evolved from different understandings of the underlying causes for the 9.11 terrorist attacks. According to Joshua Muravchik of the American Enterprise Institute (2006), these differences emerged from three disparate American ideological traditions: liberalism, conservatism and neo-conservatism. Liberals, he argues, took the position that the United States needs to address “root causes of terrorism such as poverty and hopelessness” in the Middle East. Neoconservatives disagreed with this position because the terrorists were well-educated and mostly middle class. Conservatives, on the other hand, held on to the ‘realpolitik’ view of “big power” politics and narrowly defined U.S. geopolitical interests (Muravchik).

He further argues that neoconservatives adhere to a broader view of U.S. security and interests and believe that the root causes of the terrorist attacks lay in the corrupt and dysfunctional political culture of the Middle East. The neoconservatives argued that to end terrorism the entire Middle East region needed a political “overhaul”. U.S. security and interests are served by the existence of more democracies; therefore, democracy building in the Middle East seemed the best solution to avert further terrorist acts (Muravchik, 2006).

Eventually, a hegemonic discourse based on the neoconservative position for the underlying causes of the 9.11 attacks went on to shape a perception of reality for the nation and the individuals directly involved. The elites constructing this narrative

anchored it in underlying mythological constructs found in the American public memory and consciousness that shape a particular American cultural identity. As a nation we remain embroiled in the debate of the legitimacy of the war that resulted from this narrative. Individuals at many levels - political, business and military - were caught in the uptake and went on to live the reality of the narrative as events unfolded in Iraq.

In the year following 9.11 the dominant discourse evolved into a narrative that positioned Saddam Hussein as an ally in the terror campaign against the west and a dangerous enemy of the U.S. The Bush administration created and solidified this narrative through media and White House rhetoric. Eventually the narrative gained enough support among the American public to become the accepted and legitimate narrative. The competing narratives were marginalized into near oblivion, and the march toward a patriotic war increased in fervor. Many young Americans eagerly joined the military to serve their country in what the discourse, both literally and implicitly, called a glorious and noble cause – the protection of the ‘homeland’ and ultimately freedom.

One of the foundational elements within the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns was an answer to the question many were asking immediately following the attacks: *Why?* President Bush built an answer to that question into his narrative: The Islamic terrorists, especially Osama bin Laden, were evil-doers. In speech after speech Bush constructed an ahistoric narrative that offered a simplistic us/them explanation for the causes of 9.11. It suggests a beginning, essentially erasing any history (and therefore any U.S. responsibility) that may have preceded and contributed to the attacks. According to this story the ‘war on terror’ began with the violent acts committed by 19 terrorists

orchestrated by al Qaeda. Anything that happened before that day is part of another narrative that was of little consequence to the new one being constructed - the American 9.11/Iraq narrative begins on that date with those violent acts.

This story drives the rest of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns and creates a new reality – war. It provides justification for the “self-righteous and punitive” (Gilligan, 1996) American response – a response that may be consistent with certain tendencies located in the broader American cultural context. The narrative provides an interpretation of the event that absolves America from questioning not only its own policies but also the darker tendencies existent in our national character. But, just as American policy may have played a considerable role in creating conditions for the motivation behind the attacks, elements of our sense of national identity, character and purpose may have contributed significantly to half the nation overwhelmingly supporting violent retaliation against not only the Taliban, but later Iraq as well.

The explanation for the attacks embedded in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns fits an understanding of the world in Manichaeian terms of absolutes. Both Good and Evil exist as competing forces, each with a life force of its own. This creates an easily understood moral order in which characters and acts can be aligned. Bush appealed to the simplicity of this universe and in doing so, eliminated all complexity from the conflict. People could understand that evil existed within certain people – the Others – and that such people would resort to the most heinous violent acts because they were evil. This neat division of us/them with ‘them’ acting out of an inherent inclination to hate

America and its way of life is a familiar story anchored in our historical mythological constructs. It reveals more about us than those we call our enemies.

Americans intuitively understand the moral order that shapes our national identity. This local moral order sets up boundaries of good and evil with the U.S. on the ‘good side.’ A storyline emerges easily within this frame, situating actors and action in predictable positions. At their most pernicious these thought-forms position oppositional characters and traits: if one is evil, one is irrational; therefore, rational dialogue becomes pointless. Only a violent response would counter the forces of evil. Half of the population of the U.S. accepted this explanation and would later become ardent supporters of war. Given the simplicity of this narrative’s storyline, we must ask why at least half the American public accepted it as legitimate. What tendencies in the American cultural fabric help us understand the response to this simplistic narrative? Why do we march to the politics of retaliation instead of reconciliation?

President Bush implicitly appeals to a political religion of extremism, which amounts to a social/political determinism whereby some within a national group remain fixed in their beliefs and are unified by the beliefs of their leaders. In accepting the narrative constructed by his administration approval is given to the assumptions – or beliefs – underlying the storyline. Approval is given then to the simplistic division of absolutes. If we accept Bush’s explanatory narrative then we are in fact accepting the idea that human beings can be born evil and will therefore be violent because it is in their nature to be so. It is a rather short leap then from the evil individual to the evil group. The implicit assumption in this binary construct is that America is inherently ‘good’. In

this social/political determinist scenario, nothing else can be done except to “smoke [evil-doers] out of their holes”¹ and eliminate the forces of evil altogether. America, as the force for good, must take up that challenge. No alternative course of action is possible.

Simplistic narratives based on binary constructs embedded in myth and public memory that incite or perpetuate violence often give rise to a tacit militaristic society that may ironically perceive itself as promoters of peace. President Bush and the American public backed into a corner of social/political determinism and an intractable conflict with the explanatory and retaliatory narrative that served to justify the U.S. unilateral and pre-emptive use of force against Iraq – a sovereign nation unconnected to the 9.11 attacks.

For a brief moment Americans did ask, “*Why?*” America seemed ready to reflect and engage in the critical thinking that would not strip 9.11 of its complexity and relational nature. That quickly faded. Half the nation accepted the us/them dichotomy, which simplified the event. They are evil; we are good. They are irrational; we are rational. They are uncivilized; we are civilized. They use incomprehensible violence against innocent people without cause; we do not. In short, we are essentially, fundamentally different from them. *But are we?*

That question began to surface in the minds of many of the soldiers who lived the reality of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns in the battles subsequently unleashed. The question emerged slowly for some and suddenly for others. This study traces the dynamic process of the original uptake of the narrative, the subsequent questioning of it,

¹ President Bush used this phrase in various speeches and press conferences after the 9/11 attacks.

and finally the firm rejection of it by a group of soldiers who lived it. I synthesize narratology and positioning theory to analyze first the use of mythological constructs, public memories and militarism in the presenting war narrative. Secondly, I explore the interface of the macro narrative with the uptake of the original 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns by some of those who went to Iraq and lived it. Here, I rely on the personal narratives of veterans who served in Iraq to explore the connectivity of the macro narrative with micro understanding and uptake. Finally, I will use theories underpinning narrative mediation and positioning theory to examine the dynamic change this group of veterans experienced and their consequent challenge of the hegemonic discourse, including the myths, public memories, and militarism that ground it.

In order to examine a dynamic process of change within individuals grappling with questions that were for many existential, it is also necessary to explore the emotional world that coexists dependently with our rational world. Indeed, consideration of emotional intelligence is dangerously neglected in foreign policy analyses. As stated above, Muravchik (2006) discerned the anchoring assumptions of the competing discourses within the American political traditions; however, emotional qualities are missing from all. The 9.11 narrative patterns fail to acknowledge the possibility that the terrorists, and later Saddam Hussein, dehumanized in the narratives, may have in fact been acting out very human tendencies of anger and fury from a perceived sense of humiliation. And the narrative also fails to acknowledge any sense of American shame or guilt – or even critical reflection - for its part in an economic world order that many perceive as a root cause for their misery, poverty, and ultimately, their humiliation

(Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007). I attempt to close that gap by examining the role of emotion, both its denial and its expression, in the macro narrative and throughout the process of transformation found in the micro narratives of the soldiers interviewed.

After the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the subsequent invasion of Iraq claimed more and more lives while an end to the fighting became more and more elusive, Americans may have begun asking themselves, like many of the soldiers, existential questions like: Who are *we*? Who is the *enemy*? What responsibility do we bear for the ongoing state of violence and destruction? What is the historical relationship between America and the people of the Middle East? Why were we so willing to support unilateral military action against Iraq? Why did we mobilize so strongly in support of this war? Why was opposition framed as unpatriotic and disloyal? Why, especially after the lessons we should have learned from Vietnam, are we still so willing to use violence against others in missions cloaked in the rhetoric of national destiny and privilege? Why do we easily accept an us/them dichotomy? Do we truly believe that “others” are essentially different - that our national identity is rooted in essential goodness and morality – that we are, indeed, blessed by God?

If Americans asked these questions, if a dialogue reflexively explored relational histories and the public memories that inform a national sense of identity and purpose, we might be better prepared to discern the pernicious simplicity of narratives created in tones of black and white, rather than the more realistic and complex gray. Perhaps we could have then explored the possibility that the terrorists used violence against us not because of who *they are* or because of who *we are*, but because, at least in large part, of the anger

they feel and/or the shame and humiliation they perceive themselves to have suffered as a result of decades of western policies, alliances and rhetoric – anger, shame and humiliation not unlike that perhaps felt by many Americans after their nation was attacked and the realization set in that we are vulnerable, that we can be hurt. Indeed we were hurt and so we retaliated. Are we really so different then?

This study consists of two phases. The first phase will be a descriptive study of the dominant discourse that evolved after 9.11 and preceded the 2003 invasion of Iraq. This part of the study will explore the language and meta-myths used to create a narrative positioned as the dominant, legitimate discourse. This study assumes that the three positions stated above by Muravchik (2006) all omit the possibility of a significant factor contributing to the underlying causes of the 9.11 terrorist attacks: deep-rooted feelings of humiliation and anger on the part of the perpetrators and their followers. Based on this assumption, the present study argues that the dominant narrative that emerged through the President's rhetoric was itself rooted in a denial of guilt or shame and/or a fear of humiliation. It lacked any indication of humility or critical reflection. The study argues that the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns, rooted in mythological constructs, fomented unspoken feelings of revenge and unhealthy pride, which fueled a cycle of reactive violence.

An analytical review of speeches made by President Bush will examine the rhetoric for the meta-myths that conceal or deny deep-rooted feelings of shame, guilt and/or a fear of humiliation. The tacit acceptance of the myths and their emotive power were a significant factor in the public uptake of the narrative and the subsequent

mobilization for war. I will seek to demonstrate that this discourse shaped a particular understanding of the context of and root causes for the attacks, which provided the legitimacy and moral justification for retaliatory action. Powerful and emotionally charged myths subtly reveal a sense of unacceptable humiliation and the need to defend a perceived impugned sense of honor. I explore how this language, steeped in public memories built on meta-myths embracing civil religion and militarism shadows unspoken reasons for going to war: the defense of honor and a misconceived sense of self and purpose with retaliation, or simply put – revenge and destiny.

The second phase will explore more specifically the interface of the national narrative with the personal stories of the soldiers who fought in the Iraq war itself. I conduct interviews with individual soldiers to discover how they understood and responded to the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns. I endeavor to learn about their emotional responses after 9.11, their feelings about the decision of the U.S. to engage in two wars and the relationship, if any, of their personal feelings to the emotions invoked through the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns. More significantly, I attempt to discern the location of shifts in thinking about the narrative and the moral justification it provided for war. Finally, I explore the dynamic process of individual transformation from a tacit acceptance of a grand narrative to a reflective consciousness that leads to its rejection. The intent of this part of the study will be to describe the soldiers' understanding of the legitimating discourse and to explore the relationship between the narrative, their personal reactions to 9.11, and their feelings about the lived experience of the war. All of this will be done in

the context of exploring guilt, shame, anger and humiliation as significant emotional variables not only for the moral justification of war but for personal awakenings.

It is hoped that this complex exploration through the interaction of text, discourse and context will reveal (Phillips & Hardy, 2002) the dynamics of the relationship between the categories of a reality constructed around a hegemonic macro narrative and the lived experience and feelings of individuals caught in its uptake. One objective is to reveal the neglect of the role of emotions, particularly of anger, perceived humiliation, shame or guilt, in sanctifying violent retaliatory actions against Iraq and Iraqi insurgents. Therefore, it is further hoped that this exploration will contribute to an enhanced understanding of emotions as significant but often over-looked variables concerning national and individual reactions to crises – reactions that far too often compel us to unwittingly continue a cycle of destruction and death. It is an attempt to partially address some of the questions that went unexplored after 9.11 or have yet to be fully answered: *Who are we, why did we go to war and is there a process that will free us from retaliation politics and endless cycles of violence?*

1.2 Outline of Chapters

This dissertation is organized around three phases of the narrative and focuses on the unfolding patterns that consistently run through the discourse that forms the basis for the eventual invasion of Iraq. In order to lay the foundation for the analysis of each phase of the discourse an explanation of the methodology and a review of the relevant literature is necessary. To this end, Chapter 2 focuses on methodology and research design. I

draw upon the relevant literature, original texts, and interviews as well as positioning theory, narrative analysis and the theory underpinning narrative mediation. I employ these to explore the mythological constructs and emotive appeal of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns and to analyze how these were used to create tacit first-order positioning for the U.S. and the ‘enemy’. This chapter also explains my methods for selecting soldiers to interview, and it describes the interview process.

Chapter 3 contains the review of the literature necessary for understanding the analyses of the presenting narrative, its uptake, and finally its transformation by individual soldiers. My analyses evolve from specific elements that I argue frame the narrative and its initial appeal to many Americans, including many who would go on to live it. Therefore, background on the literature for each of these elements is necessary in order for the analyses to be grounded in existing research. This chapter consists of several parts. First, I discuss American historical mythological constructs, public memory and militarism so that I can later draw upon this research to demonstrate the preponderance of all three elements in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns. Secondly, I discuss the research on emotional intelligence, focusing particularly on shame, guilt, anger, and humiliation (and the false pride it often engenders). The review of the literature on these emotions contribute significantly to my central argument that anger, humiliation, shame and false pride play an unacknowledged but significant role in the shaping of grand narratives and their uptake by the public. This discussion will also support the final analysis of transformation and will be critical to the conclusion. Finally, this chapter will include relevant research on culture, emotions and agency.

Chapter 4 draws heavily on the research presented in Chapter 3 to provide an analysis of the 9.11/Iraq presenting narrative patterns. This chapter employs positioning theory to analyze how the elements of mythological constructs, public memory, and militarism were woven into a narrative that concealed or denied guilt, shame and humiliation; instead, it promoted false pride and righteous anger. This chapter explores some aspects of the cultural/psychological territory that grounded this narrative and nourished its growth.

Chapter 5 introduces the micro-narratives into the study. Here, I analyze the elements of connectivity between the presenting narrative and how these soldiers, who eventually served in the wars the narrative spawned, understood it. This discussion explores the extent to which the elements described in the presenting narrative impacted these soldiers and their perception of the enemy, mission and justification for military action, particularly in Iraq.

Chapter 6 will explore the lived experiences of these individuals who served in the wars, particularly Iraq, but who, over the course of time, began to question the dominant narrative's identification of the enemy, its mission, and the moral justification and legitimacy of the war. It builds upon Chapter 5, which describes their initial personal understanding of the narrative but shifts to an analysis of the dynamics of narrative transformation. The interviews reveal the actual interface between the soldiers' lived experiences and the macro discourse. This chapter seeks to discover when, how and why shifts occurred in their thinking that opened space for a personal reframing of the narrative (Cobb, 2005). In particular, I explore whether or not shame was a significant

emotion experienced once serving in Iraq. A positive consequence of feelings of shame is the raising of conscious awareness (T. J. Scheff, and Retzinger, S.M., 2001). Once awareness of the Other has been raised, space may then open for personal transformation.

Chapter 7 provides a conclusion, which brings all of the previous discussions and analyses together. I will consider the power inherent in the presenting narrative that led to its uptake and the evolution of two wars. Then, I present a dynamic and emotional process that individuals who lived the narrative experienced that led to a rejection of the myths, militarism, and certain public memories that initially evoked false pride, anger and self-righteousness. Their physical journey through the brutal terrain of war brought them along a psychological and emotional journey as well – one that transformed many of them in small and great ways. Their journey provides a powerful and imperative lesson – not just for conflict practitioners - but for all of us.

Chris Hedges (2002), in his powerful book *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*, writes a provocative argument for the appeal of war as a means to provide meaning in people's lives. He writes that young men often view going to war as a means of proving their manhood and worth as people – discovering and portraying their dignity. Indeed, the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns called on Americans to sacrifice and fight for the ideals of America in hyper-masculine/militant language that called us to a battle to restore the collective 'manhood' of America. As Hedges states: "peddling the myth of heroism" is essential in order to create a sense of higher meaning and purpose.

He argued that a relationship between war and lust exists. Battle is seductive because it empowers and feeds a cathartic unleashing of the senses. He calls it a "lethal

addiction that promises excitement, power and a strange dark beauty.” But most significantly, he claims that it provides meaning. This eerily reflects the sentiments, after five years of warfare, of President G.W. Bush as quoted on page one (Post, 2008). This connection - between war and meaning – supports research regarding the ‘psychological territory’ at stake when violence is perceived as justified. Shame, alienation, anger, rage and humiliation lie at the core of the battle. War is one way to alleviate those feelings and restore a sense of dignity and meaning (Hedges, 2002).

The horror in experiencing death and perversions during war exposes the lowest depths of “evil” to which humans are capable. But despite this, war can provide a purpose for living because it provides an opportunity to resolve to fight for *something*: the oppressed, the disenfranchised, and in this case, the innocently murdered victims of 9.11, their families, and perhaps most evident in this study - the innocent, wounded, humiliated ‘homeland’. President Bush called on Americans to defend freedom and their homeland and many, filled with feelings of patriotism fueled by anger, fear or humiliation and a need to avenge a sense of damaged national pride, rose to the occasion. An enemy was identified and positioned as alien and barbaric while Americans were positioned as innocent victims; the character roles were easily established. The plot unfolded in the narrative, based on the ‘antecedent condition’ (Cobb, 2007b) that the terrorists were evil and hated us. A binary construct system of us/them fell right into place (Cobb, 2007). And so we went to war.

But, while Hedges (2002) reminds us of the psychological and emotive forces that compel us to violence, he also gives us reason to hope. If war (and violence) can provide

meaning and purpose, then alternatives to violence exist. Human beings are capable of finding meaning and purpose through love, connection and empathy. The ‘aggressive structures of society’ can transform and create positive channels of energy in place of violent ones. The third analysis of this study will draw from the research discussed in the literature review to explore that transformation and the underlying antecedents for it. Hedges also reminds us that one member of Congress voted against giving President Bush unlimited force. She stated: “...as we act, let us not become the evil we deplore” (as cited in Hedges, 2002). Many of the soldiers I interviewed came to fear that we did. It is my hope that many Americans will also engage in individual and collective critical reflection by asking themselves: *Have we?*

Chapter 2: Research Design

2.1 Introduction

The field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution draws from many other disciplines including political science, psychology, social psychology, and anthropology. This study is framed within an epistemology of social constructionism, which allows us to consider how social and interpersonal realities are interactively constructed with others and with institutions. It holds that categories of reality are shaped and reformed through social processes – including language (Shotter, 1993). According to Shotter (1993, p. 29) “we live our daily social lives within an ambience of conversation, discussion, argumentation...and justification; much of it to do with...the legitimation of claims to truth” (p. 29). Shotter explores what it means to “situate social constructionist studies in a conversational background or context.” We derive meaning by considering the background or context of talk. This implies a continual or fluid shaping and reshaping of how we understand reality, not a fixed state. As we constitute and reconstitute meaning, i.e., reality, we also constitute and reconstitute ourselves. Hence, a dialectical process occurs in which we make *of* and are made *by* what we understand as our social reality (Shotter, 1993).

This study is essentially an examination of how actors express in their discourse understanding of themselves and others; therefore, it focuses on a dialogical social

constructionism - what Shotter (1993) calls a 'rhetorical-responsive' version. He argues that we learn to speak 'representatively'. We represent, in other words, conditions or states of affair, but we must speak in a way that our audience responds to us; the audience must perceive that we speak with authority or factually. However, the possibility that our claims to representation will be challenged always exists, so we must be ready to justify our speech acts. Shotter (1993, p. 6) states that forms of language "[can] more than merely claim to depict a state of affairs; our ways of talking can 'move' people to action, or change their perceptions." Language does this through metaphor – or mythological constructions – which "function to help an audience 'make connections'" between the speaker and the audience. The connection results from the language forms that give rise to the shared feelings, concept forms and cultural tendencies between speaker and audience (p. 6). This study is concerned precisely with those connections – the social processes involved when elites use language instrumentally to generate those connections, and later the processes involved when an audience begins to challenge them.

Vygotsky, (as cited in Shotter 1993, p. 35), argues that words are "psychological tools or instruments" that can be used to "draw our attention to features of our circumstances that otherwise would escape our notice." Furthermore, words instrumentally employed can instruct us "to conduct ourselves in certain circumstances...and in how to manage or organize our ways of perceiving and acting." Ways of talking help us to make sense of our personal relations with society or the world, but leave us without any "individual sense of responsibility for [such] socially produced outcomes." A two-way process (see Figure 2.1 below) demonstrates that people are

rooted in particular backgrounds and linguistic resources, which they use by “acting back” according to their ‘world’ in order to create structure – or a sense of reality. This process also creates a “structure of feeling” that provides accountability for the appropriateness of feelings and behavior (p. 35).

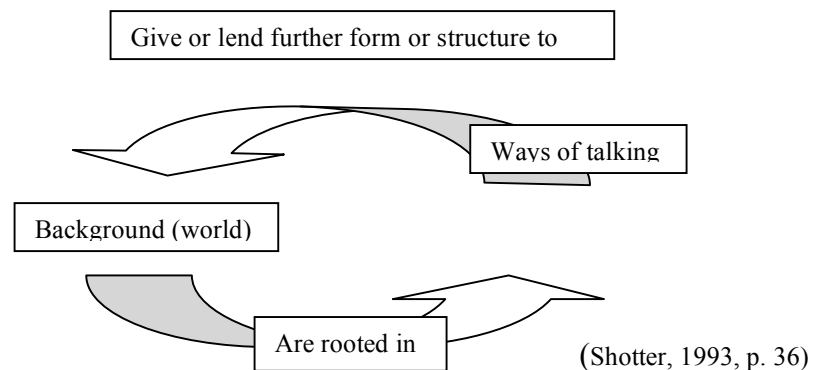


Figure 2.1: Two-way process of talking.

Feelings and behavior are often accountable to the judgments and evaluations made in response to speech acts. Wittgenstein, (as cited in Shotter, 1993, p. 40) argues that language as a means of communication implies agreement in both content and judgment. Through linguistic connections evaluations of meaning in relation to background, feelings, ‘a common sense’ and even an ‘ethos’ are reached. Vygotsky supports this claim by arguing that the interrelation between thought and language must embrace the connection between ‘intellect and affect’ (Vygotsky, 1986, as cited in Shotter, 1993). According to Vygotsky the relationship between thought and feeling

cannot be separated. Indeed, he claims that “...every idea contains a transmuted affective attitude toward the bit of reality to which it refers” (Shotter, 1993).

The study assumes, therefore, that through an analysis of language – or speech acts – that attempts to capture the relationship between speaker and audience as well as intellect and affect, we can understand how ideas and consequently accepted behavior (including policy) are produced and reproduced. According to Donald C. Klein (Klein, 2005), “...people – individually and collectively – are driven by their thoughts. ...the only reality we can ever know is that which exists in our minds.” Klein also maintains that in order to understand human behavior we must work at the interface of ‘self-understanding’ and ‘knowledge of social systems.’ It is essential, he argued, for individuals to “maintain a clear and meaningful relationship to the social milieu in which they found themselves,” in other words, to be able to make the necessary connections between the ‘talk’ they receive from respected authoritative voices and their conceptual constructs and feelings.

Harré, (as cited in Shotter, 1993, p. 7), claims that a ‘second cognitive revolution’ has occurred. He argues that a new sphere of understanding knowledge and our world can be found in the flow of conversation – a sphere of responsive and relational activity and practice that Shotter calls ‘joint action’ (p. 7). This study aims to capture that point of ‘joint action’ – a dialogical account of people’s responsive understanding of first the 9.11/Iraq conversation created by President Bush, and then their own conversation as they came to challenge the authority of the dominant voice. In this vein, this study does not attempt to prove anything but to add to a growing understanding that ‘talk’ can

construct social relations and social concepts. Therefore, as conflict practitioners and as citizens of a country with a very dominant voice, understanding the relationship between ‘talk’ and forms of social relation is critical. And learning new ways of ‘talking’, like many of the soldiers interviewed did, can help us construct new ways of being for ourselves and in relation to the world (Shotter, 1993).

2.1.1 Discourse/Narrative Analysis

Shotter, Vygotsy and Wittgenstein provide the rationale and legitimacy for the methodology chosen for this study. Within social constructionism there are various methods from which to approach a conflict study; however, given the rationale provided above and the nature of the questions I am exploring, I have chosen narrative analysis, or narratology. This study focuses exclusively on how language is constructed and received by an audience which will connect with the shared meanings and structures of feelings embedded in the sender’s conversation. It explores the initial narrative and the point of ‘joint action’ – or uptake. It then focuses on the new experiences, thoughts, and feelings that generate a discursive turn and a challenge to the presenting narrative. Narrative analysis is best suited for this purpose.

Narratology is the analysis of people’s stories - how they understand themselves and their experiences. One objective of narrative analysts is to understand the perlocutionary force of language – or the meaning intended or understood hidden beneath the literal level. It is further to understand how actors attribute that meaning to their own feeling structures and experiences. I am, in effect, studying multiple conversations,

beginning with one grand narrative and then analyzing the layered conversations about it. Because of the multiplicity of narratives and the differences in their nature, I will employ several forms of narrative analysis.

Wallace Martin (1986, as cited in Johnston, 2000) argues that narratives provide a sense of patterns for those in a shared community or culture. He divides narratives into three categories: narrative as a sequence of events; a discourse produced by a narrator; or a ‘verbal artifact’ that an audience organizes and gives meaning to.

In my first analysis I look specifically at a discourse that is produced by a narrator – President Bush. Drawing from the White House archives, I comb through his public addresses and press conferences from September 11, 2001 through the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. From this archival data I analyze the storyline and the characters as he positions them throughout this time period. During the period of my analysis Bush created a discourse with a beginning, a middle and a projected end that depended on a shared set of assumptions that are characteristic of American culture and thought. Martin suggests that these deep narrative structures represent patterns of meaning and reveal the contours of a culture’s shared beliefs. My analysis attempts to explore the patterns that surface through time as the narrative is constructed and given meaning by its audience as well as the interface of the narrative structures with the cultural assumptions from which it derived its power (Johnston, 2000).

For the initial analysis of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns I use techniques from discourse analysis to describe the use of myth, memory and militant language to create categories of shared understanding that shaped the construction of a perception of reality

through the hegemonic positioning of a particular narrative. In order to analyze discourse for meaningful linguistic conventions that can lead to plausible interpretations, a body of texts that “constitute a discourse over time” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002) must be examined within a particular context. Hence, this part of the study examines language used by President G.W. Bush between 9/11/01 and 3/20/03. The texts between 9/11/01 and 3/20/03 used by President G.W. Bush to address the nation and the military were chosen because they reached large portions of the population or because they addressed the particular part of the population that would be directly involved in the realization of the narrative. These texts were also chosen because of their emotive quality and because they deal directly with the argument for invading Iraq.

This critical approach attempts to analyze the narrative patterns that shaped a shared understanding of reality, which eventually led to general national support for the Iraq invasion. The research design embraces a combination of two perspectives: critical discourse analysis (CDA) and critical linguistic analysis (CLA). A CDA approach describes power relations and how those relations are produced, reproduced and legitimated (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The study attempts to describe the process of socially constructing categories of reality through a position of power – the power of the President’s own political capital resulting from the emotional impact of 9/11 on the American people and the power of his office.

Elements of CLA are also found in the research design. Excerpts of particular texts will be examined more closely in order to reveal the patterns that emerged to shape a storyline and characterlogical positions. A study of President Bush’s rhetoric and

narrative also uncovers how language was used to appeal to feelings of hidden fears of humiliation or shame by harnessing intense anger and chauvinistic pride in order to build support for a preemptive unilateral invasion of a sovereign nation. A rhetorical strategy that employed national myths and civil religious metaphors resonated with ‘constellations’ within the American population and provided the justification, rationale, and motivation for going to war. Those “constellations” that resisted the narrative were marginalized and disempowered (Hardy & Phillips 2002, pp. 25-27).

In the second and third analyses I use narrative analysis differently. My goal is first to understand how the soldiers who later fought in the war initially interpreted the presenting narrative. My second objective in this phase of the study is to examine how their personal experiences in the war later led them to challenge the narrative. This analysis also explores the implications of that challenge on their understanding of the narrative patterns underlying the original discourse. The data for these analyses are drawn from personal or micro narratives.

I interviewed soldiers who served in Iraq and experienced a change in their understanding of the justification of the war while serving. I assume that the 9/11 narrative patterns created to justify the invasion of Iraq would have influenced perceptions of the war’s moral justification among those who served, and I also assume that the lived experience of the war would have had an impact on these perceptions. What I hope to elicit is the extent to which the shared set of cultural beliefs layered in narrative patterns of mythological constructs in the presenting narrative and the emotions

evoked through the discourse played a role in these perceptions, and how those perceptions transformed over time.

The sample of interviewees is drawn from soldiers who served active duty in Iraq and heavily draws from those who came back to speak against the invasion. I used the internet to contact veterans' groups and arrange interviews. Many of these soldiers then put me into contact with other veterans replicating something like the 'snowball effect.' The majority of the soldiers interviewed were drawn from two main groups: Iraq Veterans Against the War and Military Families Speak Out. Some, however, I contacted after reading articles in the newspapers either about them or by them. Almost all interviews were conducted in person although a few were via email. I also draw from the public testimonies given by veterans about their experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In total, I conducted twenty interviews with soldiers who served one or more tours of duty in Iraq from March 2003 through the summer of 2007. Two interviews were with women. Fifteen of the interviews were conducted in person and five were via email communication. In addition, I attended the "Iraq Winter Soldiers' Hearings" in Silver Spring, MD, March 13 – 16, 2008. This event comprised four days of dramatic testimony from veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. During these proceedings I captured on audiotape the testimonies of fourteen male veterans of either the Iraq or Afghanistan wars. The panels on which they spoke focused on the dehumanization of the enemy, but many of the veterans addressed their personal reactions to the initial invasion as well as how their experiences transformed their initial understanding and/or support for the war. These testimonies, plus many others, are available to the public on-line at www.IVAW.org.

I had these fourteen testimonies, as well as the personal interviews, professionally transcribed. The interviews and publicly accessible testimonies provide the data for the personal/micro narrative analyses found in Chapters 5 and 6. These chapters analyze the initial reactions to the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns and any subsequent challenge to the original discourse by soldiers who served.

Because my study focuses on the initial understanding of the presenting narrative and then the later challenge to it by soldiers who served tours of duty, the micro narratives I collected from interviews and from public testimonies come largely from soldiers who came to question the war(s). The selection of interviewees is not intended to represent the complexity and diversity of attitudes and judgments of soldiers not interviewed. I do not claim to generalize the attitudes and judgments of the soldiers represented here. These soldiers speak for themselves, not for all of those who served.

I chose to interview veterans who were speaking out against the war(s) through the media or through veterans' groups. To create a basis of comparison, however, and to broaden the scope of my investigation, I also interviewed several veterans who had not publicly turned against the original narrative. In the course of these interviews I found that while not publicly or personally *against* the war effort in Iraq or Afghanistan, these veterans, through their experiences serving, had still come to question parts of the presenting narrative patterns. In sum, the main criterion for the selection of soldiers from which I gathered micro narratives was that each soldier had served at least one tour of duty in Iraq. In particular, however, I drew heavily from veterans who publicly challenged the initial rationale for the invasion of Iraq after they had completed their

tours. The veterans mostly served in the National Guard, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marine Corps and were under 35 years of age. They came from all parts of the United States.

In each interview I conducted the veterans willingly and enthusiastically supported my project and in both the interviews and the testimonies they openly shared their perceptions, feelings and experiences. For some it was a cathartic experience during the interviews to sit for almost three hours and tell their story. There were many emotional moments when their story telling brought to the surface intense feelings of pride, anger, shame or pain. For me, it was a privilege to hear their stories and to learn from following their narrative journeys from 9.11 through the Iraq War. They lived a reality created by the synthesis of two overlapping narratives: the 9.11 discourse and the Iraq narrative that was built upon it, and many came back intensely affected, indeed transformed, from that experience.

In the interviews, I begin with general questions about the soldiers' regional, religious, and educational background, including their motivations for joining the military. Many of the soldiers enlisted after the 9.11 attacks, some re-enlisted after the attacks, and a few were in the middle of their contracted service. After obtaining this background information, I move into questions that provide the opening for the soldiers to initiate telling their stories. Then, I use techniques from narrative facilitation to maintain the flow of the conversation. In general, I follow Elliot Mishler's suggestion of asking what he calls "Grand Tour," or open-ended questions (1986, as cited in Johnston, 2000). This allows the interviewee to tell their entire story and not feel limited to

narrowly designed questions. However, in order to elicit expressions of emotion and perceptions of the storyline and characterization of self (America) and enemy, I periodically interjected specific questions during the interviews. This technique refocused the interviewee on the aspects of their story that I was most interested in understanding, while still allowing them considerable latitude in telling their stories as they perceived them in as natural a voice as possible.

The use of interviews in discourse analysis is considered “research-designated discourse” (Hardy & Phillips, 2002, p.72). Thus, the initial interview questions focus on setting the stage for the soldiers to tell their own narratives in an organic, fluid way. As the stories unfold, I use narrative facilitation strategies to attempt to uncover where and how shifts in personal feelings toward the moral legitimacy of the war occurred. The individual narratives of the soldiers provide the opportunity to identify emotions and explore possible indicators of shame, pride, anger or humiliation in order to understand the power that emotions, particularly shame or humiliation, may have had in motivating these men for war and later compelling some to experience personal transformation. It provides an opportunity to enhance our understanding of the dynamic process of transformation: what happens when fear of humiliation, anger or other emotive moral justification for retaliatory violence transforms into something else.

The “something else” is revealed through the soldiers themselves. What does that transformation look like? In what way were categories of reality reformed through the social process of war? What new categories for shaping reality emerged? How did this change a personal understanding of the war and self? Lindner (2001) states current

efforts in conflict transformation are focused on resolving differences in interests. Interest-based resolutions, however, may be short-lived. For real transformation and healing to occur, she found through her research that “a focus [on interests] may be futile. This is because even the most difficult conflicts of interest may be solved comparatively easily as soon as people co-operate.” And, “unwillingness to cooperate may be fuelled by...accumulated feelings of humiliation that hamper any compromise.” Intractable conflicts require psychological transformation. Feelings, which may be transgenerational, must be acknowledged and worked through as a precondition to peace and reconciliation (Lindner, 2001). Narrative facilitation is one technique available for conflict practitioners interested in facilitating psychological transformation. I found that by simply allowing the soldiers to tell their stories they often revealed an organic process through the steps of narrative facilitation and with that, their own transformation.

I designed an interview instrument that would work to guide me through facilitating the interviewees to share their motivations for joining the military, their initial reactions to the 9.11 narrative, the emotions they experienced during that tragic event, and their attitudes toward the evolving Iraq narrative. As they told their stories, I attempted to elicit the extent to which they supported the invasion of Iraq and the underlying reasons for their support. Eventually, the questions move the soldier to their experience in Iraq and specifically, how, if at all, their experiences while serving a tour impacted their initial support or understanding of the narrative behind the war.

As they describe various episodes that might have led to their questioning of the presenting narrative and the legitimacy of the war itself, I encourage them to reflect on

the emotions they experienced that may have triggered changes in perspective. Some soldiers were very forthcoming with their emotions while others found it difficult to express them directly. At times the interviewees addressed through natural story telling the points on which I hoped to focus; therefore, rather than ask each question directly I simply used my own responses to their stories to encourage them to continue. In many cases I did not have to ask each specific question, but at times, I would go back to the interview instrument to redirect the narrative back to my focus. In this way, the interview instrument served more for facilitation than for precise questioning.

Finally, each interviewee signed an informed consent form that was approved by the George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board. This Board also approved the interview instrument used for both personal and email interviews. Copies of the interview instruments and the Informed Consent form can be found in the Appendices. Each personal interview was recorded with a voice digital recorder, which was later transcribed by a professional transcriber in California. Confidentiality was maintained at all times. To ensure this, I used a coding system for each interview rather than the actual name. Only I had access to the coding system. Copies of the transcripts are available by request.

2.1.2 Positioning Theory

Narrative analysis alone is not enough to help us understand the dynamic process that involved the creation of a narrative, its uptake and then its challenge. Positioning theory provides an analytical framework within which I can utilize theory and methods from narrative analysis. This synthesis of theory and method provides a powerful tool for demonstrating the role of language in the constitution and reconstitution of categories of reality constructing who we are and how we engage with others (Winslade, 2001). In the literature the theory and methods of narrative facilitation have also been referred to as mediation or even narrative therapy. For simplicity's sake I will use the term narrative facilitation to discuss the process of narrative transformation that I draw from as part of the analysis of the soldiers' stories. I begin with a brief discussion of positioning theory and then describe the theory and method of narrative facilitation.

Narratives – or stories – structure our social world (Cobb, 2006). Narratives can be understood through analysis using positioning theory. According to Rom Harré & Luk van Langenhove (Harré R. and van Langenhove, 1999) a position is a 'cluster of rights and duties that limit the possibility of action'. They "exist as patterns of belief in the members of a relatively coherent speech community." They state that positions are formed and reformed from the episodic structures composed of a triadic relationship between positions, acts and actions. An action is performance: what is done, while an act is interpretation: what others perceive and the meaning that is ascribed to the action. A position emerges from acts and actions – the episodes. Positions are fluid; as actions and acts change, positions can be transformed – or repositioned. Storylines emerge as social

episodes unfold; the developing storylines are expressed in a “loose cluster of narrative conventions.” Examining narratives by listening to the stories people tell help us determine the storylines through which peoples’ realities are constructed and hence, how meaning is derived (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003).

Cobb (2006) and Harré & Moghaddam (2003) discuss the three orders of positioning. First order positioning is the act of positioning the self and others. It will be demonstrated that President Bush, through his public addresses, engaged in first order positioning as he created a new storyline after 9/11. The rhetoric used to legitimize an invasion of Iraq clearly established positions for Self (the United States) and Other (Saddam Hussein). The “loose set of rights and duties” Bush established included the rights and duties of Americans to serve, to sacrifice and to fight.

Indirect or presumptive positioning occurs when “mental, characterological or moral traits” (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003) are used to unfavorably position an individual or an outgroup relevant to an idea of Self. Karen Grattan (2006), in her presentation of positioning theory to analyze the Terri Schiavo case, states that presumptive positioning is the ascription of character; this mediates the positioning process. Positioning begins with characterizing the Other; as the discourse gets taken up in the public sphere, it becomes metaphysical. The uptake by internal as well as external parties solidifies the narratives. The language of the discourse is then controlled as the storylines themselves carry the positions (Gratton, 2006). President Bush used presumptive positioning throughout the 9.11/Iraq narratives as he positioned Saddam Hussein as a deadly enemy to the United States. This technique established and maintained the moral high ground for

America (R. Harré, and Moghaddam, F., 2003). These positions will be developed later in the study as the narrative is carefully analyzed.

Second order positioning occurs when those positioned begin efforts to reposition both self and other. A ‘conversation’ about the positioning occurs and through that, repositioning may emerge (Cobb, 2006). Through the interviews with the soldiers I demonstrate the second order positioning that many experienced as they challenged the dominant narrative and the local moral order it created. Shifts in thinking and feeling that challenge the hegemonic narrative and the moral justification upon which it rests (the ‘right’ to respond violently in Iraq) will demonstrate a transformation of the storyline. Finally, third order positioning is the conversation ‘about the conversation about repositioning.’ Cobb (2006) argues that the media play a significant role in the genesis of second and third order positioning in the public sphere. It seems that the United States in general has currently reached a point of third-order positioning. The media and the public have once again challenged the narrative that legitimized the Iraq invasion, and to many the narrative has lost any legitimacy. As these new episodes unfold opportunities for new storylines and positions emerge.

Harré & Moghaddam (2003) state that groups can be assigned positions; once this occurs, the group can either refuse the position or accept it. In this study, it will be demonstrated that through the 9.11/Iraq storylines President Bush used symbolic language to construct a legitimizing narrative for a preemptive attack in Iraq. In doing so, he positioned supporters of this narrative as patriotic – or true Americans. Any one or group that contested his narrative was portrayed as unpatriotic – or un-American. As

opposing storylines emerged, the narratives positioned groups according to rights and duties, but also, more perniciously, as moral and immoral actors, i.e., those who would defend America and those who would not.

This positioning left many Americans in the unexpected and disturbing role of defending their sense of national identity. Bush imposed this position on the Americans who questioned the rationale for war. Initially, this position was resisted, but eventually those positioned as detractors from the Bush narrative's depiction of national right and duty were silenced. Opposition all but ceased.

The initial analysis uses positioning theory to demonstrate the narrative process through which President Bush achieved legitimacy for war through language laced with myth, memory and militarism. This conflation exalted military action and implicitly ground particular conceptualizations of national identity in its mix. The war discourse achieved two important goals: it appealed to a sense of national identity and therefore, duty, while it questioned the patriotism of those who rejected it. The result was a tension between second and third order positioning, which in this case led to an initial increase in outward hostility, then eventually submission through silence and ultimately war. As the narrative evolved from the characterlogical to the metaphysical, positions polarized and hardened (Rothbart, 2005). Repeated attempts to open a national reflective dialogue and explore alternative narratives failed, possibly because of the parallel power of the Bush narrative to uplift and glorify a particular sense of national identity while attacking and silencing another.

In the second and third analyses I also employ positioning theory as the framework through which I use narrative theory and methods to explore first the uptake of the narrative by soldiers who served in the war and then the dynamic process of the transformation experienced. The transformation involved a process of rejecting the hegemonic narrative and creating a new storyline – along with a new sense of national and personal identity in many cases. While I continue to use positioning theory I combine it with narrative facilitation, which captures the process of change. Below I discuss the theory and methods of this form of narrative analysis.

2.1.3 Narrative Facilitation

The theory behind narrative facilitation is firmly embedded within the social constructionist framework and focuses on the constitutive function of language. Winslade and Monk (2001) draw upon Vivien Burr's seven features of social constructionism to delineate four features that provide the basis for narrative facilitation theory and method. These four features are antiessentialism, antirealism, language as a precondition for thought and language as a form of social action.

Antiessentialism captures the idea that people are more the products of social processes than they are determined by biological or environmental essences. Human nature is fluid and much of what we understand to be 'true' has been shaped by our social and cultural worlds. From this perspective, individual psychology of essential or natural needs is destabilized. Instead, people's needs are constructed in discourse. This allows

room for space to be created in discourses for transformation of needs rather than their fulfillment (Winslade, 2001).

Antirealism is the idea that we derive knowledge from perspectives, which are in turn relative to cultural and social understandings of reality. It is further assumed that facts in a discourse serve particular purposes, so establishing a certain perspective (or story-line) privileges it and it becomes accepted fact. Narrative facilitation seeks to deconstruct the perspective so that the cultural and historical processes by which a set of facts (story-line) came to be accepted can be understood. Antirealism considers the “cultural and historical landscapes” that contribute to stories or metaphors seen as universal truths (Winslade & Monk, 2001, p. 39).

Language as a precondition for thought stems from Ludwig Wittgenstein. This suggests that the ways in which we think and understand categories of reality are rooted in the discourses that existed before we entered them. “Discourses and linguistic formulations make up our subjective experience.” (Winslade & Monk, 2001, p. 39). Words are seen here not simply as representations of reality but as the basis for the construction of an event. “Language ‘speaks’ us into existence and constitutes our personhood...” (p. 39). This understanding opens the possibility that language can either open or constrain choices for constructing experiences.

Finally, language as a form of social action considers the interactions between people more than individual psychology or social structures. Interactions play more of a role in the ‘world being constructed’, but the individual internal world and social structures support the construction. Understood this way, language is performative and is

therefore, a form of social action. “Cultural stories are performed and enacted”, and lives and relations are produced and reproduced constantly, through talk (Winslade & Monk, 2001, p. 40).

An analysis of conflict through narrative and positioning theory follows the post-modern philosophy of variation in how people perceive and live reality. A narrative perspective assumes that people do not have access to the ‘Truth’ or to all the facts about any situation; instead, they rely on perspectives generated through stories based on cultural and social positions. Once the story is created, people act from the story line, thereby reconstituting the accepted facts and categories of reality inherent in that story. Power plays a critical role here as it becomes apparent that power is a matter of whose story gets privileged (Winslade & Monk, 2001).

This study is fundamentally a narrative study of this dynamic between discourses and power - which discourse is privileged, how did it gain this position, and then how it is challenged. Discourse is a process of people interacting through talk and the products that interaction yield. I analyze the privileged or dominant 9.11/Iraq discourses for the ‘recursive patterns within particular locales’; in other words, the linguistic formulations that Bush employs to infuse the discourses with powerful cultural constructs using myth, memory and militarism. Discourses give meaning to our social practices, personal experiences and social structures. They provide the basis from which people create systems of meaning or “fields of knowledge and belief” (Winslade & Monk, 2001, p. 42).

The goal of this form of narrative analysis is to deconstruct a discourse to reveal the cultural/social assumptions that ‘masquerade’ as objective fact or truth. Analysts can

deconstruct through the destabilization of a narrative by viewing it from different perspectives or adopting different positions. Indeed, this is precisely what many of the soldiers did as they began to question the ‘truth’ of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns. “Unpacking” a discourse is not so much about exposing hidden meanings but asking questions about the obvious or ordinary assumptions within the narrative. This exploration is more consistent with curiosity about sets of standards within a cultural discourse that we use to understand our world and ourselves. It is possible, then, to glean the worldview arising from those standards and also possible to revise the standards. Once positions of discourse are located and brought to the surface, they can be changed (Winslade & Monk, 2001).

Finally, this interpretation of narrative theory provides the understanding of self and identity inherent in this study. Just as conflict is constructed through patterns of relationship, so too, is the concept of self and identity constructed within a social context. “The self is constituted by myths, traditions, beliefs, assumptions and values of one’s particular culture, all developed within discourse” (Winslade & Monk, 2001, p. 44). It follows then, that as individuals are constantly engaged in discourse and experiencing the effects of the cultural constructs inherent in discourse, the individual has countless opportunities to recreate him/herself. Identity is not seen as a fixed or static state built on linear progression through life, but rather as fluid and dynamic – reproduced or recreated by repetitive interactions that always provide the potential for repositioning of a discourse or self within a discourse (Winslade & Monk, 2001). Narrative facilitation offers a method to understand that process.

Sara Cobb (2005) presented a workshop on narrative facilitation at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA. Cobb draws from several authors including George Kelly's *Theory of Personality* (1995), Robert Kegan's work on human development, John Winslade and Gerald Monk's *Narrative Mediation* (2001) and Mikhail Bahktin's work on multiple voices in dialogical practices. The aim of narrative facilitation is to locate the basis – or antecedent condition (AC) – of the narrative. The AC is the foundation upon which a storyline is constructed. Within a storyline are events, character roles and themes. They will have value systems and will be binary (Cobb, 2007a). George Kelly's (1995, as cited in Cobb, 2007) theory of personality states that everyone has a binary construct system that gives us a worldview. This system is based on the broad cultural patterns that become anchored locally as narratives are interactively produced over time.

Narrative facilitation is based on the idea that worldviews can be transformed by changing perspectives. Often, presenting narratives are 'skinny and trivial' (Cobb, 2005) and therefore cannot respond to complexities. The objective of narrative facilitation is to expand the narrative by giving it complexity through multiple voices, circular plots and fluid rather than static characters. In this study I demonstrate this process by analyzing first the 'skinny' presenting 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns and then by exploring the dynamic process of expanding the narrative done by the soldiers. As the narrative grew more complex through their experiences more voices were added, the linear storyline grew more circular and the fixed character roles fell apart. As these changes occurred, in most cases, worldviews and sense of identity began to change as well.

Using positioning theory in conjunction with narrative theory/facilitation, I explore the process related to creating legitimacy and de-legitimacy in a hegemonic discourse. I analyze the presenting narrative for storyline, character and moral themes. As Cobb (2007) states, “conflicts get their lifeblood from negative positioning.” De-legitimate positions generate conflict. The themes and storylines of a narrative are harnessed to the character roles created. I demonstrate that the Bush narrative is blame-focused and is tied to polarizing and impoverished moral themes anchored in binary constructs of us/them. The Bush narrative uses fixed character roles to position Self and Other. These roles lack variation, are scripted and assign negative traits to others while reserving positive traits for Self (Cobb, 2007).

Narratives are interactively created through ‘turns’. A turn is a proposal that can be picked up by the other. These turns are constantly in motion and each one is a proposal for relationship. In effect, we create a relationship through turns. Turns will attribute positive or negative intentions or traits to characters in a storyline, which predict the direction in evolution of a narrative. Negative attribution reduces complexity and increases polarization while positive attribution increases complexity and reduces polarization. Bahktin, (as cited in Cobb, 2005) argues that the world is created through dialogic processes; we interactively make meaning together through discourse. A ‘turning point’ is the critical moment when the weight of the positive and negative traits shift. A shift occurs during the presence of reflection, what Bahktin refers to as the ‘reflective double voice.’ He delineates four voices: a single voice is the author alone; a passive double voice references the voice of the other; the active double voice manages the voice

of the other and the reflective double voice uses the voice of the other to question the self. It is this voice that opens space – the liminal space between one place and another – for turning points to occur and narratives to expand (Bahktin, as cited in Cobb, 2007). I explore the occurrence of this reflective liminal space in the third analysis.

Figure 2.2 represents this dialogical process. The first column in Figure 2.2 depicts the aspects of the presenting narrative patterns that together form the critical features of the 9.11/Iraq narratives. This column represents Bahktin's 'single voice' in that the narrative patterns that coalesce into the hegemonic story line that made the Iraq invasion inevitable were authored by the Bush administration. Through first order tacit positioning the Bush administration positioned the characters – Self and Enemy, and the conflicting goals. Particular emotions were also privileged and a morally justified response to perceived threats and actions were positioned. These aspects will each be analyzed in Chapter 4.

In the second column of Figure 2.2, I present the aspects again represented as the initial narrative uptake of the narrative by soldiers who would later serve tours of duty in the Iraq War. The analysis of this uptake is found in Chapter 5 and is an attempt to understand how the particular narrative patterns around the positioning of characters, goals, emotions and moral justifications were taken up by the future soldiers and understood within a context of their sense of personal and national identity. Finally, the third column represents the third analysis in Chapter 6. Here, critical turning points are revealed as the soldiers begin to challenge the presenting narrative patterns. For many, a

reflective double voice emerges creating the liminal space necessary for critical turning points to occur that can lead to perspective and narrative transformation.

Within the critical turning points – or critical moments - is uncertainty. At these points an individual begins to recognize the paradox that competing moral frameworks exist and are circularly interdependent. The liminal space is a location between social identities where roles can shift, positions can alter, and old identities can be stripped of fixed traits. As a new, more complex and interdependent narrative emerges positive change in the relationship can occur and polarization can be reduced. Conflict practitioners acquire skills in narrative facilitation to locate the antecedent condition, explore the features of a narrative and help those in a negative conflict narrative ‘blow it up’ and give it complexity (Cobb, 2007). This process occurs naturally as well when some triggering event opens reflective space and people begin to question in new ways. It is essential to our understanding of conflict escalation and de-escalation that we continue to learn about this space and how to access it (see Figure 2.2).

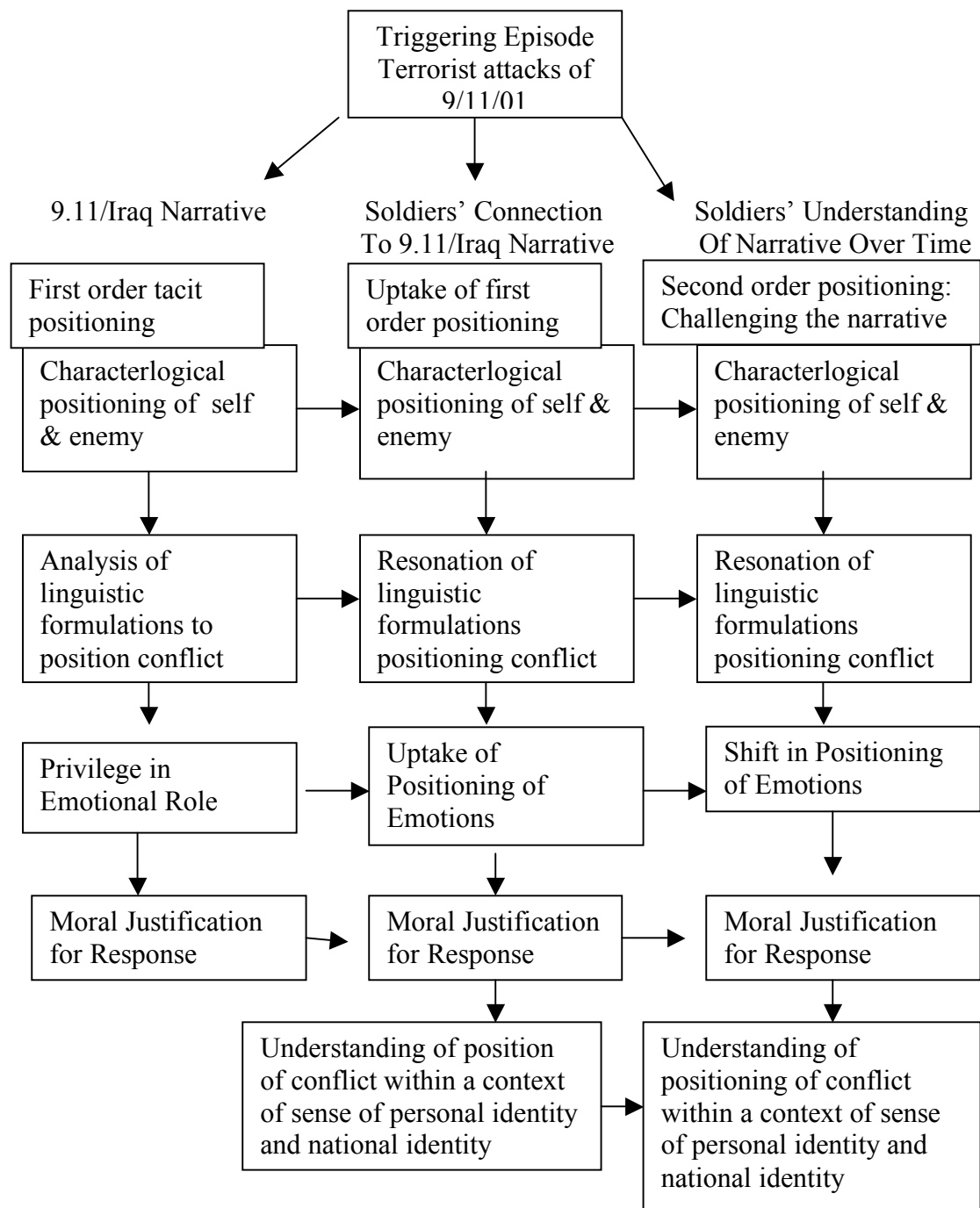


Figure 2.2: Critical Aspects of the dialogical process of the phases of the 9.11/Iraq narratives.

Chapter 3: Review of the Literature

3.1 Introduction

The review of the literature comprises several parts relevant to the analyses that follow. This study focuses on the positioning of discourse, specifically, how one discourse became dominant, accepted and then challenged. In order to enhance our understanding of the appeal of particular narratives in local moral orders we must consider the relationship between individual agency of actors, deep culture, and emotion as an evaluative process.

In this section I review relevant literature in each of these areas considering first deep culture and public memory, which shape a collective sense of national identity and purpose. Here, I incorporate literature on the myths and militarism that underpin an American cultural consciousness. Next, I review the agency as a theoretical category. Although this study looks at a macro, national narrative, it also focuses on individual or micro narratives. It is therefore important to consider the individual social actor's emotional and cognitive processes in relation to culture and social experience. Finally, I review the literature on emotions that research claims play a role both in the potential for social actors (agents) to justify violent acts or responses, and in opening space for social actors to abandon violent narratives for peaceful ones and experience personal transformation.

3.2 Culture: Myth, Memory and Militarism

While we are accustomed to considering a nation's power in military, economic, and political terms, Johan Galtung, (Galtung, 2007) at a workshop at American University, discussed an often neglected aspect of power: culture (see Figure 3.1).

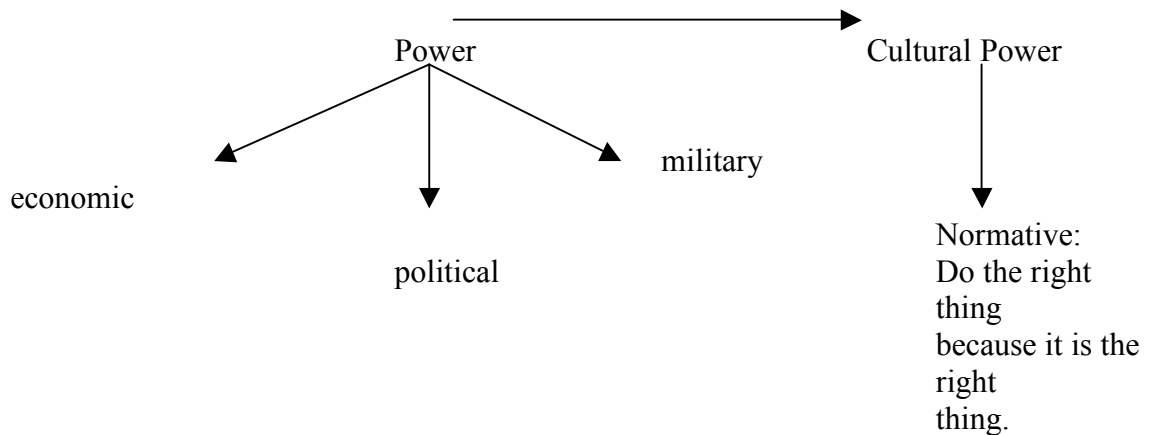


Figure 3.1: Dimensions of a nation's power.

Based on this understanding of cultural power, the essential question becomes: how do we come to know what the 'right thing' is? Or put another way using the case in this study: when our leaders constructed a narrative that compelled the nation to war, why was it perceived as the 'right thing to do' by at least 50% of the population? Our leaders understood the relationship between cultural power, emotion and agency. The 9.11/Iraq narratives were compelling because they were, for many of us, normative. In this section I explore some of the literature on memory, myth and militarism that

contribute to cultural power and engender particular characteristics of a narrative normative (Galtung, 2007).

Language is critical for constructing what has been variously termed ‘collective memory,’ ‘national consciousness,’ or ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1991; Halbwachs, 1992; Winter, 1995, as cited in Vasquez, 2007). K.R. Phillips, in *Framing Public Memories*, (as cited in Hatfield, 2006), refers to this as ‘public memory’ and suggests that public memory, distinct from history, is constructed through the power of symbolic images [and myth] that shape perceptions and reactions to experiences. While history implies accurate objectivity and a singular retelling of the past, “public memory allows for and welcomes multiple ways of knowing the past and of recognizing the interrelationships between the past, present and the future” (Hatfield, 2006, p. 18).

This distinction between history and public memory is critical for understanding how the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns appealed so provocatively to half of the nation while the other half rejected them. According to Phillips in Hatfield, (2006), public memory does not refer to one singular ‘thing’ or historical account, but “...to complex interactions with the environment over time that is mutable” (p. 19). Public memory, then, is living. It can change among individuals or groups as people experience new events or interpretations of events. Public memory is socially constructed as events evolve or as myths or historical events are revived. So while “societies are both constituted by their memories, and, in their daily interactions, rituals and exchanges, constitute these memories...” the memories are also “...open to contest, revision and rejection” (p. 20).

The interpretation of public memory is powerful. Kosalka, (as cited in Hatfield, 2006), further states that public memory contributes to the “the essential nature of man to interpret his identity and what he wishes to be in terms of his appropriations of the past. A communal identity then is built on the language of symbols that are inherent in public memory” (p. 22). Hatfield concludes that the common symbols that create public memory are brought together in the present, through narrative or symbols, “in order to inform the future.” These memories, incorporated into a narrative about a particular event, “...conjure an array of feelings, memories, beliefs, and attitudes” (p. 23).

Phillips, (as cited in Hatfield, 2006) writes:

The study of memory is largely one of the rhetoric of memories. The ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical. As an art interested in the ways symbols are employed to induce cooperation, achieve understanding, contest understanding and offer dissent, rhetoric is deeply steeped in a concern for public memories. These memories that both constitute our sense of collectivity and are constituted by our togetherness are thus deeply implicated in our persuasive activities and in the underlying assumptions and experiences upon which we build meanings and reasons (p. 23).

Bodnar, (as cited in Hatfield, 2006), supports this by arguing that public memory offers a society a way to understand reality, in this case, the reality of the 9.11 terrorist attacks and the justification for invading Iraq. Public memory often frames an ideological

system that is ‘constituted by symbols, values, beliefs, language and the creation and retelling of stories that emerge as a mechanism of sense-making’ (p. 24).

Finally, a specific cultural memory is often constructed from a crisis. 9/11 was such a crisis moment in American history and as such has become a public memorable moment. As the analysis of the 9.11/Iraq narratives will demonstrate, a public memory of this crisis was constructed during the year following the event and the particular features of that memory were used to support the Iraq War narrative. Crisis situations present challenges to a group, but public memories of the event help members of a public make sense of it and give members an opportunity to interact (Bodnar, as cited in Hatfield, 2006, p. 27).

Galtung (2007) also refers to the importance of a crisis. Where culture, subconsciously (or intuitively), is constituted largely through public memory and myth, it can be revived and brought into the open. He argues that a crisis brings this intuitive culture to the surface where the underpinning myths and memories are suddenly articulated. As I demonstrate in the analysis of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns, the events of 9.11 clearly provided the crisis, which anchored the hegemonic narrative. Supporting the theory behind narrative facilitation, Galtung argues that when a crisis situation results in the surfacing of subconscious cultural assumptions, a narrative emerges that reduces complexity but builds consensus (see Figure 3.2). The narrative, to be persuasive, must activate the subconscious cultural assumptions of a public by constituting and reconstituting public memory and myth. The narrative rests on an antecedent condition that is supported by these assumptions. It maintains a simplicity nourished by the

assumptions, which locate the explanation and the solution in ‘the way that people are pre-programmed’ (Cobb, 2005; Galtung, 2007).

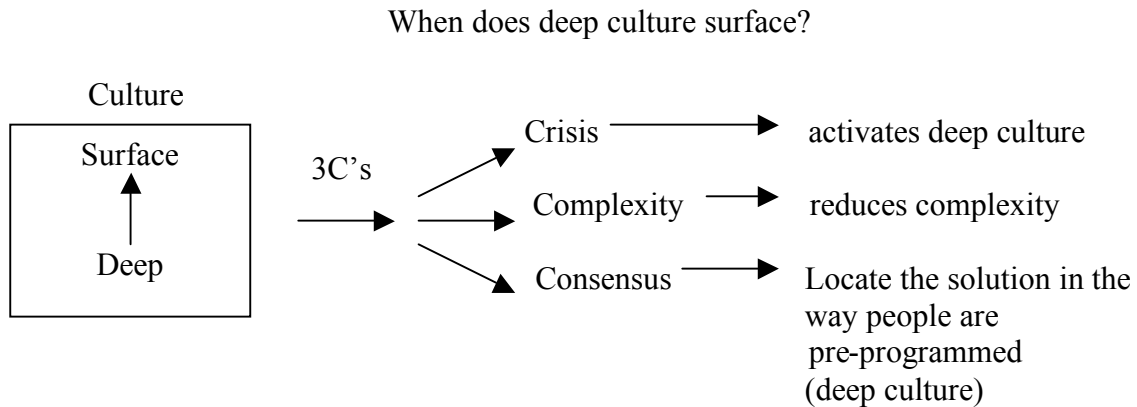


Figure 3.2: Surfacing of deep or subconscious culture and the emergence of a simplistic narrative (Galtung, 2007).

The crisis, or triggering event of 9.11, demanded a response. President Bush articulated narrative patterns that drew on deep-rooted assumptions that have been a part of the American collective conscious for generations. By anchoring the discourse in these categories the narrative appeals to instinct rather than reason. People ‘feel’ the truth in it; it makes sense although we may not understand why. ‘Gut’ instinct, or intestinal instincts rather than ‘head’ instincts produce awe, fear and polarity (Galtung, 2006). In this the narrative was successful. The Bush administration removed complexity from the narrative and relied on the feelings that were aroused without question when our deeply rooted cultural assumptions surfaced. This led more easily to consensus.

Galtung (2007) argues that narrative patterns constructed upon American cultural assumptions build on the myths of ‘chosenness, glory and trauma’. Chosenness implies that there is a mandate revealed in the narrative or through the triggering event that engendered the narrative. Glory is a revival of public memories of past glories or glories to come and trauma emphasizes a painful public experience and induces paranoia (Galtung). In the first analysis I demonstrate the overwhelming presence of these features in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns and the myths they are built upon, but what is truly critical for conflict practitioners and the public is an awareness of the pernicious tendency to discard critical thinking for instinctual or ‘gut’ responses to crises.

All cultures have myths that shape a collective sense of public memory and identity. The United States is not unique in this by any measure. It is important to note as well that myths themselves are not dangerous or bad. Myth has been present for as long as human beings have told stories. I also don’t mean to suggest that myths are inherently fiction. I refer to ‘myth’ according to the description given by Robert N. Bellah (Bellah, 1992): “Myth does not suggest a story that is not true; it seeks rather than to describe reality, to transfigure reality so that it provides moral and spiritual meaning to individuals or societies. Myths may be true or false (like science), but the test of truth or falsehood is different” (p. 3).

Although a considerable size of literature exists on myth itself and on American myths in particular, I draw heavily from three authors who have synthesized much of that research into comprehensive analyses of American myths. Robert N. Bellah describes the American myths that shape our collective sense of identity and purpose as an

American civil religion in the *The Broken Covenant* (1992). He regards civil religion as “that religious dimension, found in the life of every people [I think], through which it interprets its historical experience in the light of transcendent reality (p. 3). Richard Hughes, in *Myths America Lives By*, (Hughs, 2004) argues that many of America’s smaller myths fall under four foundational ones: the myth of the chosen people; the myth of nature’s nation; the myth of the Christian nation; and the myth of the millennial nation. He posits that Manifest Destiny, one of America’s most compelling national myths, is an outgrowth of the four foundational ones. Finally, Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz (Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007) analyzes American civil religious myths in *American’s Battle for God: A European Christian Looks at Civil Religion*.

The myths that support the subconscious assumptions engender an American civil religion. The myths harbor the assumptions that sow tendencies toward simplistic understandings of complex situations. This empowers narratives like the 9.11/Iraq discourses to be perceived as normative, i.e., ‘the right thing’. In the next chapter I analyze the discourse using positioning theory to demonstrate the overwhelming use of myth, public memory and militarism, which bring those assumptions to the surface and make them powerfully persuasive. Here I provide the background literature on the particular myths consistently woven into the narrative itself.

3.3 Mythological Frameworks

Many hundreds of years must roll away before we shall be corrupted. Our pure, virtuous, public spirited, federative republic will last forever, govern the globe and introduce the perfection of man.

(John Adams in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, (as cited in Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007, p. 14).

“We live on images,” (Robert Jay Lifton, as cited in Müller-Fahrenheit). Images are not simply visual representations, however, but the paradigms or models that shape our perceptions of the world and ourselves; these perceptions ultimately guide us through life (Müller-Fahrenheit). Conflict practitioners must, therefore, work to further understand the evolution of conflict narratives and work toward helping others to broaden and challenge the images upon which such narratives are constructed.

The tragedy of 9.11 evolved through the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns as the American “chosen trauma” (Volkan, 2004). The terrorist attacks of 9.11 were, horrifically, a traumatizing event. But, through narrative, the hermeneutical process of transforming this event into “the sole interpretive key for the self-image of an entire nation” (Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007, p. 17) excludes other significant information and experiences. The event of 9.11 significantly determined the official narrative in America during the eight years of the Bush administration, and perhaps beyond. This has severely limited our foreign policy options and has become a central point of our national identity. However, perhaps even more than 9.11, our response to this “chosen trauma” has determined our national narrative, informed our identity and shaped the reality in which

we all now live. We chose to engage in two wars. The rationale and moral justification for our chosen response derives directly from another “hermeneutical key for self-understanding and political options” – our “chosen triumphs” (Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007, p. 17; Volkan). Volkan suggests that the myths underpinning the American sense of identity are our “chosen triumphs,” or as Galtung puts the same idea – our ‘glories’ (Galtung, 2007).

One could present many myths or interpretations of similar myths that underpin an American sense of self and purpose. Indeed, the authors I have already mentioned each approach their analysis of American myths differently although considerable overlap exists. In this review I focus on the following mythological frameworks: chosenness, innocence, and the superhero, and I explore the humiliation and denial that permeates all of them. Myths function beneath the conscious level for most people (Hughes, 2004, p. 8) remaining an invisible but critical part of our cultural self-understanding. Many of these myths surfaced with a vengeance after 9/11 and were instrumental in making the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns persuasive. In the analyses in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, I draw from the literature regarding several American mythological constructs to explore the inherent assumptions embedded throughout the three evolutionary phases of this narrative.

3.3.1 The Chosen

Most scholars would agree that this is our oldest myth, emerging even before the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock. Eventually a myth of America as a Christian nation

would marry itself to chosenness and produce much of American civil religion. The 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns rely heavily on this myth and the civil religion it spawned for its resonance with the American public. Simply put, over time this myth has come to mean “God has chosen the American people for special blessings and privileges in the world; or for a special and redeeming role on the stage of world history” (Hughes, 2004, p. 6). Hughes cites H. Richard Niebuhr who wrote in 1937: “the old idea of American Christians as a chosen people who had been called to a special task was turned into the notion of a chosen nation especially favored...as the nineteenth century went on, the note of divine favoritism was increasingly sounded” (pp. 37-38).

Bellah (1992, p. 37) argues that the myth of chosenness shields Americans from critical self-reflection and responsibility for moral transgressions. Beginning in the first decade of settlement the colonists denied the Native American culture any respect or dignity and denied them the right to land and life. This initial ‘crime’ was followed by a second: slavery. To understand the significance of chosenness, he asks: “What in the dream of white America kept so many for so long, even to today, from seeing any crime at all? (Bellah, 1992). This remains an important question for evaluating the acceptance of the simplistic 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns.

Müller-Fahrenheit (2007) refers to the chosenness myth as the “messianic experiment” (p. 1). The Puritan’s grand narrative of the Exodus and the Promised Land eventually collided with a more southern myth of republicanism (Bellah, 1992). Over time the literal Biblical images subsided, but a messianic character emerged and persisted. Today America remains sufficiently religious for the biblical language found

in our political currency while the traditional messianic character continues to resonate even where direct biblical language does not. The connection that George Washington made in his inaugural speech between the American experiment and higher purposes and powers began a long tradition that continues to influence Americans' perspective of themselves, the world and events such as 9.11 (Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007).

The myth of chosenness/messianism contains a particularly pernicious strand of America's genetic cultural code because of the inherent justification it provides for our sense of power and purpose. It is an "active element [in our] 'historical script'" (Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007, p. 9) and our foreign policy commitments. It is used to prepare people psychologically and emotionally for war (p. 11). It also offers redemption. Just as Christ died to save the world and Abraham Lincoln's death took on sacrificial meaning, so too, do the deaths of American soldiers today. America and its soldiers become "...sacrificial agent[s] for the nations of the earth" (p. 13). The myth of Manifest Destiny, part of the greater myth of chosenness and messianism, justifies a dualistic perspective of history and events. The 'chosen people' stand against those not chosen, which sets up the Manichean distinction between 'good' and 'evil', assumes innocence and shields us from guilt (p. 16). Chosenness and messianism inhibit the ability to see evil within or a need for redemption; instead, it is projected onto the other (Hughes, 2004, p. 153).

3.3.2 The Innocent

Hughes (2004) distinguishes a myth of innocence that emerged in the 20th century. He claims this to be the strongest myth and the one without any redemptive value

because it is not grounded in a meaningful story but rather self-delusion (p. 8). After the terrorists' attacks of 9.11 this powerful myth resurfaced and can be found throughout the narrative. Although the myth of chosenness/messianism implies innocence, the myth of innocence draws much of its strength from the public memory of the two world wars.

Out of the destruction of the two world wars America took on a new aspect of its identity and purpose. The meaning of America itself became "good against evil, right against wrong, democracy against tyranny and virtue against vice" (Hughes, 2004, p. 153). This myth fit in easily with the existing myths and was supported by the clarity of the great evil of WWII. The public memory of WWII evolved from the narrative of good vs. evil with America as the virtuous conqueror and indeed savior of Europe. After WWII America adopted a new mission, which quickly took on a sense of the divine: to spread freedom and democracy throughout the world. The American character of the 20th century was one of goodness, virtue and innocence (p. 155). A binary construct, based on Manichean distinctions, easily grew from these myths throughout the 20th century Cold War era. This construct became embedded in American deep culture as assumed 'truth' – what 'felt right' (Galtung, 1996).

The myth of innocence is ahistorical as well. Infused with religious sensibilities of millennialism this myth creates the sense of being outside of time. The reality of history is distorted or often ignored entirely because Americans live in the present - a present not informed by history but by myths created from public memory and the beginning and end times of human history itself. This creates a delusion of a separate, exceptional and perfect world that is innocent among other nations. Once again, this

myth prevents Americans from discerning guilt, shame or responsibility. America owes no debt to history and is blind to its complicity in many of the harsh realities that others live around the world. The lack of humility before history and others ironically transforms this myth into its opposite but remains powerful enough for even that to go undetected (p. 163).

The third analysis of this study examines in part the shattering of this myth among many of the soldiers. Guilt, shame, humility and a sense of responsibility break through this psychological fortress and personal transformation occurs. This myth hurts America; a cultural transformation on the national level, exposing the prevalent and ironic tendencies of this myth, would be a terrible blow to the terrorists. The myth serves their purposes more than our own.

3.3.3 The Heroes

Nancy C.M. Hartsock (Hartsock, 1984) argues that crucial links exist between masculinity, heroic action and the making of war. She states that this cultural construct is structured around existential fears of death, mortality and oblivion. In a world constructed according to an ideology of masculinity, which is organized by competition and rivalry in the form of boasting, heroism becomes the answer to the problem of meaninglessness. In this construct honor is prized but must be won at the expense of the other's honor. For the warrior-hero, honor is central and a configuration of morally justified violence, wrapped in virtues of masculinity and militarism, is an essential part of a world in which heroic action can occur. But this world must consist only of abstracted

parts so the hero does not consider the enemy a whole person, but instead sees him only in partial terms. When the warrior/hero ethic is called into action, as it was after 9/11, the warrior/heroes respond by separating their inner emotions from the self. Emotions become detached so they cannot clear the “clouding of the normal consciousness” (Hartsock).

Müller-Fahrenheit (2007), argues that America suffers from a “winner-loser syndrome” (p. 58). He compares this syndrome, which further contributes to polarized narratives and aggression, to the myth of the American superhero described by Robert Jewett and John Lawrence (2002, as cited in Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007, p. 58). This figure redeems threatened communities singlehandedly, is selfless and destroys evil (p. 59). The myth of the lone hero is found throughout popular culture in films such as the lone cowboy in *High Noon* to heroic presidents who acting nearly alone save the country or even the world, as in *Air Force One* and *Independence Day*. This myth follows a particular paradigm: the lines are clear-cut between good and evil; evil represents the antithesis of democracy, but in order to save democracy, the lone hero must act outside the law. In this narrative, rules are meant to be broken and the hero has the courage and conviction to break them; the heroes “carry the law within themselves, [which] implies that they are always guiltless and innocent” (p. 62). This illusion of heroic action further supports the myth of innocence and the denial of guilt or shame. It prevents the critical reflection necessary for moral arguments to take place. Once again, evil is found outside – in the other – and the goal of the hero is to rid the community or world of that evil.

Jewett and Lawrence (2002, as cited in Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007, p. 59), argue that the myth of the American hero synthesizes religious and popular culture through the imagery of redemption: “The supersaviors in pop culture function as replacements for the Christ figure, whose credibility was eroded by scientific rationalism. But their superhuman abilities reflect a hope for the divine, redemptive powers that science has never eradicated from the popular mind” (p. 59). A slogan popular with evangelicals’ calls of would-be followers to: “get on the winning team with Jesus” (p. 63). Once on the ‘winning team’ the main concern becomes staying there. In other words, defeat of any kind would mean losing a position on the winning team – or condemnation from God (p. 66). Müller-Fahrenholz (2007) writes: “The mythical figure of the superhero and winner-loser dichotomy can be seen as the secularization and trivialization of the exceptionalism that is part of the American messianic project; and they are strengthening each other. Common characteristics of this mind-set are a mélange of a Manichaeian worldview, a zealous nationalism and an aggressive culture war” (p. 71).

Jose Vasquez (2007) explores the hero myth, or winner-loser syndrome, by looking at what Tom Engelhardt (1995, as cited in Vasquez, 2007) calls a *victory culture*. Vasquez claims that the media began a deluge of the airwaves with images of courage, sacrifice and resilience reminiscent of Pearl Harbor. President Bush almost immediately called for ‘total victory’. This stoked the embers of a cultural consciousness that tends toward a conception of self as victim or as the “provoked benevolent giant justified in defending its way of life from a nebulous foreign threat” (p. 1). The immediate response was taken directly from the winner-loser syndrome playbook:

American heroes became ubiquitous, an enemy was defined, and a dualistic, Manichean narrative, with retribution and victory the only acceptable conclusion, was scripted and for many, simply felt right.

The winner-loser syndrome, which underpins a conflation of masculinity, hero-action, and militarism in our language and culture, contributes significantly to the creation of narrow, polarizing narratives constructed on either-or dichotomies. This cultural construct blends easily into the concoction of underlying mythological frameworks that together form a distinctly American deep culture. The traumas of 9.11 were real but would soon be narrated into public memory as an interpretation consistent with American mythological frameworks. America, particularly the military, and the enemy were positioned and a storyline crafted out of the dust of the 9/11 disaster and the myths that embrace innocence, dualism, chosenness and a projected heroic military glory. Thus, the narrative became reality, and with it - the very real horror of war.

3.3.4 Militarism

Much scholarly work has been done on the tradition of militarism in the United States, especially since the first Persian Gulf War and the rise of bellicosity after 9.11. Some prominent works in this area are *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*, by Chalmers Johnson; *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest for Global Dominance*, by Noam Chomsky; *Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in the Era of American Empire*, edited by Carl Boggs; and *Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions*, by Clyde Prestowitz, among others

(Bachevich, 2005). These particular works share a common theme: since 9.11 and the election of President Bush America has become far more militant. In contrast, Michael Sherry's book *In the Shadow of War* (1995, as cited in Bachevich, 2005) argues that a culture of militarism has permeated the American cultural consciousness since the early 20th century and "reveals a pervasive American sense of anxiety and vulnerability" (p. 5). He suggests, however, that that cultural mindset might have been waning by the mid-90's with the end of the Cold War.

Andrew Bachevich (2005) argues in his book, *The New American Militarism* that militarism had become a part of the American collective conscious beginning in the 1960s and has evolved since then within view of and with approval from the American public. He claims that the new militarism grew from disparate groups, which shared the common goal of undoing the effects of the 1960s. Advancing the new militarism were the military officers who needed to rehabilitate the military after the humiliation of Vietnam; intellectuals who feared an American loss of confidence; religious leaders dismayed by the effects of the 1960s on traditional moral standards and rising politicians and strategists needing to recover from the Vietnam Syndrome. He argues that these groups viewed military power as the primary solution for many of America's problems (p. 6).

Bachevich (2005) suggests that the crisis of 9.11 strengthened the American tendency toward militarism and brought it into full and vigorous view. He proposes in his book to restore a sense of realism and proportion to American policy by realigning American perceptions of military power with the nation's founding ideals (pp. 6-7). I

argue, however, that the peculiar form of American militancy is to a large extent *derived* from our founding ideals – or the mythological constructs that lend an interpretation to the public memory of those ideals.

Joseph Montville (Montville, 1994) supports this argument in an unpublished paper that presents a provocative historical and psychological argument that claims that militancy is deeply rooted in the values of the American political culture. He argues that two aspects of American tradition converged to create a culture of militancy: the doctrines of Calvinism brought to the colonies from Britain, “which emphasize the permanence of evil in the world and the irredeemable nature of human depravity” (p. 1) and the historical experiences and traditions of the Scots-Irish settlers whose worldview included an “instinct toward military interventionism” (p. 1). Montville suggests that these two aspects of American history contribute significantly to contemporary American worldviews and political culture, especially toward military interventionism (p.1).

Thus, American militarism is part of our collective cultural consciousness; it can be found in all of the myths discussed above, and in our language that boasts masculinity, hero-action, glory, victory, exceptionalism, chosenness, and our own innocence. It is an aggressive language that speaks paradoxically of peace. It is a language that defines its people as peace-loving and civilized, but that ironically has constructed multiple national narratives laden with aggression, “military metaphysics and eschatological ambition” (Montville, 1994, p. 7).

Militarism is part of our deep culture. Its roots bore through the centuries of American history, entangling with many other cultural roots, which once entwined, yield

a collective American psyche that is ripe for aggression whenever a crisis or a perceived crisis occurs. 9.11 was such a crisis. The Bush administration constructed a narrative that burrowed right into the depths of these deep cultural constructs and harvested their persuasive power. And ultimately, it may be this tendency toward an ethos of combat as the price of freedom and ridding the world of evil that veils an American inclination to deny defeat, guilt, or shame and to fear humiliation.

3.4 Agency and the Process of Change

In this study I attempt to capture the dimensions and process of change over time that may or may not have occurred in the attitudes and behavior of the individual soldiers I interviewed. Although the interviewees could all identify with the deep cultural norms evoked through the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns, their agentic capacity to accept or resist the positioning of those patterns remained independent. While the analysis in Chapter 4 assumes a shared sense of national identity and purpose, Chapters 5 and 6 consider individual agency in relation to deep culture, structure, experience and emotion.

An agent is a being that can generate action; therefore, agency is a source of action. Power, the ability to interface causally, is intrinsic to agency. While action is goal-directed, agency is being-relational and is any person, group or institution with power (Rothbart, 2005).

Agency has often been neglected as a theoretical category. Historically, researchers in conflict analysis and other sociological disciplines have limited or evaded the question of individual human agency.

Theorists have often given attention instead to the role of habit and routinized practices. In this view, human agency is seen as “habitual, repetitive and taken for granted” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963). Other approaches to agency, such as rational choice theory and phenomenology, have focused on goals and motivation while still others emphasize judgment and deliberation. All of these constituent aspects of agency, but missing is the dynamic interplay among these as individuals come to make decisions, form attitudes, take positions, and act. These aspects converge in dynamic interplay in individuals internally and within different structural contexts of action (p. 963). Chapter 5 and 6 deal specifically with this often missing aspect as I explore the dynamic process of the individual uptake of a macro narrative and the process of change and repositioning these individuals experience.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) attempt to capture this interplay by reconceptualizing human agency as an “a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).” Furthermore, to capture the complexity of the agentic dimension of social action, the analysis should be “situated within the flow of time” (p. 963).

In their study Emirbayer and Mische (Emirbayer, 1998), consider these dimensions of agency by posing a critical question: “How are actors capable of critically evaluating and reconstructing the conditions of their own lives?” (p. 964). With this question they attempt to “open the black box of agency” by analyzing its “inventive and critical

aspects.” This requires that any analysis consider actors as temporally situated and that the agentic processes involved when actors reach decisions be understood through the dynamic interplay of routine, purpose, and judgment within different structural contexts (pp. 963-967). Thus, they define agency as “the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments – the temporal-relational contexts of action – which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations” (p. 972). To capture this more complex understanding of agency they distinguish it by three dimensions:

1. Iterational element: the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universes and helping to sustain identities interactions and institutions over time (part of deep culture and reliance on mythological constructs).
2. Projective element: the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears and desires for the future (transformation of attitudes/perspectives; shifts in categories of identity).
3. Practical-evaluative element: the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in

response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations (initial questioning) (p. 971).

Although habitual action is agentic, it is mostly unreflective and is largely conditioned by the past. Schema developed from social experience is part of memory. These schemas allow actors to sustain identities, meanings and interactions over time through dialogical processes (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 975).

In the second analysis (Chapter 5) I attempt to demonstrate how actors initially responded to the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns. I will show that the initial response was largely a habitual action, while over time and after experiencing new contexts a greater degree of reflection occurred among soldiers who served in Iraq. Habitual action evolved to include the projective and practical-evaluative elements of agency. Although all aspects are usually present in any action, one dominates. It is the change of the dominant element that leads to reflection and the reconfiguration of former schemas (p. 984).

Researchers such as Giddens and Bourdieu (as cited in Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 984), have traditionally viewed theories of agency as iterative, with little reflection. This limits the ability to demonstrate how actors challenge schemas derived from the past. Actors do, however, reconsider and revise schemas to open possibilities for new thoughts and action. In the third analysis (Chapter 6) I attempt to understand this reconstruction of past schemas. Many of the actors (soldiers) I interviewed relied on habitual (iterational) schemas as the 9.11/Iraq narratives originated and evolved but reconsidered past schemas through intersubjectivity, social interaction and communication as their experiences in Iraq, living the narrative, unfolded. Thus, many

began to reformulate their judgments to meet the new ambiguities presented as new experiences emerged. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) argue that to understand the process of reconstruction, we must focus “away from actors’ orientation toward the past and focus on how agentic processes give shape and direction to future possibilities” (pp. 971-985).

According to Emirbayer and Mische (1998) the practical-evaluative element of agency is the critical mediating point between the iterational and projective aspects. Reflective space, like liminal space or attunement, opens when taken-for-granted habits of thought become questionable or unsatisfactory in a particular situation. The authors elaborate on the dynamic process of projectivity by identifying three aspects within its structure: narrative construction, symbolic recomposition and hypothetical resolution. They argue that such periods allow actors to imagine reformulated action and can be transformative. These periods, however, draw from known cultural narratives and are situationally contingent. There is always a high degree of uncertainty present (pp. 991-993). In my study, this dimension of agency is present at the critical turning points for each soldier interviewed. I will describe the presence of this dimension and its dynamic process in the third analysis (Chapter 6).

The practical-evaluative dimension is based on situationally-based judgment. This dimension is located in the ‘contextualization of social experience’ (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 994). John Dewy, Hannah Arendt and Jurgen Habermas (as cited in Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 996) also explore the critical and dialogic aspects of this dimension of agency. Arendt specifically addresses this by “expanding on Kant’s notion

of the enlarged mentality, which she calls representative thinking” (Arendt, 1984, p. 36, as cited in Embirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 996). Representative thinking is similar to attunement and the ‘reflective double-voice’; it ‘is the ability to see things from the perspective of others’ (p. 996). The authors posit three dominant tones within this dimension: problematization; decision and execution; and the actors’ relationship to the past and future (p. 998).

The more complex analytical category of agency offered by Embirayer and Mische (1998) as well as their understanding that judgments are made both cognitively and emotionally are critical to my analysis in this study. I focus in particular on the narrative patterns that embraced habitual and unreflective thought-forms embedded in mythological constructs, but then I attempt to capture the dynamic process of change as agents, over time and interacting in different structural situations, engage in that dynamic cognitive and emotional interplay described above. This process invites ambiguity by problematizing once taken-for-granted thought-forms. Once a situation is perceived as problematic an actor’s thinking becomes open to ‘reflective judgment’.

Reflective judgment (or liminal space) allows the actor to perceive the problem in relation to the schemas, principles or typifications from the actors’ past experiences but recognizes that the ambiguity challenges that past understanding. “It requires responding to nuance or fine shading; judgments in this fashion are emotional or passional as well as cognitive.” And Nussbaum states, (1986, as cited in Embirayer & Mische, 1998, p. 998) “‘perception is a complex response of the entire personality’ in which emotions can be seen as themselves intelligent, educable, and inseparable from intellectual life” (p. 998).

Chapter 5 begins to explore this process while Chapter 6 attempts to follow the emotional and cognitive dynamic the soldiers experienced as ambiguity led them to question the presenting narrative and the larger cultural narrative in which it was embedded. As they problematized their experiences within the context of the reality the narrative created, many also began a deliberate search for a new course of action. This requires emotional engagement and “stands on the borderline between the intellectual and the passionate, partaking of both natures” (p. 999). Some went on to execute an alternative course of action, which ultimately transformed their perceptions of their structural environments, their sense of identity, and their lives.

3.5 The Emotional/Relational World

“Emotions shape the landscape of our mental and social lives” (Nussbaum, 2001). She argues that emotions are much more than impulses without connection to cognition and values. Rather, emotions are “intelligent responses to the perception of value” (p. 1). Emotions themselves are integral parts of ethical reasoning that contain principles of value and importance; they must, therefore, be considered when examining accounts of judgment. Although emotions are often ignored as part of the process of making choices, grief, love, anger, and fear play a significant role in thoughts about what is right and just. Emotions have cultural sources and a complicated cognitive structure. In order to understand ourselves and even our political cultures, we must examine the history of patterns of attachments that in part take narrative form. Emotions are an essential part of intelligence but to talk about them, we must examine their narrative dimensions (p. 1-3).

Including the identification and exploration of emotions as significant variables in narrative construction, uptake and transformation involves some reliance on experience. Instances of emotion will in most cases be self-identified. It is typical for researchers investigating emotions to rely on their subjects' ability to differentiate and identify emotional experiences. However, this does not mean that the researcher must rely on people's classifications entirely or on their theories about emotions. In this way, I will begin by relying on the emotions self-identified by the soldiers interviewed, but I will also use the literature on emotional theories to argue in some instances that emotions went unidentified or were incorrectly identified (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 11).

Emotions, as characterized by Nussbaum (2001), pose several problems that should be considered when attempting to describe a normative view about them. She assumes that such a view would treat people as ends rather than means or as active agents. Emotions acknowledge neediness and a vulnerability to events outside of one's control; this vulnerability may compromise the dignity of one's sense of agency. But, she argues that even people and events outside of one's control can have real worth and meaning. Emotions also focus on individual goals. They represent an impartial point of view and they develop in connection with close attachments or object relations (pp. 12-13). In this study I attempt to explore emotional experiences of American soldiers who served in Iraq and later challenged the presenting narrative patterns justifying that war. I do so with a mind toward the assumptions and problems considered by Nussbaum above.

Features of emotions that Nussbaum (2001) attempts to explain are salient to my exploration here: "their urgency and their heat; their tendency to take over the personality

and to move it to action with overwhelming force; their connection with important attachments, in terms of which a person defines his/her life; the person's sense of passivity before them; their apparently adversarial relation to rationality...; their close connections with one another, as hope alternates uneasily with fear, as a single event transforms hope into grief, as grief, looking about for a cause, expresses itself as anger, as all of these can be the vehicles of an underlying love" (p. 22). And with all of this, emotions remain a form of judgment. They always "involve thought of an object combined with thought of the object's salience or importance" (p. 23); therefore, they involve evaluation. Nussbaum refers to this view of emotions as "cognitive-evaluative," by which she means to be "concerned with receiving and processing information" (p. 23). I will rely on this view of emotions throughout this study.

While emotions possess the characteristics described above, they also possess other important features that support the claim that they are a form of judgment. First, they are directed at an object; they are about something. Second, the object that they are about is intentional. This intentional 'aboutness' is "internal and embodies a way of seeing" (Nussbaum, 2001, p. 27). Emotions can be distinguished not by the object they are about – that may not change – but by the way in which the object is seen. Third, emotions move beyond ways of seeing an object to beliefs about the object.

Having a belief about an object is usually complex. Anger, for example, embodies a complex set of beliefs: damage has been done to someone (or myself) and it is significant and done willingly. This set of beliefs can fuel anger, but if any of those beliefs are shown to be inaccurate, for example the act was not done willingly, anger may

subside and feelings change to grief or even pity. Beliefs are essential to the identity of the emotion; only critical reflection can distinguish them. Finally, the intentional perceptions and beliefs inherent in emotions are concerned with value. The object in question is seen as invested with value that is also essential to a person's own well-being. Therefore, the object of the emotion is considered important to the person's own life – as Nussbaum (2001) puts it: “emotions appear to be *eudaimonistic*, that is, concerned with the person's flourishing” (pp. 27-31).

In two very different views emotions are regarded as either biological or socially constructed. However, these apparent contradictions may not be incongruent. In their chapter titled “Emotion Expression in Groups” Hess and Kirouac (2000) argue that appraisal theories of emotion bring these two positions into accord. From a social constructivist position emotions are defined by discourse structures within a group or society. The authors here claim that while basic emotional processes are universal and biologically grounded, “types of events attended to, the appraisal of those events, and the relevant norms for behavior may vary as a function of culture, gender, relative power status and the relationship between the interaction partners” (Lewis, 2000). Hess and Kirouac posit that appraisal theories hold emotional reactions based on evaluations of either internal or external events. In this theory, emotional reactions are tied directly to the processing of information; it is the type of information processed and the norms applied to the resultant behavior that can vary culturally. They conclude, based on this, that group membership will influence the appraisal of information, the outcome of that appraisal, and the behavior that follows (p. 370).

Emotion displays have three functions. First, they are symptoms of the underlying emotional state and thus provide information about the sender's feelings. Second, they have functional roles. They are messages that serve as signals and they inform others of the sender's behavioral intentions. Third, they serve the function of appealing for reactions from the interaction partner(s). For example, an expression of sadness informs us that the sender is feeling sad and sees the situation as outside his/her control. It is also an appeal for help or comfort (Lewis & Haviland-Jones, 2000, p. 370).

These functions are salient in a social context because they depend to a degree on the real or presumed social identity of the interaction partners. Appeal functions, for example, of different modes of emotional displays will differ depending on group membership and the value placed on the emotion display may vary as well. Thus, appraisal theories of emotion take into account group membership influences on the decoding and encoding of emotion displays. In addition, the signal (or message) and appeal functions also have different consequences for different members or groups. Knowledge of social norms is critical for the displaying of emotions, for selecting appropriate responses to an emotional situation, and for interpreting emotions of an interaction partner (Lewis & Haviland-Jones, 2000, p. 370).

There are two major sources of influence of social group membership on the experience and expression (encoding) of emotions. First, social group membership either influences the perception of an event or the outcome of emotional appraisals. For example, if members of a group consider themselves in a low position of power they might appraise situations as too difficult to change; this would result more in sadness than

anger. Group membership also influences emotional displays such that displays comply with social norms and expectations. The influence of social group membership on decoding is more complex. A display of anger, for example, implies that the sender is in a position of power and can redress the wrong. Research on expression formation shows that individuals who show anger are perceived as more dominant. Averill (1997, as cited in Lewis & Haviland-Jones, 2000, p. 371) argues that emotional roles are analogous to social roles and so emotions entrain obligations. An angry person is expected to redress a wrong; otherwise, the sincerity of the anger is questioned (Lewis & Haviland). The salience of emotional roles in conjunction with social roles will become apparent in the analyses to follow.

Thomas J. Scheff (2005) states, “emotions and social bonds play an important, if disguised role in morality and political mobilization.” He argues that the Bush administration gained and maintained dominance largely through manipulating emotions, especially fear and anger. I argue that President Bush was able to create and sustain the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns through the manipulation of emotions, especially of anger, fear and fear of humiliation. Scheff points out, however, that a ‘counter movement’ may exist in the ‘emotional/relational world (E/RW) that can be transformative and therefore alter a storyline (narrative). Once the soldiers reached Iraq and experienced combat and the conditions of the country and people, they may have also experienced “moral shock” or cognitive dissonance. An experience of moral shock can dislodge existing beliefs, initiate critical reflection and ultimately transform emotions of anger and humiliation to grief and shame (T. J. Scheff, 2005).

Scheff (2005), like Nussbaum (2001) states that the study of and attention to emotions have been neglected. He argues that most of our attention is focused on the physical world; therefore, emotions often go unnoticed, especially among men. He states that although we live in a world of emotions and relationships, we have been trained to focus on behavior, thoughts and beliefs, ignoring more subtle details that reveal emotions. One mechanism we use to ‘hide’ emotions is through language.

Language in more traditional societies focuses on relationships while English overwhelmingly emphasizes the individual. This tendency to favor the individual over relationship is important for attempting to understand how we bridge the E/RW and our political consciousness. This bridge might occur during brief or momentary periods of unity between cognition and emotion. Scheff (2005) uses the term “attunement” to refer to a period of cognitive/emotional unity. Another term used to describe a similar place is “liminal space²” (Cobb, 2007). Attunement occurs, or liminal space opens, when the ‘reflective double voice’ (Bahktin, as cited in Cobb, 2007), can be heard; it then becomes possible to balance the views of self and other. Within this location of balance, a transformation in consciousness – or a turning point can occur. Emotions play a critical role in affecting this change (Scheff, 2005; Cobb, 2007).

Experts in conflict studies often suggest that deep-seated emotions lie at the root of impediments to peace and reconciliation. However, there has been little work in attempting to identify those emotions. Scheff (2005) argues that research on conflict

² Liminal space is a place of uncertainty. It is the between place where curiosity about the Other begins and opens space for recognizing competing moral frameworks. Shifts in thinking occur in the liminal space as roles shift and positions in the narrative alter. Liminal space usually opens with a moment of surprise. See Cobb, (2006), “A Developmental Approach to Turning Points: ‘Irony’ as an Ethics for Negotiation Pragmatics.”

needs to specify particular emotions and their relationship to thought and behavior. This study aims to explore that dynamic by attempting to examine the connection between American soldiers' emotions and their actual thoughts and behavior. It further seeks to identify the emotional and cognitive 'liminal spaces' or the attunement experienced for these soldiers, which may have transformed their political consciousness (Scheff, 2005; Cobb, 2007).

Institutionalized gender roles may contribute to differences in how men and women manage their emotions and relationships. According to Scheff (2005), men often suppress grief, shame, fear, love [and deny humiliation], what he calls the 'vulnerable emotions', and exaggerate anger or 'humiliated fury'. This can easily result in either violence or withdrawal in response to a perceived threat – or loss of honor. Scheff calls this "configuration of emotions hyper-masculinity." While this is a pattern more visible in honor societies³, such as Hispanic cultures, it still exists in English-speaking ones. Three characteristics are typical of the E/RW of hyper-masculine men: lack of close bonds to others (standing alone; acute individualism); hiding of emotions; and acting out of anger. The American response to 9/11 and the Iraq war narrative reflect this hyper-masculinity. Thus, unless we do more to understand the E/RW, our future will continue to be a violent one (Scheff, 2005).

If war narratives are largely based on us-them binary constructs, this may be a result of a relational construct based on solidarity/alienation and hidden, suppressed emotions. The language used by the Bush administration fostered this binary construct,

³ See Lindner and the later explanation of honor societies in the review of humiliation literature.

which is already embedded in the broader context of American deep culture. Liminal space or attunement becomes more difficult to achieve when we are ‘engulfed’ within the ‘us’ group. Engulfment within ‘us’ increases alienation from ‘them’. This isolation, in the form of physical and/or psychological distance, along with repressed emotions, increases the potential for collective violence and its perceived legitimacy (Scheff, 2005).

Political and/or identity transformation lies in the awakening of hidden feeling – a kind of moral shock. Scheff (2005) argues that the transitional feeling is always surprise. Surprise moves us from one emotion to another. The transition begins during the moment of liminal space or attunement. An attitudinal or perceptual shift must, therefore, involve a relational component. To access deeply hidden feelings, one needs to feel attuned to at least one other person. Attunement penetrates the previous isolation and cuts away from ‘us’ engulfment. Scheff states that to understand a situation or event intellectually as well as emotionally involves three steps: surprise, attunement, and feeling a hidden emotion. The following discussion explores emotions that are often hidden but which frequently lead to violent behavior or morally sanctioned aggression: anger, shame/pride, humiliation (or fear of humiliation) and the denial of guilt. This study hypothesizes that the soldiers now against the Iraq War experienced surprise, a sense of attunement, and the surfacing of their own hidden emotions.

3.5.1 Anger

As stated previously, anger embodies a complex set of beliefs that include the beliefs that damage has been done to someone (or oneself) and it is significant and done

willingly. This set of beliefs can fuel anger, but if any of those beliefs are shown to be inaccurate, for example the act was not done willingly, anger may subside and feelings change to grief or even pity. A display of anger also implies that the sender is in a position of power and can redress the wrong. Research on expression formation shows that individuals who show anger are perceived as more dominant. Averill (1997, as cited in Lewis & Haviland-Jones, 2000, p. 371) argues that emotional roles are analogous to social roles and so emotions entrain obligations. An angry person is expected to redress a wrong; otherwise, the sincerity of the anger is questioned (Lewis & Haviland, 2000).

Elizabeth A. Lemerise and Kenneth A. Dodge, in a chapter titled “The Development of Anger and Hostile Interactions,” state that anger serves several functions. It provides ‘repertoires of action’ and regulates internal psychological processes as well as social and interpersonal behaviors (Lewis & Haviland-Jones, 2000, p. 594). However justified anger may sometimes be, and it certainly can be justified and useful, it also contains the dangerous tendency toward revenge. Retributive anger, or revenge, usually concerns damage or insults to fortunes, status, power and/or honor. This causes many social problems. Anger requires a blameworthy object but in an effort to gain control over a situation in which one feels they’ve been treated unfairly, it becomes too easy to assign blame inappropriately (Nussbaum, 2001, pp. 393-394).

Nussbaum (2001) argues that anger becomes dangerous without maturity or a capacity for empathy. By moving beyond ‘engulfment’ (Scheff, 2005), or isolation, people develop an ability to see perspectives from other people’s eyes. She states, “if one cannot house the other person in one’s imagination, one has much less reluctance to do

something terrible” (Nussbaum, p. 395). In other words, an inclination for retributive anger, or revenge, decreases as we move the other closer to the self. As distance recedes so too does desire for revenge. We may remain justified in anger, but will be more likely to avoid destruction and seek redress through law or other peaceful manners. Distance – both physically, psychologically and emotionally supports dehumanizing strategies, which are employed to promote acts of revenge – sometimes in the cruelest of forms. As a capacity for empathy and therefore compassion develops with education and proximity, dehumanization strategies lose their power. Again, when one is finally able to listen with a ‘reflective double-voice’, one opens the possibility for altering previous beliefs and engaging in compassion (Bahktin, as cited in Cobb, 2007; Nussbaum).

3.5.2 Shame and Pride

According to James Gilligan (1996) author of *Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic*, biological concepts have been at the root of much of human violent behavior (Gilligan, 1996; T. J. Scheff, 2005). Concepts such as racism (or inherent evil), which serve to legitimize and justify violence against groups considered inferior, force us to consider the role of biological concepts when considering the causes of violence. He explores the relationship between violence and culture. Although Sigmund Freud and Konrad Lorenz (as cited in Gilligan, 1996) both submitted that violence is a result of biologically instinctual drives, which build up and must eventually be released, Gilligan dismisses such instinct theories as dangerous and scientifically dubious. If violent behavior is innately part of us and preprogrammed – as implied in Bush’s evil-doers, then

we cannot do anything to prevent it. Such a rationale permits explanations such as those presented in the 9.11/Iraq narratives. It puts an end to questions because it offers a finite (and aggressive) response: eliminate the people preprogrammed to commit violent acts. This response protects those in power and secures the legitimacy of state-sanctioned force. No further questions need to be asked. Gilligan (1996) offers an alternative theory for attempting to understand root causes of violent aggressive acts: a theory of shame.

Although emotional intelligence has long been dismissed as the inferior component of human beings' intellectual make-up, our emotional intelligence may determine our behavior more than our rational intelligence. Gilligan (1996) supports Scheff's (2005) position on the importance of the emotional/relational world through his examination of emotions. He states that emotions such as love, hate, guilt, shame and humiliation act as motives for behavior. Conducting research in prisons with male violent offenders framed his analysis of the origins of violent behavior. He concluded that violence is a combination of biology and environment but that symptoms for predicting violent behavior can be addressed. Gilligan argues that shame is the emotional predictor of violence. If shame overwhelms a person he/she (but especially *he*) will possibly act out violently. The purpose of the violent act is to right an injustice and in so doing, replace shame with feelings of dignity.

While Gilligan (1996) offers shame as an indicator of potential violence, other studies have demonstrated pride as the significant emotion underlying violent tendencies. Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson (1996) argue that pride has been a factor throughout human wars and has evolved through generations of male rivalry. Their

research shows that if a group has been humiliated the members will often band together in solidarity by forming a shared identity and culture, if those did not already exist. The group will cohere and begin to project out-group hostility. They will affirm themselves through self-glorification and often the dehumanization of an out-group. Furthermore, they will attempt to regain recognition, identity and dignity – their ‘psychological territory’⁴ - by humiliating the perceived enemy. A process of deindividuation occurs whereby personal identities become insignificant; the group takes on a powerful identity and creates a force of powerful energy. This energy may be directed toward impulsive behaviors or calculated, and often perceived as justified, violence (Wrangham, 1996).

James Garbarino (1999) researched youth violence in America and found compelling support for the necessity of listening in order to understand the complexity of meaning behind violent acts. In his study of youth violence Garbarino posed the same essential questions asked by many Americans after 9.11: *Why?* He sought to uncover an explanation for adolescent male violence. Unlike the explanation presented in the 9.11/Iraq narratives, he didn’t frame his answer by essentializing the agents or locating the acts outside of history; he went back to the beginning – infancy. In this way, he did not simplify the narratives or rob them of their complexity. In his study he links external conditions with psychological conditions of depression, shame, rage, humiliation and alienation; this complex connection accounts for the motivational factors underpinning expressions of violence. Finally, he argues that experiences of rejection, often over a

⁴ Dennis Sandole used this phrase in a class lecture about causes of violence at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA in 2004 to demonstrate that it is not only physical territory for which man will fight to protect or dominate, but individual and group psychological territory as well.

long period of time, lead to feelings of “toxic shame.” Eventually ‘toxic shame’ breeds increased feelings of worthlessness, and ultimately, humiliation (Garbarino, 1999).

3.5.3 Humiliation

Research clearly supports the importance of the emotional/relational world as a determining factor for violent expressions. Theorists have conducted many studies on shame, for example, as a potential indicator for violent behavior. At the workshop *Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies* at Columbia University in December 2006, debate over the similarities and differences between shame and humiliation as well as their respective place in the literature on aggression ensued.

Miller (as cited by Klein, 2005) distinguishes shame from humiliation by noting that shame involves “a reflection of the self by the self” while humiliation involves “being put into a powerless position, at that moment, [by a] greater power than oneself” (p. 2). Based on her research and understanding of shame and humiliation in relation to aggressive behavior, Linda M. Hartling, Ph.D., (2004), developed a chart delineating some differences. She differentiates between shame, humiliation, embarrassment and guilt. Before preceding to a discussion of a theory of humiliation in relation to aggression, it is useful to consider the categories of shame and humiliation Hartling describes in Table 3.1 (Hartling, 2004).

Table 3.1: Differentiation between shame and humiliation.

| Dimensions | <i>"I am not worthy."</i> Shame | <i>"I have been made to feel inferior."</i> Humiliation |
|---|--|---|
| Dictionary Definition Websters, 1989 | Shame: "The painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another." | Humiliate: "to lower the pride or self-respect of; cause a painful loss of dignity; mortify" Humiliation: "1. The act or/and instance of humiliating or being humiliated. 2. The state or feeling of being humiliated; mortification" |
| Failure | Failure of being; falling short of goals (Potter-Efron 1987 as cited by Hartling); failure to achieve ideals | Failure of significance (Klein 1996); loss of face; loss of dignity; made to feel worthless, inferior |
| Precipitating Event | Acting or being identified as acting in a dishonorable, deplorable way; evidencing a characteristic that is disgraceful or flawed (Fischer & Tangney 1995 as cited by Hartling) | Being forced into a lesser position at the hands of another; ridicule, scorn, held in contempt (Klein 1991); derision; debasement; objectification; discrimination; some form of degradation; torture; requires a power differential (Miller 1988); profound relational violation (Miller). |
| Primary Feelings | Worthlessness; inadequacy; wanting to hide; feeling small; inferior; anger; self-contempt; feeling unworthy of connection (Jordan 1997 as cited by Hartling) | Exposed; disgraced; worthless; attacked; stigmatized; deficient; violated; enraged; ostracized; powerlessness (Klein 1991); unjustly made to feel unworthy of connection (Hartling, Rosen, Walker, & Jordan as cited by Hartling) |
| Responses | Wanting to hide; escape; retaliate; deny; humiliated-fury (Lewis 1971, 1987 as cited by Hartling); shame-rage (Sheff 1987); unacknowledged or bypassed shame (Lewis 1992 as cited by Hartling); manage anger in unconstructive fashion (Tangney 1995 as cited by Hartling) | Wanting to hide; insecurity; anxiety; rage; fear of humiliation (Klein 1991); counter-humiliation (Lazare 1987); humiliated-fury (Lewis 1971, 1987); humiliated memory (Langer 1991 as cited by Hartling); retaliatory armed conflict, escalating cycles of national and international aggression and violence (Lindner 2001) |
| Involvement Self/ Group | Whole self, whole being in relation to others | Whole self, whole being, whole social group in relation to others and groups |
| Quality | Intense; enduring | Intense; enduring |
| Central Fear | Abandonment, not belonging (Potter-Efron 1987 as cited by Hartling); unworthy of connection (Jordan 1989 as cited by Hartling); "condemned isolation" (Miller 1988) | Loss of dignity; public rejection; loss of status; loss of connection; dehumanization; isolation |
| Positive Function? | Awareness of limits; appropriate response to harmful behavior; supports awareness of self and others; one's view of self (Barrett 1995 as | Ego-deflation (W.I. Miller 1993 as cited by Hartling); social control (Silver et al., 1986 as cited by Hartling). |

Evelin Gerda Lindner (2000a) attempts to build a “theory of humiliation” which draws on and brings together elements from social psychology, sociology, social anthropology, history and political science. In her research she has aimed to map “the conceptual space of the process of humiliation and illustrate it on the personal and group level” (Lindner, 2000a). She describes humiliation as relational; humiliation is understood only through patterns of interchange.

Lindner (2000b) defines humiliation as an emotion experienced when a person (or group) has been forcefully ‘lowered’ in a “process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honor or dignity” (Lindner, 2000b). Humiliation occurs when an individual or group is treated in a manner far inferior to their expectations. It can involve acts of violence or situations in which one is made to feel helpless.

Furthermore, humiliation generally involves relationships of imbalance. The humiliator has some control over the humiliated. In the case of 9/11, the victims on the airplanes were powerless before the terrorists. And the American government, caught completely by surprise, was powerless to stop the attacks. As the world watched the tragedy unfold, millions witnessed the tragic loss of the innocent people caught up in the terrorists’ own desire to humiliate America. They also witnessed the humiliation of America.

Lindner (2000b) argues that a humiliation cycle often underlies violent intractable conflicts; yet, it has not been seriously studied in this aspect and indeed has been grossly understated in analyses of conflicts. Now America has unleashed, through the 9.11/Iraq narratives, its own violent cycle of humiliation. And engaging in six years of more death

and destruction the United States, arguably somewhat humbled, is looking for a resolution. If we are to understand processes leading to violent intractable conflicts, especially the one in which we are now engaged, we must better understand the psychology of humiliation (and anger, fear and shame) in human relations (Lindner, 2000b).

In their study, Hartling and Luchetta (1999) focus on the internal experience of humiliation as “the deep dysphoric feeling associated with being, or perceiving oneself as being, unjustly degraded, ridiculed, or put down – in particular, one’s identity has been demeaned or devalued.” It is this assault on identity – both a national and a self -identity – that this paper hypothesizes occurred as a result of 9/11. However, rather than coping with those feelings through introspective reflection, constructive dialogue and a mature analysis of the root causes for the terrorist attacks, President Bush drew on shared myths and public memory to construct a narrative that harnessed and promoted a sense of wounded pride and a righteous call for violent retribution – predictable responses to feelings of humiliation (see Figure 3.3). America’s perceived sense of national identity was indeed assaulted (Hartling, 2004; Harling & Luchetta, 1999).

Margalit (2002) supports this understanding of humiliation by arguing that experiences of humiliation are formative and can shape individuals’ views of themselves, i.e., their identity. A humiliating event impacts not only self-identity but collective identity as well. Examples include the African-Americans descendent from slaves collectively identifying with the humiliation of their people or the famous words “never

forget” used for Holocaust memorials to encourage the remembrance of the past collective humiliation of the Jewish people (Goldman).

Another way to understand humiliation, which is salient to the argument in this paper, is that humiliation “can be characterized as a moral emotion” (Margalit, 2002). Moral emotions motivate behavior towards others. For example, compassion or sympathy is a motivator of positive or ethical treatment toward another, but other emotions, such as humiliation, anger, and resentment motivate negative moral behavior through violence or aggression. Humiliation is particularly pernicious because individuals or groups, after experiencing a humiliating event, may feel permitted – or justified – to respond in ways that previously would have been seen as socially and morally unacceptable. As a result of a humiliating experience then, victims find it acceptable to act outside of normal moral boundaries and to engage in more extreme, usually violent ways against the perceived humiliator (Goldman & Coleman, 2005).

Taking all of the above understandings of humiliation into account, Goldman and Coleman (2005) provide an integrated and more comprehensive definition of humiliation. This definition will underpin the arguments put forth in this paper. They define humiliation as:

...an emotion, triggered by public events, which evokes a sense of inferiority resulting from the realization that one is being, or has been, treated in a way that departs from the normal expectations for fair and equal human treatment. The experience of humiliation has the potential to serve as a formative, guiding force in a person’s life, such that depending on the context in which it occurred, it can

significantly impact one's individual and/or collective or group identity. Finally, humiliation is a moral emotion. As such, the experience of humiliation motivates behavioral responses that may serve to extend or redefine previously existing moral boundaries, thus in some cases leading individuals to perceive otherwise socially impermissible behavior to be permissible (p.11).

Klein (2005) conducted a study in which he interviewed people who reported feeling humiliated. His study found that humiliation remains vivid in the memory regardless of the passage of time and that when one feels humiliated, they experience helplessness, confusion, a sickness in the gut and with few exceptions, rage. He refers to a description of "humiliated fury" to explain the consequences of the humiliation dynamic to both victims of humiliation and those who become the targets of their anger (*Journal of Primary Prevention*, p. 119, as cited by Klein, 2005, p. 9):

When it is outwardly directed, humiliated fury unfortunately creates additional victims, often including innocent bystanders as is so often the case in war, civil strife, personal and family vendettas and terrorists attacks.... In either case, those who are consumed by humiliated fury are absorbed in themselves or their cause, wrapped in wounded pride and individual or collective righteousness, the very epitome of egoistic self-importance (Klein, 2005).

Those who are consumed with humiliation expend their emotional, physical and intellectual energies on either trying to exact revenge or fantasizing about doing so (Klein, 1991, p. 119, as cited in Klein, 2005, p. 9). Klein (2005) argues that humiliation is the "single most pervasive and powerful motivator of destructive collective behavior."

A sense of national humiliation can occur when a collective identity has been insulted or offended; this can often lead to an escalation in violent conflict and an intractable humiliation cycle.

Klein (2005) argues that an existential fear of ‘disappearing’ compels us to defend our self-concepts, even to the point of killing or facing death. In general, he found that people possess a ‘fear of humiliation’ – and will go to great lengths to avoid feeling powerless, put down, or ridiculed (p. 10). Fear of humiliation, he states, is as important as actually experiencing humiliation, and indeed, he argues that it is one of the most powerful motivators of behavior. People will kill themselves and others to avoid being labeled a coward or traitor (p. 10).

He suggests then that the humiliation dynamic is one of the most “pervasive and powerful motivators of destructive collective behavior.” It is this dynamic, more than any other ‘psychic furies’ that precipitate and shape violent conflict (Klein, 2005, p. 6). This dynamic embodies personal experiences of humiliation as well as social dynamics where the potential for humiliation always lurks. He describes the humiliating dynamic as involving a triadic relationship of humiliators, who inflict disparagement; victims, who experience it as disparagement; and witnesses, who observe what happens and agree that it’s disparagement (p. 6).

In her four-year study of the role of humiliation in conflicts Lindner (2001) confirmed several assumptions pertinent to the argument in this paper. First, feelings of humiliation are among the strongest emotions experienced by human beings. Second, these feelings are among the strongest to incite conflict between people; they are among

the most difficult to heal and form the strongest obstacles to trust and cooperation.

Third, reactions to humiliation vary according to the social context in which they occur.

And finally, perhaps the most salient point for the argument of this study, is her findings that feelings of humiliation can be instrumentalized by leaders (Lindner, 2001).

Goldman and Coleman (2005) conducted a study on the effects of emotion – especially humiliation – on reactions to conflictive encounters. They argue that emotions can be socially constructed; this affects “how emotions are experienced, acted upon, and recalled.” According to the literature cited above, if the 9.11/Iraq narratives reveal indicators of humiliation or fear of humiliation expressed to a public wounded and angry after the 9/11 attacks, I can hypothesize that the Bush storyline was a narrative of wounded national honor – collective humiliation – which played into the hearts and minds of those already experiencing personal rage and wounded pride. This narrative harnessed the rage, pain, and confusion of the American people. Through its evolution into the hegemonic narrative and its uptake in the public sphere, it justified a war of retribution, regardless of any contrary facts or alternative narratives.

Goldman and Coleman (2005) define intractable conflicts as destructive and enduring. They are complex and symbolic, and therefore, difficult to resolve. They often involve paradoxical issues and cause deep trauma. Their study contends that emotions play a significant role in the perpetuation of intractable conflict. Lederach (1997) states that today’s conflicts are “driven by social-psychological perceptions, emotions and subjective experiences, which can be wholly independent of the substantive or originating

issues.” He further suggests that emotions themselves can perpetuate cycles of violence that have become distinct from any originating issues (Lederach, 1997).

Recently we have seen how intense collective emotional experiences such as humiliation or rage can motivate group violence – such as terrorism (Goldman & Coleman, 2005). I argue that these processes have occurred in the United States since 9.11. Rather than helping the American people handle collective feelings of fear of humiliation, rage and confusion peacefully and with humility, President Bush constructed a war narrative that used those emotions and exacerbated them in order to justify a war partly to restore honor.

The experience of humiliation can serve to justify violent action against the perceived humiliators. Speeches can incite feelings of humiliation or injustice and then demonstrate the ways in which this experience justifies a violent response. Lear (2003, as cited in Goldman & Coleman, 2005) writes, “Indeed, because humiliation is supposed to be so awful, some kind of retaliation is thought to be justified.” Humiliation not only inspires retaliatory rage, it can morally justify it.

Emotions are experienced internally but can frequently be predictive of future behavior (Frijda, 1986). Frijda refers to emotions as ‘action tendencies.’ Primary emotions are those that tend to be interchangeably labeled with the action they motivate: fear – an urge to disengage from the situation; anger – the urge to regain control. Humiliation, Frijda argues, is an emotional blend of perhaps anger and shame. Blends differ from primary emotions in that they tend to elicit reactions based on a specific ‘constellation of events’ – a story. Blend emotions evoke many types of responses or

action tendencies, which depend on a particular story or context. This suggests that given different social contexts, conditions, or cultural backgrounds, emotional blends, such as humiliation, might be acted upon differently (Frijda, 1986).

Although emotions are in large part psychological constructs, studies show that they are influenced by social variables. Reactions to emotions also vary culturally. In other words, how we conceptualize emotions and respond to them are “influenced and constructed by social and cultural messages and norms” (Goldman & Coleman, 2005). Another study places emotional roles in three categories: privilege, restriction and obligation (Averill, 2001). *Privileges* are emotional roles that allow certain behavior that would be disallowed under normal circumstances. For example, if one is mourning from a death, one might miss work. *Restrictions* places limits on what people can ‘get away with’ when in certain emotional states. Cultural norms curb emotional responses. *Obligation* is what people must do in particular emotional states.

Drawing on these distinctions helps us to understand the interface of social norms – or a socially constructed narrative that frames social norms for a particular story or event – with the emotional and behavioral reactions of individuals and groups. In this study, I hypothesize that the 9.11/Iraq narratives constructed by President Bush shaped the norms for privileged and obligatory emotional and behavioral responses to the terrorist attacks. These distinctions help us conceptualize a framework for understanding the emotional space that can fuel a humiliation-aggression cycle. Furthermore, they help us to understand how some individuals or groups can perceive events and social norms differently, therefore experiencing different reactions. Based on the analysis of the sense

of national identity and mission evoked by the 9.11/Iraq narratives, we can expect that the uptake embodied a sense of privileged and obligatory aggression through retaliation (Goldman & Coleman, 2004). More than WMD or ties to al Qaeda then, perhaps emotions and their culturally sanctioned responses justified war.

Little empirical or theoretical work has been done on the relationship between humiliation and aggression, but the few studies conducted support a link between the two. In a study on aggression within dating contexts it was found that feelings of humiliation contributed to aggressive behavior (Foo, 1995). Another study on the political level argues that the experience of being humiliated motivated aggressive behavior during the Cuban missile crisis by both Khrushchev and Kennedy. This study states that ‘narcissistic rage’, expressed in aggressive behaviors, is “an attempt to alleviate painful emotions and to increase feelings of self-worth.” The analysis suggests that publicly humiliating international leaders can incite retaliatory, vengeful behavior including war (Steinberg, 1991). This study supports the argument that feelings of humiliation largely overtook Germany after World War I, which resulted in a humiliation-aggression cycle fueled by Hitler and the Nazi Party that led to the second world war and the violent atrocities of the Holocaust (T. J. Scheff, 2003).

Another significant suggestion for the argument in this study involves the role of public memory. It has already been demonstrated that the experience of humiliation motivates aggressive behavior; the public memory of humiliation seems to as well. Remembering a humiliating event can be like ‘reliving’ it. In addition, individuals can become “attached” or “addicted” to humiliation. Individuals or groups receive the

“benefit” of social and moral exemption from responsibility for causing pain or for aggressive behavior. This exemption allows them to maintain a victim status and liberates them from a status as perpetrator. If the experience of humiliation were forgotten or abandoned, aggressive acts would no longer be morally justifiable. This would also necessitate facing responsibility for aggression. Therefore, the humiliation itself can serve as a perpetual motivator for violent action resulting in an endless cycle of humiliation-aggression (Margalit, 2002).

A final area of the literature on humiliation salient to this study involves societal and historical distinctions of humiliation made by Lindner (2006). Lindner builds on an argument made by William Ury in his book, *Getting to Peace* (1999, as cited in Lindner, 2006). Ury argues that human history has evolved through three types of societies: interdependence, coercion and knowledge. Interdependence was required for mutual survival during the long period of the hunter-gatherers. Once civilization discovered agriculture, coercion replaced interdependence and incessant warfare and violence plagued the period. Ury argues that we are now in an age he calls the “knowledge revolution” in which globally we are more interdependent again than we have been since the rise of agriculture. He posits that this new age will bring more peace and cooperation – more win-win scenarios rather than the win-lose competitive goals of the coercion period (Ury, 1999).

Lindner draws on these historical distinctions as a basis for her theory of humiliation. She argues that during the hunter-gatherer societies humiliation was rare. She calls this a period of ‘pride and pristine equality’ or a ‘self-pride’ society. Nature is

subjugated during this period but not human beings. An emphasis on fairness and equality existed. Relationships were egalitarian and the social order was based on pride. She suggests that the near-absence of humiliation is a result of a society structured without hierarchies (Lindner, 2000).

Honor societies evolved with agrarian and industrial societies. In honor societies humiliation is a tool or ‘normal device’ used for establishing hierarchies. If honor has been attacked it is considered legitimate to defend, even violently. Honor societies turn humans into tools – they are subjugated along with nature. The principle of inequality is often seen as divine; it is taught and enforced through language and myths. Violence and humiliation, in order to keep ‘people in their places,’ are viewed as legitimate. Lindner argues that defending honor was reason enough for men to risk their lives in duels for long stretches of history. But, she argues, honor is a “more collective feeling and institution than pristine pride or dignity. It is a learned response to institutionalized pressures” (Lindner, 2006).

She states that although it can be argued that individuals feel and not groups, the dynamics of humiliation and honor can be “transported” from the individual to the group level through a process of organization and mobilization. One process that can move the dynamics of humiliation and a perceived need to defend honor is through “grand narratives of humiliation and retaliation”. Such narratives are often created and promoted by “humiliation entrepreneurs” who call on their supporters or publics to seek revenge or fight back for perceived acts of humiliation. Lindner calls this type of humiliation “honor-humiliation” (Lindner, 2006).

Finally, Lindner argues that Ury's 'knowledge societies' correlate with dignity societies and hence "human rights – humiliation." According to Lindner, honor-humiliation does not accept or include the concept that human beings are equal and deserving of equal respect and dignity. That concept is central to societies based on human rights or 'dignity societies'. In human rights based societies, the imposition of inequality is unacceptable. In these societies what is considered 'legitimate' humiliations in honor societies become illegitimate examples of what Johan Galtung refers to as "structural violence" (Galtung, as cited in Lindner, 2006).

Today we are experiencing the growth of "global and egalitarian knowledge societies" in which any subjugation of human beings is morally condemned as attacks against dignity and human rights. This suggests that in dignity societies humiliation "attacks a person's core as a human being and inflicts very deep emotional wounds" (Lindner, 2006). In this same vein, experiences of humiliation can be perceived to be attacks against a sense of national identity as well. In dignity societies, humiliation is perceived as an unacceptable violation that strikes at the core of one's identity (Lindner, 2000).

Although the United States is largely a 'dignity society,' like all western countries, it possesses much of the traditions of an 'honor society,' especially in the south (D. Cohen, Nisbett, R., Bowdle, B., & Schwarz, N., 1996). In addition to this cultural mix, Lindner (2000) argues that within the political establishments of many societies the rhetoric and actions of 'honor-humiliation' remain strong, especially in matters of national sovereignty and external relations. A study conducted by Cohen, et al., (1996)

revealed that southern white males react cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally according to the norms characteristic of a “culture of honor”. The results of the study, which compared white northerners’ reactions to insult with white southerners’, demonstrated that while white northerners were mostly unaffected by the insult, southerners were more likely to perceive their reputations threatened, became more upset and primed for aggression and were more likely to engage in aggressive or dominant behavior.

This study supports Lindner’s (2006) argument that distinguishes between norms of dignity societies and those of honor societies. Furthermore, it provides additional insight into the humiliation-aggression cycle that Lindner argues exists more predominantly in honor societies. Honor is restored with aggressive behavior⁵ – not through attempts toward understanding a perceived humiliator’s underlying motivations, dialogue or structural change. The 9.11/Iraq narratives evoke such a need for a violent response and disdain any other option throughout the period from 9/11 to the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. And much of the country found this narrative compelling. The symbolic language and myths that thread the narrative together resonated with Americans’ sense of national identity and also provided a response that many believed morally appropriate and just (Cohen, et al., 1996 & Lindner, 2000).

Lindner (2000) cites examples of Germany under Hitler and South Africa under Mandela to show how leaders can respond differently to experiences of humiliation with

⁵ Jones (J. G. Jones, 1995) argued in an unpublished dissertation that President George H. Bush claimed America had been redeemed from the loss of Vietnam and that America had recovered from the ‘Vietnam Syndrome’. In other words, the victory in the first Persian Gulf War restored American honor and redeemed us from what was understood as past humiliation.

radically oppositional outcomes. Hitler “responded to the challenge of honor-humiliation...Mandela [saw] his task as healing the wounds inflicted by human-rights humiliation” (Lindner, 2000). Perhaps what we needed after 9.11 was a national dialogue that took as its underpinning assumption Mandela’s position; instead, as a nation, we accepted a ‘grand narrative,’ which demonstrated the nation’s need and sense of duty to “respond to the challenge of honor-humiliation.”

Dignity societies, such as in the west, instill in impoverished and marginalized populations of the world the expectation for empowerment. We feed the hope for more equality and human rights and then fail to recognize the humiliation those oppressed experience when their expectations are not realized. The pain and anger that follow are not limited to economic class or educational level (Lindner, 2000a). Lindner refers to this experience as a ‘double-humiliation’ because of the sense of betrayal between the human-rights discourse and the exploitation, hence humiliation, experienced. It is this fundamental point that the 9.11/Iraq narratives fail to consider; any alternative narrative that did was silenced through patriotic shaming.

The unresolved violence that has followed in Iraq rests on the assumptions of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns and the failure to address the root causes of the terrorists’ fury toward America. Perhaps equally important, the violence, now in its fifth year, further demonstrates our failure as a nation to understand ourselves. The 9.11/Iraq narratives depict this failure again and again. Thus, we remain at the time of this writing, six years later, caught in the uptake of a misguided storyline that perpetuates a humiliation-

aggression cycle that we fail to understand – a cycle that has wrought death and destruction to the people of Iraq and to ourselves.

According to Lindner (2006) different types of humiliation exist: conquest humiliation, relegation humiliation, reinforcement humiliation, and exclusion humiliation. The narratives leading to conflict between the United States and Iraq reflect all four types of humiliation (Lindner, 2006, p.29), depicted in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Four variants of humiliation that occur as honor or human rights/dignity humiliation.

| | Honor Humiliation | Human Rights/dignity Humiliation |
|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Conquest humiliation: When a strong power reduces the relative autonomy of rivals, previously regarded as equals and forces them into a position of long-term subordination. Creation of hierarchy or addition of a new upper tier within a hierarchical order. | X | ---- |
| Relegation humiliation: When an individual or group is forcefully pushed downwards within an existing status hierarchy. | X | ---- |
| Reinforcement humiliation: Routine abuse of inferiors in order to maintain the perception that they are, indeed, inferior. | X | ---- |
| Exclusion humiliation: When an individual or group is forcefully ejected from society, for example through banishment, exile, or physical extermination. | X | X |

In the analysis of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns as well as the personal stories of the soldiers, each type of humiliation will be examined within the broader Iraq War context. However, it is worth considering briefly here how each variant may have a place

in this conflict in order to understand the possible dimensions of a humiliation-cycle. For example, if we accept that we are now entering an age of “knowledge” and therefore a human rights dignity global society, it is possible to see the 9.11 terrorist attacks as a reaction against the humiliation of economic, political and cultural conquest – particularly given the much longer view of history that exists in other parts of the world. If the United States, or the west, is perceived as imposing its values and culture or as economically conquering and therefore subjugating to inferior positions of poverty particular regions of the world, conquest humiliation can be experienced. This is especially pernicious if the west is also perceived to be rhetorically advancing a human rights/dignity society while simultaneously creating an economic hierarchy. This is a double standard and equally, a ‘double’ humiliation (Cobb, 2006b; Lindner, 2006b).

Certainly a global economic and military hierarchy exists with the United States positioned at the apex. Given this generally accepted position as the world’s sole superpower, it can be argued that the terrorists’ attacks of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were symbolic acts of relegation humiliation. The United States was “forcefully pushed downwards within an existing status hierarchy (Lindner, 2006).” Our sense of economic and military superiority and invincibility were suddenly vulnerable and clearly shaken. The United States was humiliated before the world by a group of people from a region considered militarily, economically and indeed, culturally, inferior. American honor had been wounded.

Throughout the narratives following 9.11 President Bush routinely verbally “abuse(d) [the perceived] inferiors in order to maintain the perception that they [were],

indeed, inferior” (Lindner, 2006). ‘Reinforcement humiliation’ is found throughout the narrative to position a legitimate and moral claim to invade Iraq. In order to mobilize the west, which the narrative largely failed to do, and America, in which it largely succeeded, the narratives consistently positioned the Other – Saddam Hussein and the terrorists – as inferior. Eventually the impact of the rhetorical reinforcement humiliation gets taken up in lived events such as the Iraq War itself and is tragically seen in such cruel episodes as the prison abuses at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Finally, it can be argued that ‘exclusion humiliation’ has taken place on all sides of this conflict. President Bush characterologically framed the terrorists and Saddam Hussein (as well the Iranian and North Korean leaders) as evil – as outside the world of normative civilization. In other words, they were rhetorically banished from the global society. In response to the escalating American rhetoric, the symbolically ‘exiled’ leaders began to frame President Bush and America in ways that metaphorically framed them as evil as well. The incidents of exclusion humiliation fueled the already spiraling humiliation-aggression cycle.

Müller-Fahrenheit (Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007) offers another way of explaining the humiliation-aggression cycle: the hermeneutics of humiliation and denial. He argues that an incident of gross injustice (a precipitating event) results in differing histories of remembering. The perpetrators of the injustice will establish a memory based on guilt and shame⁶ – if the guilt and shame are not denied. But for the victims, a generational history of remembering will be one of humiliation and pain (p. 77). The two distinct

⁶ Germany, since the end of WWII, has done this with positive results. The United States has not created a public memory of guilt or shame for the Vietnam War; it has, rather, denied any guilt or shame.

versions of remembering become intertwined forming a “chain that locks both sides to the past and to each other, mostly in the unconscious” (p. 77).

A ‘chain of memories’ produces a cycle of retaliation, which prolongs a hostile polarity and inhibits creative approaches to reconciliation. Trauma and humiliation feed on the products of a polarizing narrative: hatred, resentment and suspicion. The narrative itself promulgates a ‘hermeneutics of humiliation’ by keeping the traumatic experience alive through repeated reminders and through retaliatory repetition of violent acts (Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007, pp. 77-78).

The ‘hermeneutics of humiliation’ is a phenomenon bred from subconscious motives at play in a narrative that aims to keep painful memories alive. Müller-Fahrenheit (2007) describes three of its aspects:

1. A feeling that suffering has not been acknowledged; dignity has been crushed; a resentment of arrogance of power; an emasculating experience that undercuts a sense of self; a burning feeling of wrong that cries out for justice and/or revenge and arouses profound feelings of rage.
2. A way out of this turmoil is to blame everything on the enemy. The enemy becomes responsible for everything.
3. A distorted image of the enemy is created, including the creation of highly fictitious and fantastic images of the enemy – almost caricatures of reality; there is a lack of variation – reduction of own self-image is accompanied by a distorted image of the enemy (p. 78).

The result is a demonization that creates a metaphysical gap between ‘self’ and ‘other’ – or the enemy and us. And once again, responsibility is absolved; if the enemy is evil then it is not our responsibility to seek creative solutions to the conflict. Instead, we must eliminate the evil. We retaliate by ‘repeating the evil [we] pretend [it will] overcome’ (p. 77).

A recent experiment described by Shankar Vedantam (2008) in the Washington Post describes how “reminders of the September 11th attacks seem to dull the responsibility that Americans feel for the harm caused by the botched war in Iraq.” Social psychologists Michael J.A. Wohl and Nyla Branscombe (as cited in Vedantam, 2008) found that when reminded about the attacks, people felt less collective responsibility for the war and less distress for Iraqis. This turned out to be true even when a group was reminded about Pearl Harbor rather than 9.11. Thus, the study shows that when reminded about instances of victimization in the past there is an “increased legitimization of American actions in Iraq and a reduction in the amount of guilt [felt] for the amount of harm their country may have inflicted on another group.” The researchers attribute this to an unconscious need in people to attack back or ‘lash out’ when reminded about a traumatizing event that leaves people feeling helpless and victimized. The basis for feeling guilt, they argue, is the “feeling that you or your group is responsible for having done illegitimate harm... To the extent people feel their actions were completely legitimate, they won’t feel any guilt” (Vedantam, 2008).

Müller-Fahrenheit (2007) suggests that the myths that drive our narratives of success, triumph, divine blessing and exceptionalism deny the underbelly of American

storylines, most notably the genocide of the Native Americans, slavery and imperial conquest. When the underbelly of a narrative is not exposed or considered, the ‘hermeneutics of denial’ are in play. He describes this according to the following:

1. Declare that history is insignificant – not caring to know is an emphatic expression of denial. The adversary bears responsibility for any aggression (p. 82).
2. Mythological framework of denial is found in the metaphysical justification in end-time scenarios. In this way, historical actors are not accountable.
3. The greater the claim to goodness, the more urgent the need to ‘undo’ the memories of wrong (p. 83).
4. A mixture of reluctance, self-pardon and wishful thinking characterizes denial. Destruction as a ‘solution’ transformed into an instrument of redemption (p. 84).

Finally, he suggests that strategies for ‘re-membering’ must be more than just remembering the past. We must connect ourselves to the past and the processes that have created the conditions of the present. The Hebrew word for change or conversion is *teshuba* (p. 89). Donald Shriver, (as cited in Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007, p. 89) asks, “Is there a formula for combining civic shame with civic pride to yield an honest patriotism?” The answer might be in *teshuba*. Many of the soldiers I interviewed experienced such a change in their perceptions, attitudes, and even behaviors after shifting from certainty to a healthier ambiguity. Ambiguity invites ‘attunement’ by

opening the liminal space that will often proceed through a process of 're-membering', or connecting the past with the present. Shame and guilt aid this dynamic process and the result is very often far less certainty - but greater honesty, and an enhanced capacity for humility of self and empathy for the other.

Chapter 4: From Discourse to War

4.1 Introduction

The 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns tapped into an American cultural belief system rooted in tacit acceptance of mythological constructs that contribute to public memories and form a powerful part of American collective consciousness. I argue that President Bush tapped into that collective well to build support for first the overthrow of the Taliban in Afghanistan and later a shift in enemy identification from Osama bin Laden to Saddam Hussein in Iraq. The successful shift in perception of enemy identification provided the justification for more than half of the American public to back the President's plan for regime change through a pre-emptive invasion of Iraq in March 2003 (J. M. Jones, 2003). The following analysis explores the initial framing of the narrative, the evolution of the shifting storyline and the blurring of the main characters. This shift began as a subtle transition and eventually subsumed the narrative formed immediately following the events of 9.11.01.

I draw upon the literature reviewed in Chapter 3 on the myths, militarism and memory that shape dominant understandings of American culture as well as the power of emotion to influence perception. For this analysis I use narrative analysis within a positioning theory framework.

In Chapter 2, I describe the basic premise and contours of positioning theory. I utilize positioning theory as a means of framing the salient features of the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns. My analysis in this chapter explores the storylines, characterizations and the perceived rights and duties of the narrative patterns, which are anchored in the mythological constructs and emotive appeal of many discrete speech acts as the narrative is constituted and reconstituted.

According to Moghaddam, Harré, and Lee (Moghaddam, 2008), positioning theory provides a way to move beyond an issue-based level of analysis to the more obscure background, offering insight into the psychological dimensions of belief systems that underlie conflicts (p. 18). As these authors argue, exploring the implicit beliefs about what is right exposes the moral orders, which shape people's shared sense of rights and duties. The following analysis attempts to do just that: employ positioning theory to reveal the narrative features of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns beyond the issues to the deep cultural belief systems that shape a shared sense of rights, duties, and moral orders – indeed, an American national identity. President Bush dug deeply and broadly, bringing to the surface constructs that too openly brandished can become perniciously normative.

This first analysis focuses strictly on the narrative patterns as they evolved from 9.11.01 through 03.19.03. As described in Chapter 2, this analysis looks specifically at a discourse produced by a particular narrator – President Bush. Although members of his cabinet and other aides contributed to the explanation for the attacks and the choice of actions to respond, President Bush held the position of power that gave

authoritative voice to the narrative. Therefore, I draw solely on addresses and press conferences given by him during this time. I look at the narrative structures used in these addresses that represent patterns of shared meanings and that reveal the contours of underlying culturally shared beliefs. This analysis attempts to explore both the patterns over time and the cultural assumptions from which they derive their power.

Moghaddam, Harré and Lee (2008) argue “...there are patterns of belief, customs and habits that nourish conflict. In the talk of a community people’s explicit beliefs become visible, and much that is implicit can be brought to light” (p. 4). Positioning theory, as an analytical framework, shifts the study of conflict from more traditional approaches to a dialogical approach that enhances our insight into dynamic and long-term conflict processes. To this end, the following analysis seeks to examine the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns in terms of the positions assigned to self (the U.S.) and ‘other’⁷, and in terms of the nature and formation of local moral orders evident in the framing of the rights and duties of the main actors. This analysis, in keeping with the scope of positioning theory, does not seek to determine actors’ motivations. Neither does it claim explanatory value for actors’ actions; rather, this analysis examines certain discursive practices for the underlying themes that lie just below the surface of accounts of this-or-that event, themes about the ‘reality’ (pp. 9-10).

I attempt to derive the shared cultural meaningfulness of President Bush’s speech acts as the narrative evolves over the course of roughly a year and a half. According

⁷ Other will refer variously to Osama bin Laden, the terrorists and/or terrorist organizations in general, Iraq and Saddam Hussein.

to positioning theory, there are three background conditions that contribute to determining how speech acts become meaningful. First, the ‘illocutionary force’ of a speech act describes its social significance. One speech act may have various social meanings given the context or the person speaking. Second, there are implicit patterns of rights and duties that are often taken for granted. For example, the President of the United States assumes the rights and duties of an authoritative voice on matters of public policy and security. Finally, storylines structure the flow of actions and interactions. An essential part of narratology is to study the origins and plots of storylines, including the implicit ones. In analyzing this particular narrative, therefore, I examine the relevant implicit mythological constructs operating beneath America’s cultural surface and within the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns (Moghaddam et al., 2008).

There are many sources for storylines, including folk tales, beliefs about the past and myths. Positions, although rarely explicitly articulated, are usually formed according to traditions or customs, and the complex patterns of rights and duties emerge naturally with positions taken or held. These aspects are the conditions for the dynamic process of evolving meaningful episodes. Storylines, positions and rights and duties mutually determine each other. This relationship is represented with the positioning triangle, shown in Figure 4.1 (Moghaddam et al., 2008).

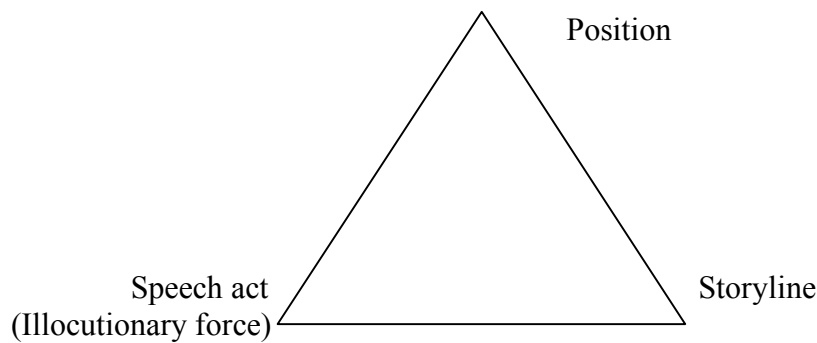


Figure 4.1: Positioning triangle.

As I analyze this narrative in terms of the above aspects and their relationship, I will also explore the local moral orders that are revealed. A local ‘moral order’ can be elicited by examining the cluster of norms tacitly embraced by actors in a particular cultural setting. Uncovering the accepted norms reveals what actors believe is ‘right’ to feel or do in a particular situation. It also provides insight into how actors perceive their presentation of self. In any situation there is an explicit moral order, which includes the rights and duties inherent in an actor’s potential to act – their capabilities and their constraints. Through positioning theory I attempt to account for the evolving local moral order in the original narrative and later (Chapter 6) as soldiers challenge it. This analysis demonstrates that the narrative challenges cultural norms by ‘closing the gap between what is possible and what is permitted’ (Moghaddam et al., 2008).

President Bush began constructing a causal and explanatory narrative surrounding the events of 9.11.01 when he addressed Congress and the American people on 9.20.01. He ‘localized’ the event and provided an ordered and coherent explanation that enabled people to begin to make sense of it. In this first address, he began what would become a

patterned use of civil religious metaphors extracted from particular America mythological constructs. This narrative quickly established the relationship between a storyline, positions within the storyline and the rights and duties of the actors. Hence, an explanatory account emerged and an appropriate response was prescribed (Shotter, 1993).

Figure 4.2 is a representation of the position and storyline that President Bush established immediately after the attacks of 9.11.01 and a description of the categories of actors created by the narrative. This represents the elements of a narrative pattern and its early evolution. At this point, I will consider the narrative itself, not the response to it. Consequently, the following representation and analysis is based on speech acts culled directly from the narrative as it was presented and as it evolved from September 12, 2001 through March 18, 2003. Chapter 5 will consider the initial response to the narrative by those who would eventually serve while Chapter 6 deals with the same soldiers' changed perception of the narrative after they did serve. In short, the presenting narrative can be understood according to Figure 4.2.

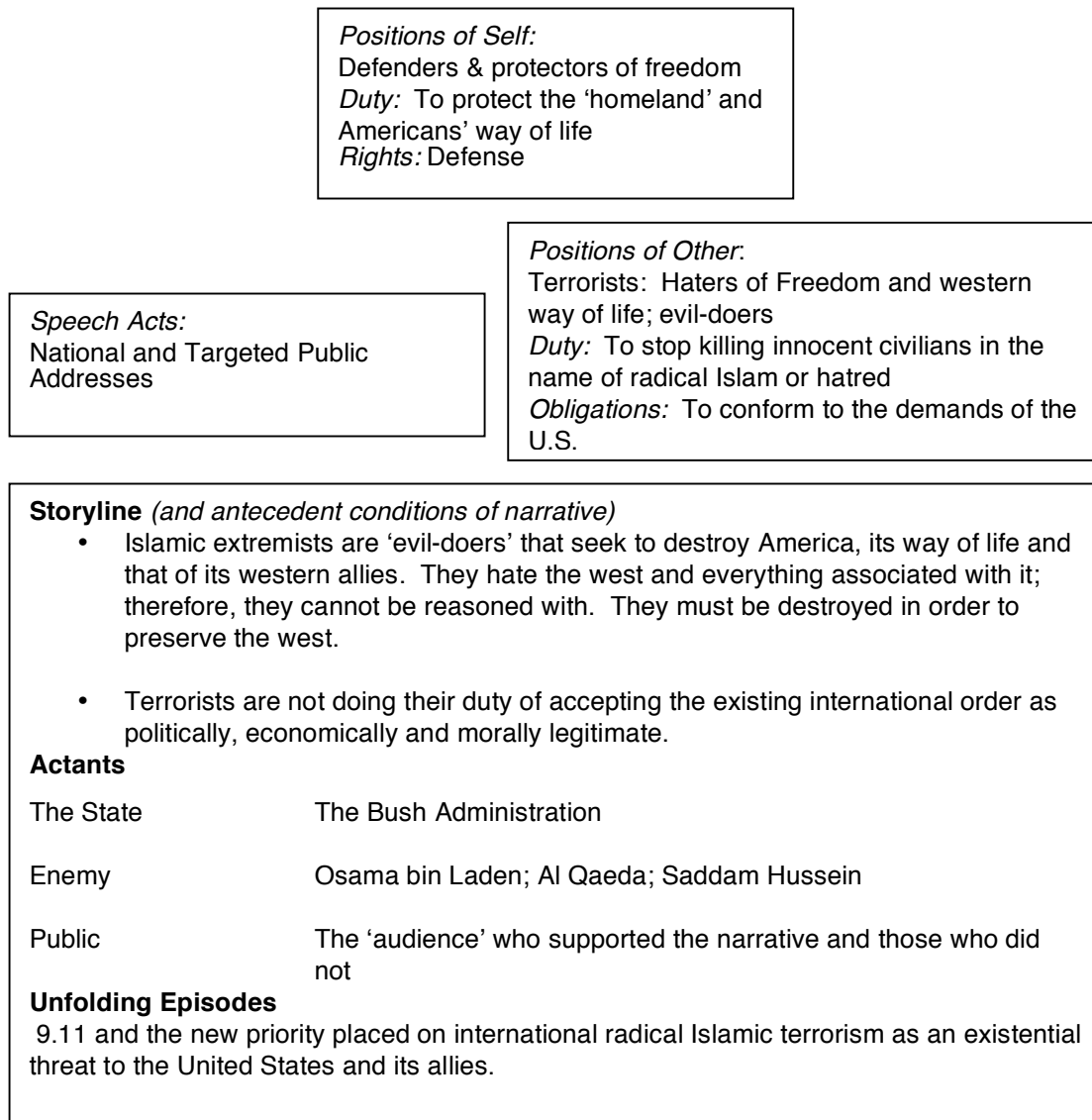


Figure 4.2: Foundational aspects of the narrative patterns as they emerged after 9.11.

An episode is any sequence of happenings in which human beings engage; each episode has a structure. Episodes demand the interaction of actors, writers and audience members. In social settings individuals project a set of roles and rules relative to the

unfolding episode. While an actor's personal identity is constrained by the requirements of a person-type recognized by others, the display of a person-type, if perceived as legitimate, will be recognized, responded to and confirmed in the actions of others (Rothbart, 2006). The initial episode of the 9.11 terrorist attacks created a crisis – physically and emotionally, and so it demanded such an interaction between actors, writers and audience members. From this crisis President Bush emerged as the authoritative voice to respond to the security needs of the country and the emotional needs⁸ of the people. Thus evolved the 9.11/Iraq narrative storylines and the two wars they spawned.

As stated in Chapter 2, a position is a cluster of rights and duties to perform certain actions with particular significance. In the following analysis I categorize President Bush's many speech acts according to the positions framed in the discourse. These positions reveal the perceived rights and duties of the U.S. government, the public, and the enemy. The attributes assigned to the actors frame the possibilities of action through the assignment of rights, duties and obligations. In this regard, every socially significant action must be interpreted as an act – a socially meaningful and significant performance (Rothbart, 2006).

Positioning itself is achieved through storytelling, which renders actions of self and others intelligible. Storylines tend to follow existing patterns of development and can be formed by group myths or group histories (Rothbart, 2006). As I develop the

⁸ The emotional needs of the American people include the fear, confusion and anger (and possibly humiliation) experienced after what was a completely unexpected and horrific attack on American soil. The sense of invulnerability that has traditionally been enjoyed by Americans was shattered and the attacks amounted to an existential assault on a shared sense of identity.

analysis of the 9.11/Iraq storyline, I argue that it derived more from existing myths and public memory already pervasive in American culture than from the 9/11 episode itself.

Finally, a moral order was established through the construction of positions, which created an unequal distribution of rights, duties and obligations amongst the characters – self (America) and other (first al Qaeda and later Saddam Hussein). The asymmetric construction of these positions insinuated a political landscape involving contestation of contested parties. These positions ‘stuck’ and war followed. The question for conflict practitioners to explore is why these pernicious positions so easily took collective emotional and psychological hold of so many ‘audience members’ – the American public. But of course, the positions were already rooted deeply in the American mind-set. To understand the 9.11/Iraq narratives’ patterns of characterizations and positions, we must look at the myths and public memories that nourished it, and to understand its functional appeal – its power - we must examine the emotions it privileged.

According to Paul Boyer (Boyer, 2003) millions of Americans believe in biblical prophecy and saw Bush’s foreign policy as part of a divine plan. He further argues that this belief can shaping grassroots attitudes, not only regarding U.S. foreign policy, but America’s position and role in the world – its ‘calling.’ If, as Boyer contends based on evidence from national polls, about 40% of Americans believe that biblical prophecy includes “end-of-times events through war, natural disasters, immortality, the rise of a world political and economic order, and the return of the Jews to the land promised by God to Abraham,” then we can find insight by exploring the socially shared “identities of

feelings” that position Bush’s categories of civil religious metaphors and myths as practical and persuasive forms of rhetorical speech. This language ‘makes visible’ what usually operates subconsciously in America’s collective cultural conscious (Boyer, 2003; Shotter, 1993). This analysis is an attempt, using positioning theory and narratology, to deconstruct the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns in terms of American mythological constructs, militarism, and public memory.

The narrative created by the Bush administration after the attacks of 9.11 was not the only account of the event, but it became, at least for many Americans, the hegemonic narrative. Although some Americans challenged the ‘voices of institutional authority’ (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999), the agonistic positioning of the dominant discourse silenced them. The use of civil religious language created boundaries of insiders and outsiders. Rejection of this narrative resulted in marginalization; rather quickly, the ‘voices of authority’ silenced the opposition at a cost to the democratic values of debate and dissension. Because opposing discourses threatened the coherence and legitimacy of the dominant discourse they had to be delegitimized and eliminated (Harré & van Langenhove).

Many Americans accepted without criticism the Bush storyline of good versus evil in a struggle for freedom and America’s destiny in leading the world to salvation. As the narrative began to shape dominant categories of reality, Bush increased his use of polarizing mythological constructs and other discourses were swept aside and forgotten. As a result, within America, Bush emerged as the legitimate moral and political leader of the ‘free, civilized’ world. Perhaps more significantly, the constraints were removed and

the administration was empowered to pursue its agenda unquestioned – the gap between the possible and permissible grew dangerously narrow. With the actors enabled and the positions legitimized – the projective value of the narrative could be realized. A new reality had been created (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999).

According to John R. Searle (Searle, 1995), a reality outside of the physical or natural world exists within human institutions. Certain facts exist because human beings agree with them. As Bush created the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns a particular structure of ‘facts’ were given, but the persuasive value of the civil religious constructs already lay within the existing ontology of Americans’ understanding of the social world. The civil religious language ‘bridged the visible and the invisible structures of Americans’ social reality (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Both consciously and unconsciously Americans understood the images portrayed as rational and true; therefore, many did not question the legitimacy beneath the metaphors. Those who did were quickly branded ‘un-American’, which generated conflict between those supporting the dominant discourse and those seeking alternatives (Searle; Shotter, 1993). But for at least 50% of Americans (J. M. Jones, 2003) the narrative provided by the Bush administration ‘felt right’; it held enormous weight in cultural power (Galtung, 2007). But why did it ‘feel right’? How could a narrative, replete, as we now know, with unsubstantiated claims, still hold such persuasive and emotive power? This analysis explores that question.

4.2 A New Era Emerges from the Dust of 9.11 and the Rhetoric of President Bush

In Figure 4.2 I introduced an overview of the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns within a positioning theory framework and accounted for the basis of my argument, which is that this narrative was grounded more in the existing patterns of American myths, militarism and memory than in the episode of the 9.11 attacks themselves. Based on this and the background presented above, I analyze the positions within a context of the myths at the heart of American culture. Finally, I explore the role of emotive power within the interacting contexts of the speaker (President Bush), the narrative patterns and the audience.

The narrative constructed after the 9.11 episode rests on the antecedent condition that ‘they’ (the terrorists/Saddam Hussein) hate freedom and want to destroy it while ‘we’ (Americans and the West in general) cherish freedom and must defend it at all costs. The positioning triangle in Figure 4.2 represents conflict as a discourse and a means of presenting a problem (Galtung, 2008). The discourse generated by the Bush administration relies heavily on character attributions of vice and virtue that shape construction of group identity and difference (Rothbart, 2006).

Positioning theory shifts the focus away from the actual conflict toward the conversation, or flow of dialogue, within which the conflict is set. The narrative patterns that feed the conflict derive from patterns of belief, customs and habits rooted in culture (Moghaddam et al., 2008). To understand a conflict, according to Galtung (2008), three aspects must be identified: parties, goals and clashes (perceived incompatible goals). The 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns, as constructed by the Bush administration, lay out those

aspects through narrative patterns in an evolving discourse from 9.12.01 through the 3.19.03 invasion of Iraq.

Immediately following the attacks of 9.11 the Bush administration began narrative formation. The original narrative, constructed and delivered in an address to the American people on 9.11.01 sets the frame for the patterns that would follow. In this address, President Bush characterizes the enemy – but ambiguously and as not quite human. He also lays out the initial framing for America’s characterization, which will be built upon throughout the year by drawing continuously on mythological constructs, public memory and militarism. He further positions the duties and obligations of the American state, public and military. The initial storyline is framed by particular characters and duties; none of these characterizations or duties would have seemed new or out of place to most Americans. They would have ‘felt right.’ From the very first day, Bush crafted a narrative that held tremendous cultural power.

On September 11, 2001, President Bush immediately began constructing a polarizing narrative that positioned characterological attributes of self positively while other is positioned in negative, often dehumanizing terms (Rothbart, 2005). The enemy is described simply as “evil,” “terrorists,” and “they”. The American people are characterized as “a great people; a great nation; [with] resolve of steel, [and an] impenetrable foundation.” Most tellingly, America is further described as the “brightest beacon of freedom in the world” and Americans as those who “value peace and security” (Bush, 2001j)

The narrative provides an initial explanation for why ‘they’ attacked: “America was targeted for attack because we’re the brightest beacon for freedom and opportunity in the world,” and because ‘they’ wanted to “frighten the nation into chaos and retreat” (Bush, 2001j). The duty of the state is positioned as to “protect citizens at home and abroad, search for terrorists, and to defend freedom, goodness and justice.” The American people are assigned duties as well: “to keep the light shining...” “to unite in resolve for justice and peace...” and to defend freedom, goodness and justice.” Finally, the military is advised “to be prepared” (Bush, 2001j).

So from the very beginning a narrative is spun that draws heavily on mythological constructs and public memory rooted in American culture, rather than an analysis of the historical relationship between the actors. No attempts are made to name a person or group with potentially legitimate grievances against the U.S. – although I am in no way suggesting that the attacks themselves could have been justified by any such grievance. The point remains that the presenting narrative relies on American cultural power to provide its initial legitimacy, not the actual events of 9.11, the historical background that may have led to the attacks or the claims of al Qaeda itself.

President Bush positions America as a ‘great people’ and the ‘brightest beacon of freedom in the world’ who must ‘defend freedom, goodness and justice.’ Dualism and indeed Manicheanism anchor this storyline – supported by American mythological constructs such as ‘chosenness, innocence and heroism’, as described in Chapter 3. At this point no explicit duty is assigned to the enemy; this first address focuses on positioning the actors and the plot. The storyline remains simple: this was “an act of

mass murder;” and an attack against the “brightest beacon of freedom and opportunity in the world” (Bush, 2001j). Thus, this immediately becomes an existential assault – an attack on *who* we are *because* of who we are.

According to American mythological constructs of chosenness, innocence, and heroism, an attack on *freedom, our way of life, our goodness, and our justice*, is an attack on the very idea of America – an American identity. President Bush claims in this first address that the “terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve” (Bush, 2001j). He quickly draws from the myth of the ‘super hero’ by positioning the American citizen as unnaturally strong and determined. Fitting to this subtle image of the American character is the description he applied to the emotional response sanctioned in this address: “[these acts] have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness, and a quiet, unyielding anger” (Bush).

The carefully selected words positioning appropriate emotions reveal much about American culture – and the Bush administration’s awareness of it. Our innocent sense of invulnerability⁹, (superhuman) strength, power and goodness would indeed cause many Americans to experience disbelief that anyone could attack us so viciously on our own soil. President Bush positioned anger as an appropriate emotional response¹⁰, but infused it with a particular quality: ‘*quiet and unyielding*’ (Bush, 2001j). Americans intuitively

⁹ This myth hides the irony that America is actually a nation beset with anxiety, (Sherry, 1995, as cited in Bachevich, 2005).

¹⁰ I don’t dispute that anger was appropriate; indeed, I think it was. But anger can be expressed in different ways and can lead to various responses. Instead of anger resulting in critical analysis and thinking, the anger channeled through the 9.11 narrative patterns resulted in years of violent retaliation, which was perceived as morally justified.

know this kind of anger. This quality of anger carries with it the image of the ‘super-hero’ that pervades American popular culture. This hero-type embodies particular rights and duties. Thus, it created an instant, if not subconscious, image – or model – of how America was going to view itself and the other, and it made possible action that would otherwise be considered outside of accepted moral behavior. It established from the onset the local moral order that would compel America toward two wars (Robert Jay Lifton, as cited in Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007).

President Bush continued to construct a narrative replete with language familiar to Americans – language drawn from American mythological constructs and public memory, which in turn shape a collective cultural identity. As the narrative patterns evolved over the 18-month period leading to the invasion of Iraq, the language of exceptionalism, chosenness, innocence, heroism and militarism became ubiquitous. Little to no attention was given to history, a relational context, alternative perspectives, (certainly not that of the terrorists) or even to facts. Using exclusion humiliation, the perceived enemy was consistently dehumanized into an abstraction – into an evil that must be eliminated, while Americans were repeatedly portrayed with super-heroic, almost otherworldly, qualities. Victory was defined as eradicating evil and ridding the world of evil-doers; this sense of victory became the only viable goal in a winner-loser construct. In this timeframe, as the nation approached a second war, Americans learned very little from their government or the media about the historical context of 9.11 or Iraq or the perceived grievances of the other. If they listened closely to the words of their leader, however, they would have learned much about themselves.

On the day following the attacks President Bush sent a letter to Congress requesting \$20,000,000,000 in emergency funds. No enemy was yet identified, but the actions were described as attacks against “our way of life, indeed our very freedom...” (Bush, 2001k) The attacks were positioned as an existential threat then – an attack on American identity and its survival. He built on this characterization in a radio address to the nation on 9.15.01 by positioning the enemy as a “different kind of enemy...who believe they are invisible. Enemies [who] hate who we are” (Bush, 2001g). The narrative further created character polarities as Bush attributed Americans with a “...spirit of sacrifice, patriotism and defiance...[and with] courage and concern for others...this is America; this is who we are” (Bush). For the first time in this address he characterized the event as a “great cause we have entered...[to] eradicate the evil of terrorism.” The public was positioned immediately as “...committed to this goal” with “patience, resolve and strength” (Bush). This language resonates with public memories of World War II, drawing on both the memory’s storyline and associated emotions.

The images invoked through the president’s speech acts symbolized a gloried view of American identity that retrieved storylines from the mythic past. It is indeed the perceived right and duty of the president to respond to the nation when a crisis occurs, to provide an explanation and to determine a response. Importantly here, is the particular explanation provided and the response that resulted. President Bush, in constructing an explanation and response, relied on patterns of beliefs offering the elements of meaning-making that are conferred, presumably, to him as President.

Over the next five days, from September 16th through the 20th, President Bush delivers five more addresses. In each the perceived enemy is described in dehumanizing, abstract terms and is presumptively positioned, i.e., given mental, characterological and moral traits. This dehumanization represents a powerful form of humiliation: exclusion humiliation. The enemy is verbally ejected from the society of ‘civilized’ human beings; their very humanity is exiled. According to Lindner (2006, p. 29), as described in Chapter 3, exclusion humiliation occurs when “an individual or group is forcefully ejected from society, for example through banishment, exile or physical extermination.” The speech acts position the perpetrators of 9.11 outside of civilization – they are linguistically banished and therefore can be psychologically perceived as less than human. President Bush speaks alternately in a ‘single voice’ and an ‘active double voice’ (Bahktin, as cited in Cobb, 2007) as he steadily builds presumptive positioning for self and other (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Initial prescriptive or characterological positioning of the 9.11 perpetrators and the American people.

| Address (Speech Acts) | Positioning of Enemy (Other) First Order Prescriptive Positioning | Positioning of Self (the US) First Order Prescriptive Positioning |
|--|---|---|
| 9.16.01 Press Conference (Bush, 2001i) | Evil-doers; evil folks who lurk out there; barbaric; a new kind of enemy; a new kind of evil – no remorse; them; people who hit and run and hide in caves; can't stand freedom | Great nation of resolve; people of great faith; freedom loving people; strongest nation in the world; a mighty giant; determined |
| 9.17.01 Address to Employees at the Pentagon (Bush, 2001b) | Evil-doers; barbaric people; enemy that hides and burrows; different kind of enemy; terrorists with no borders | Spirit and courage; freedom-loving people; [America is] a great bastion of freedom |
| 9.18.01 Statement by President (Bush, 2001f) | Terrorists; scourge of terrorism | Innocent Americans; civilized nations |
| 9.19.01 Remarks by President (Bush, 2001h) | Evil-doers | Greatest halls of freedom – US Congress; united in resolve; great nation; lead the world for freedom |
| 9.20.01 Address to a Joint Session of Congress And the American People (Bush, 2001a) | Enemies of freedom; al Qaeda – a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations; murderers; terrorists; they... hide in countries to plot evil and destruction; they hate our freedoms – our freedom of religion, our freedom of speech, our freedom to vote...; they follow in the path of fascism and Nazism and totalitarianism; | Giving and loving people; strong; civilized world; civilization's fight; fight of all those who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom; either you are with us or you are with the terrorists; we'll meet violence with patient justice – assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come. |

According to W. Gerrod Parrott (Parrott, 1999) strategic public positioning is a dynamic construction of personal identities relative to others. In a conflict situation these qualities are strategic and negotiable. The power inherent in positioning theory is that both parties are characterized as active participants in interactions (p. 30). The Bush administration characterized both parties, as seen in Table 4.1, as polar opposites, constituting group identities of difference with character attributions of vice and virtue (Rothbart, 2005). He begins to draw from the mythological constructs by positioning America(ns) as innocent and good, while the enemy is evil. Indeed, he implies that the

enemy itself is evil –not just the acts - and so establishes a storyline based in a struggle of good vs. evil. Oppositional positioning increases the distance between self and other, creating an in-group environment of engulfment (T. J. Scheff, 2000). This storyline will continue to take shape as Bush relies more and more on the myths underpinning an American sense of identity and purpose.

Emotions are often neglected as salient factors in narrative analysis. But, according to Parrott (1999) emotions can play a central role. He argues that one can position oneself by displaying emotions characteristic to a role and ascribe emotions to one's opponents by stating what they should be feeling, managing not only the voice of the other but the emotions as well. Bush uses emotion to further strengthen the positions for self and other that he is constructing. For example, expressions of contempt and pride can strengthen a position of superiority. Anger displays position one as a victim and help position the other as blameworthy, which in turn provides a target for the expression of anger.

President Bush uses emotion effectively to position both America and the still shadowy enemy in the major public address on 9.20.01. He also begins to create the storyline upon which the subsequent narratives will rest. He states: "Our grief has turned to anger and anger to resolution. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, justice will be done" (Bush, 2001a). As he establishes the duties and obligations inherent in this positioning, he reminds his audience that 'grief and anger' are appropriate and that these emotions carry particular responses. He informs the

country that America will bring justice to the enemy and that we will “defend freedom.”

He states:

Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom – the greatest achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time – now depends on us. Our nation – this generation – will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail (Bush, 2001a).

President Bush invokes the basis of the myth of the chosen and the super-hero. America is positioned as having near supernatural powers and as the nation that the ensured continuance of freedom depends upon – for the entire world. No historical or relational context is given. This ahistorical position absolves self from any possible complicity. The terrorists acted because of the evil within them; they acted because they hate America and what it stands for. This storyline denies any relationship between the perpetrators and the United States; America is positioned as an innocent victim – punished for its very goodness. Positioned as a random act rather than a relational one closes the space for reflective critical thought. Feelings of guilt or shame, which can lead to constructive or conciliatory relations, cannot surface when actors remain in the iterative element of agentic capacity (Emirbayer, 1998). Retaliation becomes the expected response positioning further violence as morally acceptable.

President Bush positions anger and ‘victory’ – bringing justice to the terrorists – as appropriate – indeed expected. Anger itself carries the expectation of righting a wrong – a wrong committed willfully against an innocent victim. President Bush concludes this address: “I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people” (Bush, 2001a). Implicit in that statement is the intent for retaliation. He skillfully uses the first-person singular pronoun to demonstrate singular courage and determination – positioning himself as the new American superhero – and challenging the rest of the country to stand with him.

The narrative patterns use characterological positioning that set up oppositional attributes and establish a binary storyline of good vs. evil. President Bush invokes grief and anger while projecting exclusion humiliation on the perceived enemy. The positioning of emotions is significant. Emotions, according to Parrott (1999), consist of more than subjective feelings. They have the property of intentionality. Their intentional and cognitive aspects publicly express a claim about some ‘thing’ – an objective circumstance in the world. Expressions of anger and grief, therefore, assign actors in a particular place in a local moral order; they also place others who share these emotional expressions in the moral order. One actor is a victim and the other blameworthy; thus the identities and positions within a local moral order are established. (p. 30-31).

Emotions are reciprocal. An angry person must have a target and the target should feel shame or guilt. Publicly expressing anger or pride generates real or perceived admiration – a following. In the same vein, the audience will feel disapproval toward the

target. Establishing positive traits for self and negative ones for the other arouses these emotions in audiences. Thus, emotions entail a point of view, often so much so that the audience emphatically shares the emotion (Nussbaum, 2001). An emotional person also demonstrates commitment to the positions and storyline being constructed. Emotions are critical for this positioning to be persuasive. As Aristotle said in the *Rhetoric*:

...your language will be appropriate if it expresses emotion and character, and if it corresponds to its subject... This aptness of language is one thing that makes people believe in the truth of your story; their minds draw the false conclusion that you are to be trusted from the fact that others behave as you do when things are as you describe them; and therefore they take your story to be true, whether it is so or not. Besides, an emotional speaker always makes his audience feel with him, even when there is nothing in his arguments (Book III, section 7, W. Rhys Roberts, Trans., as cited in Perrott, 1999, p. 32).

From 9.11 through the 2002 State of the Union, President Bush employs ahistoric narrative patterns. He relies on patterns already familiar to Americans through myth, public memory, and militarism. He constructs a storyline that is binary and linear – a ‘skinny’ narrative that is emotionally persuasive and cognitively easily understood. Table 4.2 demonstrates the continuing construction of this characterological strategic positioning.

Table 4.2: Prescriptive or characterological positioning of the 9.11 perpetrators and the American people from October 17, 2001 to the State of the Union address on January 29, 2002.

| Address (Speech Acts) | Positioning of Enemy (Other) First Order Prescriptive Positioning | Positioning of Self (the US) First Order Prescriptive Positioning |
|---|--|---|
| 10.17.01 Remarks by President to Military (Bush, 2001e) | Instruments of evil; evil-doers; evil people; motivated by hate | Noble mission; strength of nation is the military; determined; steadfast; resolved; compassionate nation; good, kind- hearted, decent people; greatest nation on the face of the earth. |
| 11.8.01 Address to Nation (Bush, 2001d) | Evil; do not value life; do not allow education or healthcare; do not value free speech; no conscience and no mercy; [would] destroy our freedom and impose its views | Renewed sense of pride and patriotism; we value life; we value education, free speech, religion. |
| 11.10.01 Address to United Nations (Bush, 2001c) | Wicked; terrorists; parasites; the Taliban are now indistinguishable from the terrorists; freedom and fear are at war; hate our policies and our existence; aspire to dominate | Dignity of life over a culture of death; law over coercion and chaos; commitment to hope and order, law and life |
| 1.29.02 State of the Union (Bush, 2002e) | Dangerous killers; outlaw regimes; spreading throughout the world like ticking bombs, set to go off without warning; a terrorist underworld in at least a dozen countries; axis of evil; evil is real and it must be opposed. | Steadfast, patient and persistent; courage, compassion, strength and resolve; deep in the American character there is honor and it is stronger than cynicism; |

Throughout this time period the enemy has been somewhat elusive. Osama bin Laden and then the Taliban in Afghanistan were identified as enemies, but Bush maintains the shadowy, ambiguous, almost fantastical descriptions of the opponent. As the evening of the State of the Union address approaches, he infuses his speech with more generalities, opening space for the introduction of a new enemy found in the ‘axis of evil’. While he positions self and other, he also assigns the rights and duties of America positioned as victim, innocent, and just. From this position a storyline that embraces American mythological constructs, public memory and militarism continues to emerge.

Although this is speculation, I assume that one goal of the terrorists on 9.11 was to humiliate the U.S. in response to years of perceived humiliation inflicted upon

Muslims and ‘nonwestern’ countries¹¹. According to Lindner (2006, p. 29), relegation humiliation occurs when an individual or group is forcefully pushed downward within an existing status hierarchy (see Chapter 3). Based on my assumption of one of the possible objectives of the attacks, the storyline emerging resists this attempt at humiliation. Using myth, public memory and militarism, Bush draws on prideful images and past glories to deflect a possible ‘loss of face’ in the eyes of the world, which ironically reflects honor-humiliation. A reaction to perceived honor-humiliation assumes the need to humiliate the other creating a dangerous humiliation cycle. The Bush administration reminds his audience repeatedly that the American position as the ‘strongest nation on the earth’ must be reestablished quickly and the humiliation of being unprepared and successfully attacked¹² overcome. The attacks were perceived and portrayed as existential assaults on the identity contained in our myths; President Bush spoke to reinforce the legitimacy of that identity and to assure the world that it would remain legitimate.

Once positioned as an innocent victim attacked by ‘evil that lurks’ in the world, Bush can assign appropriate rights and duties. His speech acts distinguish the rights and duties of the State (his office), the public and the military. The positioning of the enemy’s purpose is juxtaposed to American duties and serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the emerging storyline. He claims that “freedom is at risk” and that the enemy is “motivated by hate” and seeks to destroy American freedom while imposing its own views. The enemy “embrace[s] tyranny and death as a cause and a creed. We choose freedom and the dignity of every life” (Bush, 2001d; (Bush, 2002e). Table 4.3 describes

¹¹ Several of the participants in this study make the same assumption as seen in Chapter 5.

¹² Brought down or lowered, see Figure 3.3.

the rights and duties of the State, the American people, and the military as positioned through speech-acts from 9.11 through 1.29.02.

Table 4.3: Positioning of American rights and duties through January 29, 2002.

| Speech Act | Rights/Duties of State | Rights/Duties of Public | Rights/Duties of Military |
|---------------------------|---|---|--|
| 9.11.01 (Bush, 2001j) | Protect citizens at home and abroad; defend freedom, goodness and justice | ...to keep the light shining; to unite in resolve for justice and peace; defend freedom | To be prepared; defend freedom, goodness and justice |
| 9.16.01 (Bush, 2001i) | To be alert to evil folks who lurk; to protect life; to find suspects and bring them to justice; to get them running and to hunt them down; we will hunt down, find, smoke out of their holes. | People will go back to work and we'll show the world. This crusade – war on terror – will take awhile. Patience | Rid the world of evil-doers; fight terrorism; win the first war of the 21 st century; rout terrorism out of the world. |
| 11.8.01 (Bush, 2001d) | To save civilization itself; to protect citizens | Service, citizenship and compassion; new era for our government and our people; let's roll. | Only possible response to hate is to confront it and to defeat it; to wage war to save civilization |
| 11.10.01 (Bush, 2001c) | Deliver our children from a future of fear; we do not ask for this mission yet there is honor in history's call; we have the chance to write the story of our times, a story of courage defeating cruelty and light overcoming darkness | Commitment to hope and order, law and life; | The only alternative to victory is a nightmare world where every city is a potential killing field; to provide the response to aggression and terror |
| 1.29.02 (Bush, 2002e) | Goal is to prevent regimes that sponsor terror from threatening America with WMD; We have a greater objective than eliminating threats... We seek a just and peaceful world... | ...our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom's fight; whatever it costs to defend our country we will pay; ...overcome evil with good; lead the world toward the values that bring peace. | Shut down terrorist camps, disrupt terrorist plans and bring terrorists to justice; prevent terrorists from obtaining WMD; defend liberty and justice. |

A familiar storyline surfaces with the repetitive use of narrative patterns that frame this conflict as good versus evil. America is positioned as the leader of the world and the 'hero' needed to rid the world of evil. The winner/loser dichotomy is clearly invoked here when Bush states that only total victory is acceptable, and victory lies in eliminating the 'evil-doers' and evil itself. Bush reminds his audience of America's special, divine mission – it's calling. He implicitly refers to the public memory of

previous battles against evil – WWII and the dangers of appeasement. He uses tough, masculine language when describing America’s response, speaking in militaristic terms of battles and victories. He espouses the spread of American values as necessary to ensure world peace. Bush uses the 9.11 crisis to raise pervasive collective cultural understandings to the surface of the public’s consciousness; he reminds his audience of the collective values Americans shares, values emanating from our myths and public memories. Of course Americans “choose freedom” and Americans can identify with his statement that “we’ve been called to a unique role in human events” (Bush, 2002e).

In the 2002 State of the Union address President Bush begins the transformation of the primary enemy – or target – from the shadowy terrorists embodied by Osama bin Laden to Iraq’s leader, Saddam Hussein. The speech acts in this address serve to solidify fear, pride and a shared identity based on values found in the mythological constructs of chosenness, innocence, and the superhero. It also exploits public memories of past glories and struggles against evil. Finally, it uses emotion as a persuasive force to bind those values and create solidarity behind the president and his call for justice through retaliation. The basic pattern of the storyline that will hold nearly unchanged until the invasion of Iraq is constructed during the months prior to the 2002 State of the Union and finally set with its delivery. The main character and the projected landscape for the ensuing battle against evil shifts subtly, almost imperceptibly, from Afghanistan to Iraq. But President Bush can do this regardless of whether his story is true or not; his speech acts are emotional and they speak to the core of American collective identity. President Bush successfully made “his audience feel with him” (Aristotle, as cited in Parrott, 1999).

4.3 Enter Iraq: The Storyline Begins to Shift

The shift in storyline and enemy identification was introduced midway through the 2002 State of the Union address. Bush refers briefly to the security concerns with Pakistan, Iran and North Korea and then devotes two paragraphs to Iraq. He states:

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens – leaving bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspections – then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world (Bush, 2002e).

President Bush, in this paragraph, identifies Iraq as an enemy - a terrorism conspirator and an outlaw regime. Employing exclusion humiliation again, he evokes dehumanizing and shadowy descriptions when he distinguishes Iraq from the ‘civilized world’ and claims it ‘has *something* to hide’ (italics my own). He will repeat these speech acts, in exact form or with close approximation, in many addresses to come until the invasion of March 2003. Immediately following the statement above Bush essentially sets the new storyline in motion:

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to

terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic (Bush, 2002e).

Although the essential storyline is laid out here the public doesn't take it up immediately. To accomplish this the administration begins to harness the emotions of 9.11 by constructing a connection between Iraq and the terror attacks in subsequent addresses. From February 2002 through May 2002 Bush remains seemingly focused on Afghanistan (the terrorists/al Qaeda), but he subtly alludes to Iraq (Saddam Hussein) and the elements of the storyline presented in the 2002 State of the Union, particularly the connection between Saddam Hussein and terrorist organizations. The characterization of the enemy becomes shadowy again, depicted in general terms of evil. During his address to the troops in Alaska on February 16, 2002 he offers no historical context for the attacks once again, but devolves into militant language of us/them and good/evil:

It's hard for me to figure out what was going through the minds of those who planned and attacked America. They must have thought we were soft... But there is no cave deep enough to hide from the long arm of justice of the U.S. military. We're going to run them down, one by one. Now that they've laid down the gauntlet, we're going to pursue them. And we're going to get 'em. But we've got a bigger task than that. One of the most dangerous things that can happen...is that terrorist organizations hook up with nations that develop WMD... to allow nations that have that dark history and an ugly past to develop WMD...

particularly those who have gassed their own citizens in the past, for example (Bush, 2002k).

This becomes truly a war of good versus evil or the civilized defending themselves against the uncivilized. To accomplish this requires an audience with a subconscious cultural understanding that permits identification with these images to occur. To foster this identification Bush delves into familiar mythological constructs more frequently and increases his use of militant language. Indeed, his language is so militant, exuding a blend of intense pride and anger that it resonates more than anger; it implicitly calls for revenge (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: Prescriptive or characterological positioning of the 9.11 perpetrators and the American people from February 16, 2002 through May 17, 2002.

| Address (Speech Acts) | Positioning of Enemy (Other) First Order Prescriptive Positioning | Positioning of Self (the US) First Order Prescriptive Positioning |
|---|---|---|
| 2.16.02 (Bush, 2002k) | I view this conflict as either us versus them and evil vs. good. And there is no in between. There's no hedging. And if you want to join the war against evil, do some good. ...those who murder innocent people for the sake of murder. | ...our cause is just; our cause is noble; incredibly important crusade to defend freedom; mighty military; nation of resolve and strength; full of compassion and kindness; a decent nation; the strength of the nation is the people. |
| 3.11.02 (Bush, 2002l) | We face an enemy of ruthless ambition, unconstrained by law or morality; And they are determined to expand the scale and scope of their murder; against such an enemy there is no immunity and there can be no neutrality. | A mighty coalition of civilized nations; the civilized world was stirred to anger and to action; victory will come over time; we fight for the conditions that will make lasting peace possible.. for lawful change against chaotic violence, for human choice against coercion and cruelty and for the goodness and dignity of every life. |
| 4.17.02 (Bush, 2002j) (Bush, 2002g) | Ruthless enemies; evil | ...they've never faced a country like ours before: we're tough, we're determined; we're relentless. Americans always see a greater hope and a better day. And America sees a just and hopeful world beyond the war on terror. |
| 5.17.02 (Bush, 2002f) | Determined and fierce enemy; enemy (repeated five times) they (repeated six times); killers; they thought we'd just roll over. They thought we were weak. | ...greatest nation on the face of the earth; ...this is a nation that loves our freedom and loves our country; ...this is a nation that has got citizens who are willing to sacrifice for a cause greater than themselves. |

Throughout this period President Bush maintains some ambiguity about the enemy by continuing to speak in dehumanizing terms that help build consensus with the American audience while humiliating the perceived other. He also does something very important: he persistently reminds the public of the 9.11 attacks with emotive - particularly anger and intense pride- language and tones. A new public memory is being formed while raw emotions of anger are continuously brought back to the surface. A desire to redress a perceived wrong – an urge to fight or seek revenge – relies on

memories of the initial wrongdoing staying alive. Bush fuels the anger initially felt after the 9.11 attacks through repetitive speech-acts and a descriptive re-counting of that day. His use of repetitive language to position self, other and the duties of self also condenses the potential complexity of the narrative into a simple, knowable and predictable storyline.

The address to world leaders on March 11, 2002 lasted twenty minutes. In that time he repeated variations of ‘civilized world’ or ‘civilized nation’ seven times. He also reminds his audience repeatedly of the events of 9.11 and speaks almost directly of the intent for retribution, or revenge. He states: “History will know that day [9.11] not only as a day of tragedy, but as a day of decision – when the civilized world was stirred to anger and to action. And the terrorists will remember September 11th as the day their reckoning began” (Bush, 2002l). And in the address of May 17, 2002 he again sounds vengeful: “...this country must have the will and the determination to chase these killers down, one by one, and bring them to justice. And that’s exactly what is going to happen...” (Bush, 2002f).

On April 17th, in a 30-minute speech, he used ‘civilized world’ twice and invoked heavily bellicose language laden with militarism and alluding again to a vengeful intent: “We’re hunting down the killers, one by one.” And again he seeks to position the entire world in a simple, dualistic conflict between good and evil that allows no space for the complexities of different terrorist organizations and individual nations’ contexts: “Around the world every nation must choose. They are with us or they are with the terrorists” (Bush, 2002j). This speech-act is repeated so often that Americans themselves

would begin to feel that they had no choice but to support the mission and the President. In fact, the duties of the U.S. military and the American public are positioned in clear, militant terms: to ‘defend freedom,’ to ‘make the world safer and better,’ to ‘deny terrorists safe havens,’ to ‘achieve a better world [and] uphold the dignity of humanity,’ and finally, to ‘take up a great calling,’ ‘serve your values and your country,’ protect fellow citizens,’ and ultimately, of course – to ‘advance the cause of freedom around the world’ (Bush, 2002j).

This is not so much a strategic response to an act of terrorism; it is, rather, a response that comes from concepts of ‘chosenness,’ ‘innocence,’ and a messianic, or heroic vision. Such a calling surely has grace – morality – on its side. And it fits perfectly with the underlying myths and public memories that constitute a shared national identity. To refuse this call is to deny one’s essential social identity – to fail to be a patriotic American.

During the spring of 2002 the Bush administration continues its subtle shift in enemy identification and storyline to Iraq through allusions to the statements in the 2002 State of the Union Address. He refers to a ‘network’ of terrorist organizations and their state sponsors as a “threat to our lives and our way of life.” And then less ambiguously, he describes the “growing threat of terror on a catastrophic scale” and to ‘some states’ (Bush, 2002l). On April 17, 2002 he reinforces the shifting storyline without mentioning Iraq specifically:

And finally, the civilized world faces a grave threat from weapons of mass destruction. A small number of outlaw regimes today possess and are developing

chemical and biological and nuclear weapons. They're building missiles to deliver them, and at the same time cultivating ties to terrorist groups. In their threat to peace, in their mad ambitions, in their destructive potential and in the repression of their own people, these regimes constitute an axis of evil and the world must confront them (Bush, 2002j).

Six months after the 2002 State of the Union and nine months after the attacks of 9.11, President Bush addresses the graduates at West Point. In this address he intensifies use of militant language, while at the same strengthening the connection between the 9.11 attacks and the threat of WMD. This connection is made explicitly and forcefully, although neither Saddam Hussein nor Iraq are mentioned directly as the 'new enemy' or target. The speech acts, however, clearly expand the issues considered critical and warranting potential military action. This address may have been meant to prepare the military for the introduction of a new war front – Iraq. In the coming months this storyline, drawing even more heavily from shared myth and memory, subsumes the essential aspects of the presenting 9.11 storyline, and by the first anniversary of the attacks becomes dominant. The present conflict is no longer a response to the 9.11 attacks alone, but a much broader – and in the end far costlier - conflict.

In the June address to West Point graduates President Bush's position of the enemy shifts further toward Saddam Hussein, foreshadowing the explicit identification that follows three months later. He characterizes the enemy as "evil and deluded men [who are] ruthless and resourceful [and are] mad terrorists and tyrants." He then alludes to Saddam Hussein by describing a "shadowy terrorist network[s]" in one sentence and

stating in the next “containment is not possible when unbalanced dictators with weapons of mass destruction can deliver those weapons or missiles or secretly provide them to terrorist allies... we cannot put our faith in the word of tyrants, who solemnly sign non-proliferation treaties and then systematically break them” (Bush, 2002c).

He establishes a link not only with the enemy but with the threat: “The gravest threat to freedom lies at the perilous crossroads of radicalism and technology [and]... they have been caught seeking these terrible weapons.” The connection between 9.11 and Iraq underpins the new enemy positioning. He further builds on this connection by equating the two different, but merging, settings – caves and laboratories: “...to reveal threats hidden in caves and growing in laboratories.... our military must be ready to strike at a moment’s notice in any dark corner of the world... our security requires all Americans to ... be ready for preemptive action when necessary to defend our liberties and to defend our lives” (Bush, 2002c).

The West Point address is persuasive because it is anchored in mythological constructs and public memories that shape American identity and purpose. The audience is the graduating class of the prestigious military institute – Americans most likely to be in positions to answer the president’s call to service. He infuses this address with words of military glory and American exceptionalism. The characterizations of self - in this case America(ns) in general and West Point graduates in particular resonates with the myths of ‘chosenness’, ‘innocence’ and ‘heroism’ – or a winner/loser dichotomy. America is described as “a great and unique country” [that has] no empire to extend or utopia to establish; ... we wish for others what we wish for ourselves.” He calls the

graduates America's "guardians of values" and states "some West Point classes are also commissioned by history to take part in a great new calling for their country." And he reinforces the 'historic call' with references to WWII and the Cold War as examples of America as a symbol for freedom throughout the world (Bush, 2002c).

President Bush frames the storyline in civil religious terms found throughout American myths. He claims "we will not leave the safety of America and the peace of the planet at the mercy of a few mad terrorists and tyrants. We will lift this dark threat from our country and the world." This reflects the myth of the chosen – chosen to be blessed, to represent all that is good and to lead the fight against evil. He states this unequivocally:

We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. By confronting evil and lawless regimes, we do not create a problem, we reveal a problem. And we will lead the world in opposing it. As we defend the peace, we also have an historic opportunity to preserve the peace (Bush, 2002c).

Before explicitly introducing Saddam Hussein and Iraq as the 'new enemy' President Bush continues to construct a narrative with rhetorical patterns that depict a world divided into forces of good and evil. He elevates the position of America to "the greatest force for good in history" and the as the "citadel of freedom, a land of mercy, the last, best hope of man on Earth" (Bush, 2002b). He invokes America's chosenness, innocence and heroic qualities through character attribution and positioning: "America[n] [is] leading the civilized world in a titanic struggle against terror" but "with its unique

position and power... this great country will lead the world to safety, security, peace and freedom” (Bush, 2002r).

The dehumanizing language used in presumptive positioning of the enemy desensitizes the audience to the full humanity of the other. A single word choice can dehumanize either consciously or unconsciously. For example, in July Bush states: “This is a war that we fight against these shadowy terrorists that hide in caves or hide in big cities and send young souls to their death through suicide. That’s the kind of people we’re after. But we’ve *hauled in* [italics mine] over 2,400 people so far” (Bush, 2002h). The use of the term *hauled in* conjures up images of trash while *shadowy terrorists* strips the other of a true human form. Speech acts such as these serve two functions. First, they dehumanize the target so it becomes morally acceptable to use violence against the perceived enemy, and they function as reinforcement humiliation of the perceived enemy. Repetitive use of dehumanization and reinforcement humiliation speech acts from an interlocutor positioned in a place of authority and power fuels a cycle of humiliation and violence (Lindner, 2006, p. 29 & Hartling, 2004).

Interestingly, in the July 1st 2002 address President Bush distinguishes between justice and revenge. He claims “...this country doesn’t seek revenge. We seek justice. This great country, we don’t go as conquerors – we go as liberators” (Bush, 2002h). Indeed, throughout his speech acts after 9.11 he positions *justice* or *seeking justice* as a duty or obligation of America and although he uses vengeful, militant language repeatedly over the course of months, revenge is not explicitly mentioned until now. Finally, seven days later in the July 8th press conference, a reporter implies that President

Bush may be seeking revenge rather than justice. The reporter states: “Since shortly after September 11, you said that you would like to see Osama bin Laden dead or alive. But you’ve also said that America is after justice not revenge (Bush, 2001b). The reporter then asks Bush to clarify the difference. Bush replies “it’s a difference of attitude. I mean, I seek justice for the deaths done to American people. And it’s --- you can be tough and seek justice... but it’s a frame of mind (Bush, 2002h, 2002m).

The militant and aggressive tone and speech-acts employed throughout the 9.11/Iraq narratives suggest that President Bush constructed not a discourse of justice – but a narrative of retribution and revenge. A reporter’s question immediately following Bush’s distinction between justice and revenge finally addresses Iraq explicitly and implies vengeful intent once again: “Is it your firm intention to get rid of Saddam Hussein in Iraq?” Bush replies firmly and without hesitation: “Yes” (Bush, 2002m). This ‘frame of mind’ translates into the narrative patterns as a call for retribution that gets taken up by many as motivation for revenge. The personal stories of some of the soldiers I interview in Chapter 5 reflect this transfer. Many of them either experience a desire for revenge or recognize that desire in those around them.

According to Martha Minow (Minow, 1998), “vengeance is the impulse to retaliate when wrongs are done. Through vengeance, we express our basic self-respect” (p. 10). She argues that vengeance is a “notion of equivalence that animates justice” (p. 10). It attempts to equalize a wrongdoing in an eye for an eye fashion. But vengeance unleashes far more than the proportionality of the scales of justice. It invites retaliation that can far exceed any punishment meted out by the rule of law. Revenge, rather than

justice, leads people to broaden the scope of normally accepted behavior, which results in more aggression through reciprocal acts of violence. It can set in motion spirals of violence that trap people in cycles of revenge (p. 10).

In a study of conflict and cooperation in the Middle East over a 20-year period (1979-97) researchers found that cycles of violence – action and reaction – become the norm. People will increasingly respond in a tit-for-tat fashion. This revengeful cycle renders all parties worse off, yet it is difficult to stop. The researchers argue that domestic politics is one cause. When one side is attacked, public opinion demands action. These conditions create the pressure to take retaliatory action, even when it is realized that it may not work. When this occurs, revenge is really an end in itself. A second reason they found for cycles of revenge is the belief that the other side will perceive not retaliating as a sign of weakness. Finally, they argue that each side tends to learn from the wrong examples in history. Such ‘learning’ tends toward the resurrection of public memories that support retaliation even though history might offer different lessons (Telhami, 2005). I find evidence of all three examples of this reasoning in the micro-narratives in Chapter 5.

Twelve days after the July 8th Press Conference, President Bush dehumanizes the other again by identifying the target as “an enemy – by the way, nothing but a bunch of cold-blooded killers, [and] madmen who threaten our values” while he glorifies the American people as “...generous people... kind people...courageous people.” And he employs militant language that resonates with tones of revenge rather than justice: “...if somebody attacks our freedoms, we’ll stand tough and strong. We’re bound together in

this war on terror. We're hunting down people that will hide in caves ... we're going to get 'em on the run, and we're going to keep them on the run until we bring them to justice." In his next sentence he seems to understand that he must distinguish again between justice and revenge: "We owe it to history, we owe it to our children and our grandchildren, any time anybody wants to affect the freedom of our people, they must pay a price – not because we seek revenge, but because we seek justice" (Bush, 2002a).

Throughout August President Bush continues the shift in enemy identification yet denies explicit intention of planning an invasion of Iraq. In an August press conference one questioner suggests that if he goes to war with Saddam, [America] is going to go alone and asks if the American military has that capability. Bush replies, "Well, look, if you're asking – are you asking about Iraq? The subject didn't come up in this meeting. ...I know there is this kind of intense speculation that seems to be going on, a kind of a -- - I don't know how you would describe it. It's kind of a churning – [and then Donald Rumsfeld finishes the sentence] frenzy (Bush, 2002g). He further comments however, that "we've [America] got to be prepared to use our military and all the other assets at our disposal in a way to keep the peace..." but he then states, "My position is that regime change is in the interests of the world... this administration agrees that Saddam Hussein is a threat... (Bush, 2002g).

The Iraq storyline is still emerging in vague innuendo. In the flow of interactions demonstrated here over a period of at least seven months, President Bush develops the plot introduced in the 2002 State of the Union in general terms without committing himself or the nation to a particular policy or strategy. Through myth, public memory

and militancy in this narrative construction he slowly and subtly builds a case against Saddam Hussein, until he finally completes the shift of dominant enemy identification to Iraq in his address to the United Nations on September 12, 2002. He prepares the American people for this final merger of the narrative storylines in the 9.11 anniversary address. These two addresses, taken together, weave into one the final threads of two concurrent storylines. The narrative now unfolds as a unified, coherent discourse that will shape perceptions of reality, reveal values along a local moral order and lead directly to the March 20, 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Combining studies of metaphor and positioning theory adds to the “demonstration of the power of discursive practices in the creation of reality” (Berman, 1999). He supports the claim that those in power impose metaphors on others to gain control over the ways in which people will interpret events or conceptualize ideas (Lakoff, 1991, as cited in Berman, 1999, p. 140). The discourses constructed over time by the Bush Administration are composed of a system of metaphorical concepts, drawn from mythological constructs and public memories deeply rooted in the American consciousness that come together a year after the attacks of 9.11 to define a new reality. These discourses also reveal ‘national identity, behavior and notions of citizens’ roles, rights and obligations” (p. 139). Metaphor naturally exposes particular features and hides others.

Information and interpretation are expected to come from the ‘experts’ because their position sanctions their voice, granting it a position of power and authority. This ‘voice of authority’ can then speak for the nation while distancing itself from ‘personally

responsible “I” statements.’ In this way, this voice takes on a father figure quality as the protector of the defenseless children. He/she can create a sense of family and express familial concerns (Berman, 1999). President Bush takes on this role; after 9.11 he easily becomes the voice of authority¹³ for the nation and takes on a benevolent father figure role. As a result, he doesn’t have to clarify facts or experiences. His addresses contain many indirect and vague speech-acts because his voice – or position – is privileged. He polarizes positions by creating categories of ‘right thinking’ and ‘wrong thinking’. Certainly one can disagree with his interpretation – his narrative, but disagreement carries a cost – in this case, lack of patriotism, which is a threat to one’s collective identity. Those who disagree are aligned with the enemy (p. 148).

The power of the voice of authority – in this case, President Bush – enables him to ‘fix relative positions and all the rights and obligations associated with those positions.’ Acceptance of the discourse entails learning and understanding the underlying constructs associated with and supportive of that discourse. The underlying constructs – the myths, metaphors, and memories – are not questioned. In this sense, discourses have boundaries. If one accepts the discourse, one is ‘inside’ it.

As Bush begins the final push toward the invasion of Iraq Americans either took up the discourse or rejected it. In other words, they were positioned either inside the evolving system or outside of it. In Chapter 5, the second analysis, I explore how the soldiers saw themselves positioned according to the boundaries of this discourse, and in Chapter 6 I explore whether or not distance from this system (once serving in Iraq)

¹³ Although we see in Chapter 5 that Colin Powell, in his UN address, is an influential ‘voice of authority’ as well.

empowered some of them to question the constructs underlying the narrative and ultimately to challenge it.

4.4 Merging Two Narratives

On the one-year anniversary of the 9.11 attacks President Bush addresses the nation in moving language laden with civil religious metaphors and references to myths and public memories. He does not address any actual facts about the terrorists or the conflict. He also does not directly mention Saddam Hussein or Iraq, although he again links Iraq to 9.11 in ambiguous terms. The next day, September 12, 2002, he presents his case to the United Nations against Iraq and Saddam Hussein unambiguously. The American public had been given eight months of vague references and subtle storyline shifts. However, on September 12, 2002 the new narrative emerges clearly and firmly – subsuming the original 9.11 narrative in its wake.

In the anniversary address to the American people President Bush opens by reminding Americans about the horror, pain and anguish of the attacks – something he repeatedly did throughout his addresses all year: “We’ve seen the images so many times they are seared on our souls, and remembering the horror, reliving the anguish, re-imagining the terror, is hard – and painful” (Bush, 2002p). The narrative patterns that Bush employs here and during this year provided Americans with an interpretation that would become a shared public memory. Bush created the contours of this memory – the characters, their attributes, and the storyline. He constructed a new public memory from a crisis and offered that memory as a means of understanding a new reality (Hatfield,

2006). He claims, “September 11, 2001 will always be a fixed point in the life of America” (Bush, 2002p). This ‘fixed point,’ or new memory, will be remembered not for the facts, historical or relational contexts in which 9.11 occurred, but according to the underlying assumptions found in an American cultural identity that gave it meaning.

The characterization of self and other throughout this first year after the attacks unquestionably establishes the moral high ground for the United States. The prescriptive positioning of the other becomes metaphysical as the attributes assigned are essentialized, or fixed and rigid (R. Harré, and Moghaddam, F., 2003). The storylines converging on September 11th and 12th, 2002 carry these positions, which unambiguously establish the U.S. as the benevolent victim rising from anguish, righteous anger and an invigorated pride and patriotism to lead the ‘crusade’ to rid the world of evil and save America from an existential assault on its very identity. The polarizing, fixed characterizations reveal the assumptions underpinning American commitment to the values represented in the cultural myths of exceptionalism, chosenness, innocence, and a call to near supernatural feats of heroism (see Tables 4.5 and 4.6).

The narrative patterns strongly and clearly create a persuasive storyline. America is at once an innocent victim shrouded in essential goodness and a tough, unrelenting, singular heroic savior. These essentialized qualities assigned to America(ns) are redemptive; they position the nation as morally superior *because* of these qualities. The ascription of the national character reveals the values often hidden in the depths of the myths and memories that shape our culture and national identity. This characterization

allows America to escape any reckoning with its past - its actions and policies and its own misdeeds.

History is wiped clean as of 9.11, and America's slate is never even glanced upon. And with this absolution our 'soul' is purged as well. The evil is 'out there', as a separate force to be battled; there is no evil within. Guilt and shame - feelings that might lead to honesty and a fairer reconciliation with the past – are bypassed. Instead, intense pride and righteous anger are presented in the narrative patterns and taken up by a large percentage of the intended audience – not the terrorists, not Saddam Hussein, but Americans. To many Americans this *feels right* (Galtung, 2007). Hence, the cultural power harnessed by the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns becomes formidable.

Table 4.5: First-order characterlogical positioning of self in the address to the American people on the first anniversary of 9.11 (Bush, 2002p).

| Speech Acts Positioning Self (the U.S.) First Order Presumptive Positioning | Characteristics of Positions |
|---|--|
| The attack on our nation was also an attack on the ideals that make us a nation. Our deepest national conviction is that every life is precious, because every life is a gift from the Creator who intended us to live in liberty and equality. More than anything else this separates us from the enemy we fight. We value life; our enemies value none. | Construction of group identity and difference. Self: Innocent; Free; Equal; Virtuous: Life as highest value Other: Evil – not valuing life |
| There is a line in our time, and in every time, between the defenders of human liberty and those who seek to master the minds and souls of others. | Construction of group identity and difference. Self: Values freedom; Hero myth; Other: Evil, devil quality (the mythological devil takes souls). |
| America has entered a great struggle that tests our strength and our resolve. Our nation is patient and steadfast. We strive to be tolerant and just. We fight, not to impose our will, but to defend ourselves and extend the blessings of freedom. | Self: Innocent; Chosen; Hero and reluctantly, but virtuously and gloriously, fighters/defenders of freedom/goodness (militarism) |
| Our country is strong and our cause is even larger than our country. Ours is the cause of human dignity; freedom guided by conscience and guarded by peace. This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope still lights our way. And that light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it. ¹⁴ | Self: Chosen, Hero; Innocent; Good in opposition to Evil; glorious and virtuous militarism couched in terms of peace and goodness |

The Bush administration not only constructs the characterizations of opposing group identities through language that resonates with an already existing cultural understanding of self, but he also describes the associated rights and duties of self. Drawing upon the same cultural myths, the administration appeals to the historic and cultural norms of America's purpose and role in the world. See Table 4.6 for examples of the rhetoric employed that appeals to these shared value commitments and cultural norms.

¹⁴ The President distinguishes clearly between the 'forces of good and those of evil' with ascriptive positioning and civil religious language strongly resonating with the myths of chosenness and innocence.

Table 4.6: Positioning of U.S. rights and duties in the address to the American people on the first anniversary of 9.11 (Bush, 2002p).

| Speech Acts Describing Rights and Duties for U.S. State, Public and Military | Characteristics of Positioning |
|---|---|
| We owe their children and our own the most enduring monument we can build: a world of liberty and security made possible by the way America leads, and by the way Americans lead our lives. | America is positioned according to the assumptions in the myths of the chosen and hero; Positioned as Good, innocent, superior, virtuous. |
| pursue the terrorists in cities and camps and caves across the earth. ...to rid the world of terror. We will not allow any terrorist or tyrant to threaten civilization with weapons of mass murder. ¹⁵ | Positioned as in the hero myth – savior of civilization; defender of good against forces of evil; |
| Our generation has now heard history's call, and we will answer it. | Positioned in accordance with the public memories of World War II. |
| This nation has defeated tyrants and liberated death camps, raised this lamp of liberty to every captive land. ¹⁶ | Positioning according to value commitments in myths of chosen, innocent and hero and in glory of battles against evil forces. |
| We have no intention of ignoring or appeasing history's latest gang of fanatics trying to murder their way to power. ¹⁷ | Positioned as innocent, chosen and heroic. Glorifying military response |
| We have made a sacred promise ¹⁸ to ourselves and to the world: we will not relent until justice is done and our nation is secure. What our enemies have begun, we will finish. ¹⁹ | |

This is perhaps the most persuasive language used to call Americans to support the response to 9.11 as well as to prepare them to support the impending war in Iraq. President Bush uses his position as the 'voice of authority' with powerful civil religious metaphors drawn from the mythological constructs of American culture and public memories. He closes the anniversary address by preparing American for the yet unknown journey to come.

¹⁵ President Bush subtly links the two storylines here by including both terrorists and tyrant with WMD in one sentence as our legitimate threats and targets.

¹⁶ The metaphors here are allusions to public memories of WWII. The common public memory is that the U.S. fought evil dictators and evil itself and that we liberated Europe during WWII. The image is one of superheroism; this memory also invokes battles between good and evil and American innocence.

¹⁷ Again, Bush alludes to the WWII public memory of the policy of appeasement. References to WWII memories of the dangers of appeasement and the battles of good and evil are found increasingly in his addresses as March 2003 approaches.

¹⁸ The metaphor of a 'sacred promise' indicates that the US response is sanctioned by a higher power.

¹⁹ This phrase contains subtle tones of revenge suggesting vengeful retaliation.

I believe there is a reason that history has matched this nation with this time.

America strives to be tolerant and just. We fight not to impose our will, but to defend ourselves and extend the blessings of freedom. We cannot know what lies ahead. Yet, we do know that God had placed us together in this moment, to grieve together, to stand together, to serve each other and our country. And the duty we have been given – defending America and our freedom – is also a privilege we share. We're prepared for this journey (Bush, 2002p).

The next day at the United Nations President Bush clarifies his foreshadowing of “what lies ahead” as he begins to explicitly lay out a case for regime change in Iraq (Bush, 2002q). The new storyline, already vaguely understood by the American people feels familiar and so it begins to shape the categories of a new reality, sweeping up the world in a debate that will set opposing views of that reality into conflict. But eventually the Bush administration's storyline becomes the hegemonic discourse in the United States, rendering powerless those outside of it. And on March 20, 2003, under the new doctrine of preemptive force, America engages in another war in another Muslim country, for reasons that will shift for as many times as the number of years the soldiers and the thousands of innocent civilians caught in the uptake of the narrative live it.

4.5 The Push Toward Preemptive War: From Rhetoric to Reality

President Bush definitively introduced the content of the new storyline to the United Nations and the world on September 12, 2002. In this address he positioned the new enemy target – Saddam Hussein – with words that would be repeated in address after

address until the invasion itself begins. Use of repetition, especially from a ‘voice of authority’ position, eventually creates accepted categories of reality, which then shape perceptions, attitudes and behavior. What seemed unimaginable a year ago – unilaterally invading a sovereign nation that did not attack us and whose threat to us is tenuous – transforms into the reality from which we begin to operate. Shotter reminds us that language is an essential social process that shapes our categories of reality (Shotter, 1993). President Bush constitutes a new understanding of reality through continuous talk that framed characters and storylines in repetitive speech acts, creating the context from which a new reality could logically emerge. Thus, the unimaginable morphs almost imperceptibly into reality.

Language forms that draw from familiar resources and stir emotions create the connections between speaker and audience that shape perceptions and influence behavior. President Bush constructed a storyline that provided the frame on which Americans could hang an understanding of Iraq, the terrorists, and an appropriate response. This frame also gave a home to the fears and insecurities as well as the anger, hatred and desire for retaliation that many Americans experienced after the 9.11 attacks. And the many oft repeated appeals to those feelings kept the passion alive, hungry for expression.

The connection between affect and intellect sustains the narrative that successfully makes that connection. The connection itself suggests agreement with both the content and the judgment of the message (Wittgenstein, as cited in Shotter, 1993, p. 40). Thus, values, or a collective ethos, are revealed through the acceptance of a particular narrative, and actions that once carried social unacceptability become the

expected, settling into the norm. President Bush harnessed the Iraq War narrative to the tragedy of 9.11; the shift in storyline used that harness as a bridge to a new enemy and objective. But, the legitimacy of the discourse also depended on a shared set of assumptions that are characteristic of American culture and thought. These narrative structures represent patterns of meaning and reveal a culture's shared beliefs (Johnston, 2000). Thus, while the new storyline features Saddam Hussein as the main character and his intent to build and hide WMD as the plot, the narrative remains anchored in the events of 9.11 and in the mythological constructs, public memories and militarism that shape Americans' beliefs and reveal their values. The narrative draws its persuasive power not from the literal storyline, but from the implicit, underlying assumptions that raise no questions²⁰ and from the fear and anger that the narrative is meant to foment.

One of the many ironies of conflict is found in the language often used to build support for a war. The 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns are full of such ironies. Table 4.7 reveals speech acts that position an enemy and a world to be feared in the President's address to the U.N. on 9.12.02. Instilling fear works to build support for a military intervention meant to create peace. He is arguing for peace by arguing for war. And the world is given only two choices. It is essentially a linguistic trap that coerces the world into choosing between two positions established by the United States. The U.S. determines the boundaries of the discourse at the U.N. President Bush positions both those who accept the U.S. storyline and those who reject it (Bush, 2002q).

²⁰ Relying instead on the comfort and security – the attraction – of habitual thought patterns, or the iterational element of agency (See Chapter 3 and (Emirbayer, 1998).

In this way, the discourse takes on global dimensions over the following months, inciting protests all over the world as people take up one position presented or the other. The discourse becomes hegemonic. Whether the positions and storyline were accepted or rejected, the world had no choice but to take it up and see it through to its real consequences. It became reality for all of us.

Table 4.7: Direct positioning and characterization of a new enemy.

| Public Address | Positioning of Iraq/Saddam Hussein First Order Prescriptive Positioning | Characteristics of Positions |
|--|--|--|
| 9.12.02 President's Remarks at the United Nations General Assembly (spoke for 25 minutes) (Bush, 2002q) | Above all, our principles and our security are challenged today by outlaw groups and regimes that accept no law of morality and have no limit to their violent ambitions. In the attacks on America a year ago, we saw the destructive intentions of our enemies. This threat hides in many nations... In cells and camps terrorists are plotting further destruction and building new bases for their war against civilization. Our greatest fear is that these terrorists will find a shortcut to their mad ambitions when an outlaw regime supplies them with the technologies to kill on a massive scale. In one place – in one regime – we find all these dangers, in their most lethal and aggressive forms. ²¹ | Positioned as 'outside' the norms of civilized nations; Positioned in relation to terrorists who are positioned as fighting a war against 'civilization'. Positioned as 'mad' and evil. (Exclusion and reinforcement humiliation) |
| | By breaking every pledge – by his deceptions and by his cruelties - Saddam Hussein has made the case against himself. ²² | Positioned as target of blame, which absolves the U.S. of responsibility for impending war. |
| | ...the regime's repression is all pervasive. | Positioned in a single dimension, eliminated variety or complexity. |
| | Iraq continues to shelter and support terrorist organizations that direct violence against Iran, Israel, and Western governments. Iraq's government openly praised the attacks of September 11 th . And al Qaeda terrorists escaped from Afghanistan are known to be in Iraq. | Positioned as associated with the 9.11 attacks. |
| | We know that Saddam Hussein pursued weapons of mass murder... Saddam Hussein's regime is a grave and gathering danger. | Positioned as plotting to 'murder' millions of Americans in the imminent future. |
| | If the Iraqi regime wishes peace, it will immediately end all support for terrorism and act to suppress it. ...it will immediately and unconditionally forswear, disclose and remove or destroy all weapons of mass destruction... | Positioned as responsible for outcome of current impasse, which is also positioned by the U.S. |
| | The United States has no quarrel with the Iraqi people; they've suffered too long in silent captivity. Liberty for the Iraqi people is a great moral cause and a great strategic goal. The people of Iraq deserve it. Then the attacks of September the 11 th would be a prelude to far greater horrors. | U.S. positioned as a friend to the Iraqi people while their leader is implicitly positioned as their real enemy. 9.11 is positioned in relation to the threat from Iraq. |

²¹ President Bush implicitly links the 9.11 attacks to Saddam Hussein.

²² Shifts blame for present conflict situation to Saddam Hussein.

The Bush administration positions the characterization of Saddam Hussein and the threat from Iraq and Saddam Hussein's goals. In Table 4.8, examples of narrative patterns used by President Bush are presented to demonstrate the presence of 'managing the voice of the other'²³ to position goals, motivations and purposes.

Table 4.8: Positioning of the enemy's purposes.

| Positioning of Enemy's Purpose | Characteristics of Positioning |
|--|---|
| War against civilization | Exclusion humiliation; positioning of other as outside the norms of civilization and as plotting to destroy what Americans (the West) perceive as civilization. |
| Seize other countries and resources | |
| Terrorism | |
| Weapons of mass destruction programs – including Anthrax | Positioned as plotting to invade and take over other countries. This is perceived as the desire to dominate other nations and impose a ruthless dictatorship on 'free' nations. |
| ...to plan and to build and to test behind the cloak of secrecy | |
| ...to pursue weapons of mass murder | |
| ...the regime admitted to producing tens of thousands of liters of anthrax and other deadly biological agents. Right now Iraq is expanding and improving facilities that were used for the production of biological weapons. | Positioned as deceptively plotting and planning to build and use WMD for the purposes of destroying the West. |
| Should Iraq acquire fissile material, it would be able to build a nuclear weapon within a year. | Use of regime's past history to position present intentions. |
| | Positioned as an imminent threat. |

Once the plot is in place, President Bush frames the choices the world can make. He bases these choices on a binary code within a fixed, linear and simplistic narrative that is anchored in American cultural assumptions, assumptions the rest of the world may not share or even understand. He does, however, imply the worldwide public memory of the appeasement of Hitler as a persuasive tactic. This memory will resonate especially with his European audience:

²³ See Chapter 3.

Events can turn in one of two ways. If we fail to act in the face of danger, the people of Iraq will continue to live in brutal submission. ...If we meet our responsibilities, if we overcome this danger, we can arrive at a very different future (Bush, 2002q).

Then he positions the audience within an either/or storyline in which each must make a choice. He reminds his audience once again of the dangers of appeasement, but then lapses into American cultural assumptions that could be interpreted as arrogant and condescending. In effect, he invites the U.N. delegates into the American myth of chosenness and heroism, positions automatically bestowed on America “*by heritage*” and heroically accepted by “*choice*” (Bush, 2002q).

We must choose between a world of fear and a world of progress. We cannot stand by and do nothing while dangers gather. We must stand up for our security and for the permanent rights and the hopes of mankind. By heritage and choice, the United States of America will make that stand – and delegates to the U.N., you have the power to make that stand as well (Bush, 2002q).

The local moral order is established. The world is invited to join the U.S. in confronting the evil represented by Saddam Hussein, or the United States, because of its chosen position, will confront it alone. The boundaries of international law can be disregarded; the U.S. can act alone and without world approval. That’s the code of the American mythical hero – the lone hero of the old west and the solitary heroes of more contemporary films like *Rambo* and *Air Force One*. Heroes operate alone and outside the parameters of law. They become their own law. Our films, books and even cartoons are

replete with this characterization of the good hero fighting evil single-handedly.

Americans, whether consciously or unconsciously, understand this. The rest of the world may not.

One day after September 12, when the new storyline is articulated directly and clearly after months of implicit references, it finally dominates the public conversation. From this point forward Osama bin Laden seems to disappear. Speech acts, as seen in Table 4.6, consistently identify Saddam Hussein as the primary enemy, but he is repeatedly associated with aiding terrorist organizations. In this way, the memory of 9.11 and the anger associated with it remains current; the narratives merge almost seamlessly and imperceptibly.

Between September 13, 2002 and March 17, 2003 President Bush reinforces this storyline in almost every public address delivered. Reading through his public addresses reveals a heavy reliance on American mythological constructs and public memories. The myth of innocence takes on increased importance as the narrative evolves during this time period. As late as March 17, 2003, only three days before the invasion, President Bush states: “We did nothing to deserve or invite this threat.” And he continues, “The American people know that every measure has been taken to avoid war; Americans understand the cost of conflict” (Bush, 2003b).

The first public speech acts that insist on American innocence come on October 2, 2002. While thanking the House leadership for agreeing to the *Joint Resolution to Authorize the Use of United States Armed Forces Against Iraq* (Resolution, 2002), Bush states, “None of us here today desire to see military conflict, because we know the awful

nature of war. Our country values life and never seeks war unless it is essential to security and to justice” He further claims American innocence by insisting, “We didn’t ask for this challenge as a country, but we will face it, and we will face it together.” In this same address he positions the U.S. as having to “defend ourselves and shape a peaceful future” and calls this resolution “a central commitment on the war on terror” (Bush, 2002p).

By characterizing the U.S. as innocent – as being forced into this position by Saddam Hussein - the administration further develops the moral order. The U.S. is once again the victim and Saddam Hussein is positioned as an evil, deceitful betrayer. He betrayed his commitments so he will bring war upon himself, his country – and the U.S. The positioning absolves the U.S of the responsibility for the impending war with Iraq. This plot of innocence is repeated consistently until the invasion itself and afterwards.

In the meeting with President Bush, Senator John Warner invokes the myth of the chosen as he praises the resolution: “America has always led in the cause of freedom. And now, in this century, this resolution marks, I think, the most significant step in fulfilling America’s history in carrying out our responsibilities.” And finally the myth of the hero makes an appearance by another Congressman. According to Speaker Dennis Hastert, the resolution positions the president such that: “if the President determines that he has to act unilaterally to protect American people, he can...; the resolution does not require the President to get U.N. approval before proceeding” (Bush, 2002n). America (or Bush) will take up the cause of the reluctant lone hero.

In these two addresses, the resolution itself and the statements following the resolution, Saddam Hussein is positioned again as a “gathering threat to the security of America and to the future of peace.” He is described as a “threat of unique urgency” [whose] “regime sponsored and sheltered terrorists.” References are also made to the public’s memories of America’s first Cold War enemy, Stalin. Saddam is called a “student of Stalin,” and a “cruel and dangerous man.” Surely public memories of Stalin invoke images of the most ruthless dictator and murderer with aims to take over the world. Bush then refers back to 9.11 calling terror cells and terror states “two faces of the same evil” (Bush, 2002n). The links to 9.11, because the event was so recent and personally felt by Americans, effectively re-energizes feelings of anger, which can incite motivation for retaliation. And over the next six months those links would be repeatedly emphasized.

Repetition of speech acts that narrate this storyline through the myths and memories that shape America’s culture, beliefs and sense of national identity and through consistent reminders of 9.11 keep feelings of anger and a desire for retaliation fresh and forge the connection between the speaker and his audience. The Gallop News Service only began asking Americans whether they “favor or oppose invading Iraq with U.S. ground troops in an attempt to remove Saddam Hussein from power” in June 2002 – six months after the brief introduction to the storyline. This corresponds with the June 1, 2002 address Bush delivered to the graduates at West Point, when he began increasing the repetition of the storyline introduced in the 2002 State of the Union through indirect references to Iraq, the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and the link between terrorism

and Iraq. According to Gallop, support between June 2002 and February 2003 was relatively constant, ranging from a low of 52% to a high of 59% (see Figure 4.3) (J. M. Jones, 2003). An American audience identified with the Iraq storyline and that was sufficient. War would come and the American public would stand behind their president.

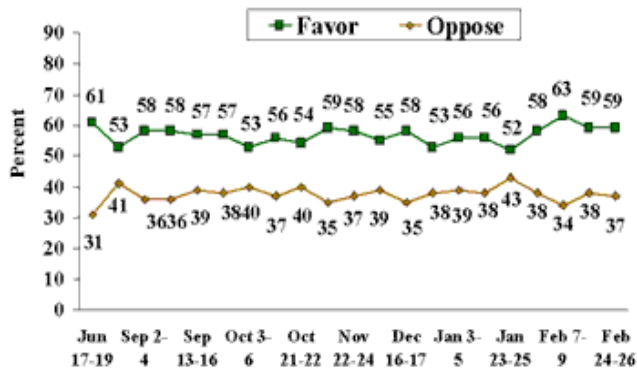


Figure 4.3: Public Support for Invading Iraq June 2002 through February 2003 (Jones, 2003).

By March 17, when Bush delivered his ultimatum speech, 88% of Americans believed that Saddam was involved in supporting terrorist groups that plan to attack the U.S., while only 9% said he was not. 51% of Americans believed he was directly involved in the 9.11 attacks. And finally, 32% of those surveyed said that Saddam Hussein's involvement with terrorist groups was the main reason they supported the invasion while 43% said it was one reason. Only 13% said it was not a reason (Carlson, 2003). These are overwhelming numbers and demonstrate the persuasive power of the new storyline, introduced in January 2002, merging slowly and almost imperceptibly

over time with the 9.11 storyline, until they served as one hegemonic narrative supporting two wars (see Figure 4.4).

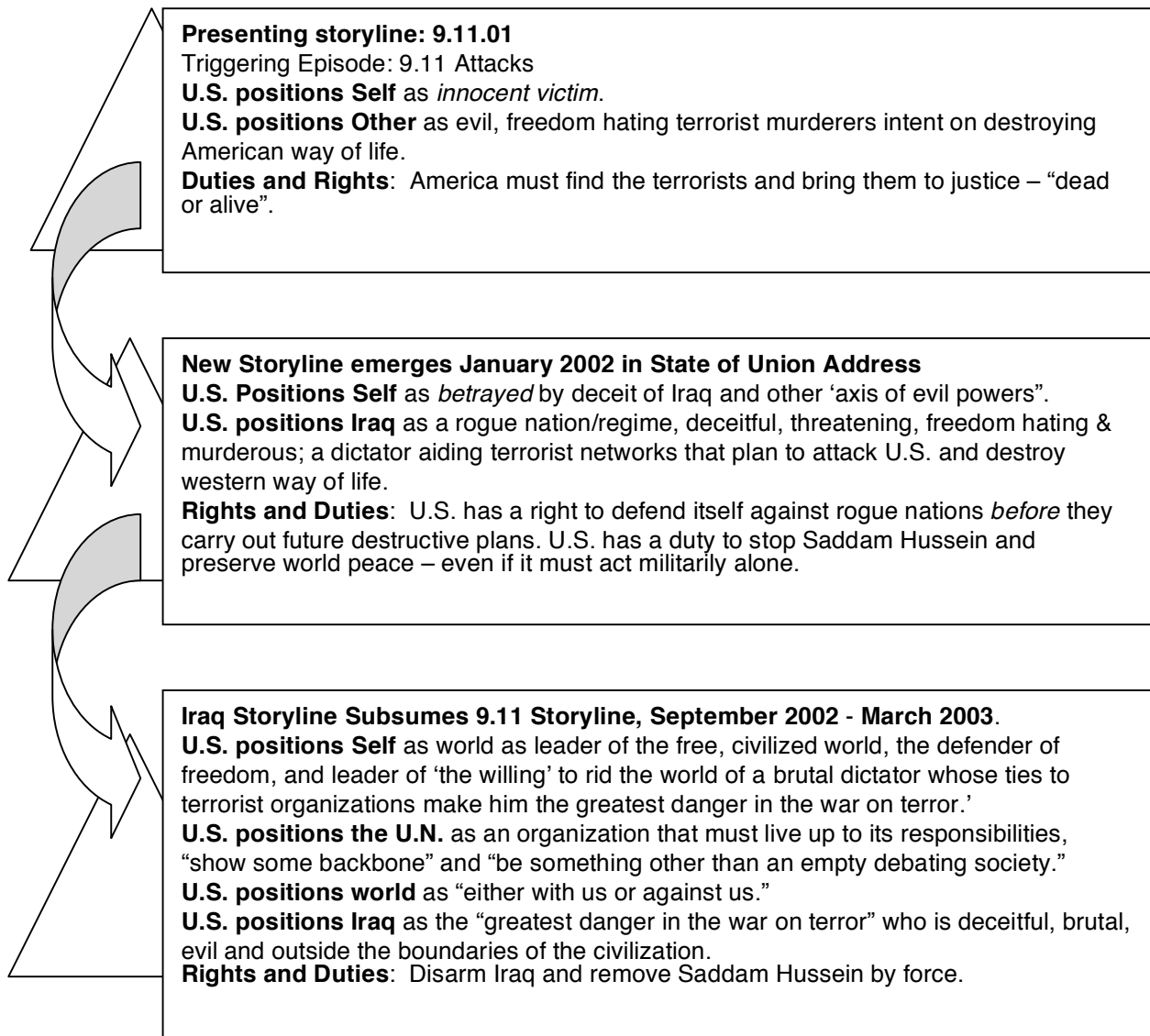


Figure 4.4: Positioning during the merging of 9.11 and Iraq storylines.

Interesting though, by March of 2003, 78% of Americans favored invading Iraq if the U.N. passed a new resolution for Iraq to disarm. If the resolution was submitted but the U.N. rejected it, only 54% of Americans then favored military action unilaterally. If the U.S. went forward alone, without offering any new solutions on Iraq and without a U.N. vote, only 47% would favor the invasion (Jones, 2003). This might explain the first order positioning of the U.N. by the President during these months. The U.N. had to be positioned as standing with the U.S. or as irrelevant so that President Bush could build support for the invasion without U.N. sanction.

The public support for the Iraq War is tied directly to the rhetorical power of the President's speeches, a power that enlivens long-standing images of a glorious country, and fueled by the immediate fears, images, and anger over the 9.11 attacks. Indeed, the President's speech acts become more heavily defensive, insistent and exaggerated during this time period. According to Scheff (2005), it is common, especially in men, to suppress feelings of grief, shame, fear [and humiliation] and instead exaggerate anger. I would add that a sense of strength and confidence is also exaggerated. Scheff, as discussed in Chapter 3, p. 56, calls this "configuration of emotions hyper-masculinity." This pattern is seen more commonly in honor societies, but is present in the United States as well, especially in regions that maintain residual cultural patterns of honor societies. The three characteristics typical of hyper-masculine emotion displays are acute individualism; hiding of emotions, and acting out anger. This configuration is a good

predictor of future violence. And it is this configuration that reveals itself most strongly during the months of October 2002 through the invasion in March 2003.

Table 4.9 demonstrates this and the overwhelming reliance on America's cultural myths to characterologically position the U.S. and Iraq, construct a plot that links American fears and anger with 9.11, and repress any sense of guilt, shame or fear of humiliation (defeat) in hyper-masculine language that is bellicose, threatening and militant. Ultimately, all this together creates the legitimacy and support for preemptive war.

Table 4.9: First-order presumptive characterological and rights & duties positioning by the Bush Administration in October 2002 of Iraq and the United States.

| Address | Positioning of Iraq/Saddam Hussein (Other) | Positioning of United States (Self) |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| 10.5.02 (Bush, 2002o) | Guilty of beginning two wars ²⁴ Long-standing ties to terrorist groups; World's most brutal dictator Cruel and dangerous man | The U.S. does not desire military conflict; our country values life Cannot leave the future of peace and the security of America in the hands of this cruel and dangerous man; delay.. and inaction... could lead to massive and sudden horror. |
| 10.7.02 Bush, 2002d) ²⁵ | ...a grave threat to peace and America's determination to lead the world in confronting that threat. The threat comes from Iraq. It [Iraq] has given shelter and support to terrorism.. ...the threat from Iraq stands alone – because it gathers the most serious dangers of our age in one place. Murderous tyrant Merciless nature of its regime; Homicidal dictator who is addicted to WMD. Ruthless and aggressive dictator; He holds an unrelenting hostility to the US. | To lead the world in confronting that threat; America believes that all people are entitled to hope and human rights, to the nonnegotiable demands of human dignity; America is a friend to the people of Iraq; By our resolve we will give strength to others. By our courage, we will give hope to others. And by our actions, we will secure the peace and lead the world to a better day. There's no refuge from our responsibilities. We must never forget the most vivid events of recent history. ²⁶ We did not ask for this present challenge, but we accept it. We will meet the responsibility of defending human liberty against violence and aggression. |

These two October addresses begin to solidify and intensify the Iraq storyline. He clearly draws on images embedded in each mythological construct. The consistent recounting of the events of 9.11 in the context of a threat from Iraq implies a link between the two and invokes the emotions necessary for a connection – or attunement –

²⁴ President Bush does not clarify which wars he is referring to, but I assume it is the war with Iran in the 1980s and the First Persian Gulf War.

²⁵ President Bush argues throughout this address that confronting Iraq is crucial to winning the war on terror. He uses fear and expresses restrained anger throughout the address. He also states that the resolution signed by Congress “does not mean that military action is imminent or unavoidable.”

²⁶ President Bush is persistent in reminding Americans of the 9.11 attacks – reminders that reawaken feelings of fear, anger and desire for retaliation. He states: “On 9/11/01 America felt its vulnerability to threats that gather on the other side of Earth. We are resolved to confront every threat from any source that could bring sudden terror and suffering to America. We refuse to live in fear.”

between speaker and audience. This connection is vital to build consensus and legitimacy for the eventual invasion.

On October 16, 2002 President Bush signs the Iraq Resolution with a statement implicitly glorifying militarism: “The resolution I’m about to sign symbolizes the united purpose of our nation, expresses the considered judgment of the Congress, and marks an important event in the life of America. The 107th Congress is one of the few called by history to authorize military action to defend our country and the cause of peace” (Resolution, 2002). He insists that “we will face our dangers squarely and we will face them unafraid.” He repeats the dehumanizing characterizations of Saddam Hussein, which amount to a public declaration of exclusion humiliation and reinforcement humiliation. He reminds his audience of the ‘dictator’s’ “intense hatred for America and of [his] contempt for the demands of the civilized world.” He offers a familiar either/or choice: “Those who choose to live in denial may eventually be forced to live in fear.” Also in this address President Bush explicitly positions the duty of all: “Every nation that shares in the benefits of peace also shares in the duty of defending the peace.” And he positions the United Nations: “The time has arrived once again for the United Nations to live up to the purposes of its founding to protect our common security” (Resolution, 2002).

President Bush closes this address by reminding Americans of 9.11: “The terrorist attacks of last year put our country on notice. ...In the events of September the 11th, we resolved as a nation to oppose every threat from any source that could bring sudden tragedy to the American people. This nation will not live at the mercy of any foreign

power or plot.” Constructing the shape of a public memory and using it to justify military action anywhere in the world is part of almost every public address during this time period. The president positions Saddam Hussein and the American response, as well as the American people, their emotions and their beliefs.

This analysis of many of the president’s speech acts over time also reveals that indicators of the ‘hermeneutics of humiliation’ were present throughout the evolution of the merging narratives. The presence of these underlying and perhaps subconscious emotions would surely be transmitted to the audience, taken up and shared.²⁷ Table 4.10 describes the aspects of the hermeneutics of humiliation in discourse.

Table 4.10: The Hermeneutics of Humiliation (Müller-Fahrenheit, 2007).

| The Hermeneutics of Humiliation²⁸ | |
|---|--|
| Aspect 1 | A feeling that suffering has not been acknowledged; dignity has been crushed; a resentment of arrogance of power; an emasculating experience that undercuts a sense of self; a burning feeling of wrong that cries out for justice and/or revenge and arouses profound feelings of rage. |
| Aspect 2 | A way of the turmoil is to blame everything on the enemy. The perceived enemy becomes responsible for everything. |
| Aspect 3 | A distorted image of the enemy is created, including the creation of highly fictitious and fantastic images of the enemy – almost caricatures of reality; there is a lack of variation. |

The analysis presented in this chapter strongly supports my argument that the discourse employed by President Bush displayed indicators of the presence of the ‘hermeneutics of humiliation,’ which were possibly projected onto members of his audience. All three aspects of the presence of (denied or bypassed) humiliation are found

²⁷ And later, reinforcement humiliation is particularly evident in episodes of prison abuse at Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and in many episodes shared by the soldiers in their personal stories.

²⁸ These aspects of the hermeneutics of humiliation demonstrate the underlying presence of various types of expressions of humiliation at work throughout the construction of the narratives.

throughout the speech acts represented in this analysis. Certainly the dehumanizing and humiliating characterological positioning of the terrorists and Saddam Hussein, couched in our own cultural mythological constructs, was projected in unambiguous terms, while the consistent reminder of the horror of 9.11 kept the grief, anger, fear and the hermeneutics of humiliation associated with the memory of the event alive, producing a still unbroken cycle of retaliation.

4.6 Conclusion

President Barack Obama was sworn into office on January 20, 2009.

Commenting on the austerity of his inaugural address, given six years after the March 2003 invasion of Iraq and nearly eight years after the 9.11 attacks, columnist for the *New York Times* Frank Rich writes: “Obama wasn’t just rebuking the outgoing administration. He was delicately but unmistakably calling out the rest of us who went along for the ride...” (Rich, 2009). Rich mostly focuses on the economic ride of the last decade, but the U.S. is still fighting two wars; America went along for those rides as well.

Another prominent opinion writer, Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post*, reminds us of an aphorism: “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.” He calls that ‘past’ country America right after 9.11 when George W. Bush had an approval rating of 92%, rightly pointing out that very few thought we were heading down the wrong path. But now everything is different and most Americans think the Iraq War was unnecessary, even wrong. The new President, understandably wanting to look forward, stated that he is opposed to looking back. But this is a classic mistake; one that

this analysis demonstrates clearly. To understand the present, we must look back (R. Cohen, 2009), and we must ask critically reflective questions.

In this first analysis, I attempted to show through narrative analysis and positioning theory how overlapping discourses, beginning after the 9.11 attacks, drew from culturally familiar mythological constructs and public memories to create categories of reality that led to two wars. I also attempted to demonstrate that emotions associated with the consistent reminder of a tragic crisis and powerful cultural myths could be instrumental in forging a connection between a speaker and his/her audience. Such a connection creates narrative consensus, which stimulates support for the narrative and approval of the categories of reality it creates.

Americans overwhelmingly supported both wars; yet today there is little enthusiasm for either and most feel the war in Iraq was a mistake. As Cohen (2009) suggests, however, the public cannot expect only the leaders – the original narrative constructors, to be held responsible. If actors, in a relationship with a speaker, take up a narrative and realize later there was little truth or justification in it, then the participants must also hold themselves responsible. If we want to learn from the past we must examine it. These three analyses attempt to do just that. Here, I examined the social construction of a narrative of anger, fear and the hermeneutics of humiliation. It was a narrative built upon shared understandings of identity and purpose and a need for retaliation to counter the feelings that fed on and into a cycle of violence from which we have yet to emerge.

In the next chapter I continue to examine the ‘past’ through the stories of some of the soldiers caught in the uptake of the narrative. These soldiers share their memories of this past – how they felt about the then impending invasion of Iraq and how they understood the presenting narratives. In the final analysis I ask the soldiers to share their feelings and perceptions about the narrative after serving in Iraq, and I examine the process of narrative and identity transformation. The crisis of the 9.11 terrorist attacks set in motion storylines that ushered in a new era for the U.S. and beyond. Today, in 2009 and with a new president, the storylines are shifting again. It would serve all of us well to move forward, as President Obama asks. But, we would be wise to remember the past America of 2001 through 2003 when the persuasive power of culturally familiar discourse patterns “closed the gap between the possible and permissible,” (Harré R. and van Langenhove, 1999) reaping so much violence, destruction and death. It is, after all, through our discourse that we reveal how we understand others - and ourselves.

Chapter 5: Receiving the Narrative

5.1 Introduction

In Chapter 4, I analyzed the narrative patterns in public addresses given by President Bush during the months between the 9.11 terrorist attacks and the March 2003 invasion of Iraq. I used positioning theory as a framework to explore how elements of public memory, national myths and militarism operated discursively, promoting heightened levels of pride, fear, and anger while concealing or denying the presence of guilt, shame and/or humiliation. In this chapter, I introduce discursive data from narratives collected through personal interviews with veterans of the Iraq War. The data presented here attempt to demonstrate elements of connectivity between the presenting narrative patterns and how individuals caught in the uptake understood and responded to them. This discussion explores the extent to which the elements described in Chapter 4 resonated with the individual thoughts and feelings of these soldiers and shaped their perception of the official positioning of self (the U.S.) and other (Saddam Hussein/Iraq). Drawing on their self-identified emotions and from theories of emotion, it further explores the role of their affective responses to the terrorist attacks and the narrative patterns that spawned the invasion of Iraq.

As described in Chapter 1, Shotter (1993, p. 6) argues that forms of language “[can] more than merely claim to depict a state of affairs; our ways of talking can ‘move’ people to action or change their perceptions.” In the rhetoric of war, political leaders resort to metaphoric language and mythological constructions which “function to help an audience ‘make connections’” between themselves and the speaker. These connections involve both a cognitive and an affective response, giving rise to shared feelings, concepts, and beliefs between audience and speaker. Vygotsky supports this by arguing that as ‘psychological tools,’ words can be instrumentalized to “draw our attention to features of our circumstances that otherwise would escape our notice,” and insinuate reliance on certain cognitive constructs that are deployed for organizing experiences and guiding our conduct (as cited in Shotter, 1993, p. 35).

We make sense of personal relations with society and the world through dialogical processes. This process demonstrates that people are rooted in particular backgrounds and linguistic resources, which they use to make sense of the world – or reality. This process also creates a “structure of feeling” that provides accountability for the appropriateness of feelings and behavior (Shotter, 1993, p. 35). It is precisely these connections and influences that I probe in this chapter.

According to Donald Klein (2005), the reality within which people operate is that which exists within the mind, or thought-processes. He argues that to understand behavior, we must examine the interface of ‘self-understanding’ and ‘knowledge of social systems.’ This reflects the theoretical work in conflict studies of Johan Galtung and John Burton. Early in the field of conflict analysis and resolution Galtung proposed a model

of conflict as a triangle with contradiction, attitude and behavior at the vertices (see Figure 5.1).

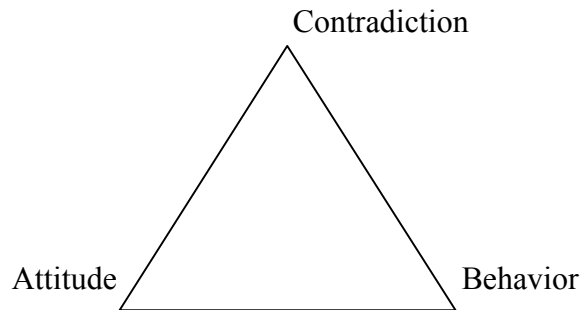


Figure 5.1: Galtung's conflict model.

The contradiction refers to the actual or perceived incompatibility of goals between the parties in conflict. Behavior can include cooperation or coercion. Attitude refers to the perceptions and misperceptions conflict parties have of each other, including dehumanizing stereotypes. Emotions such as fear, anger and humiliation influence attitudes as well as cognition, or belief systems. Galtung argues that a manifest conflict involves all three components, which influence each other (Ramsbotham, 2008). In the previous chapter, I focused on the subjective aspect of conflict, the attitudes and perceptions expressed in the narrative patterns employed by the Bush administration. This chapter extends that analysis by examining how the attitudes expressed through the hegemonic narrative were picked up and understood by individuals who would experience its fullest expression.

In Chapter 3 I drew again from Galtung. He identifies four types of power: economic, political, military and cultural (see Figure 3.1). I am interested here in the

cultural power inherent in the narrative patterns used by the Bush administration to create legitimacy for the invasion of Iraq. Galtung argues that cultural power is normative: people act when they perceive proposed behavior as the right thing to do. Cultural power lies in its prescription for the 'right thing' (Galtung, 2007). On Galtung's model for conflict, cultural power falls on the attitude vertex. My guiding question for this analysis is: Were the narrative patterns that compelled the nation to war perceived as the 'right thing to do'? And more specifically: "which patterns resonated most strongly?" To respond to this question, I must examine the components of this vertex of conflict: the attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and emotions expressed in the narrative patterns with which individuals identified and upon which they acted.

I conducted personal interviews with sixteen veterans of the Iraq War and transcribed public testimonies of fourteen others. All interviews were done over a period of 12 months during 2007 and 2008. Many of the veterans became members of the organization *Iraq Veterans Against the War* after their service in Iraq. I drew heavily from this group in order to analyze the process of perceptual and attitudinal change over time, which I include in Chapter 6. Twelve of the veterans I interviewed are represented in Chapter 5. I selected these twelve participants to be represented in this chapter because their narratives were more substantive and followed more closely the themes I explore. Some of the email interviews, while interesting, were far shorter in substance. This may have been due to the nature of having to write responses rather than speak. And although many of the public testimonies I heard support and contribute to the themes of this study, I excluded them here because of space limitations. I chose to exclude them

because the speakers, while offering public testimony, did not agree specifically to participate in this study.

At the time of the interviews, eleven of the veterans had originally supported or were neutral about the invasion of Iraq but turned against the war while serving. Many of these veterans, while creating a counter-narrative, also experienced dramatic personal/identity transformations, which will be explored in Chapter 6. Two participants initially opposed or questioned the narrative and invasion; through their experiences in Iraq they became increasingly resistant to the narrative, the war, and the underlying assumptions in the narrative. Two veterans I interviewed originally supported the invasion and continued to support it after serving in Iraq, while one participant initially opposed the war and the narrative but emerged from his experience committed to the mission. While many of the veterans from whom I heard public testimony originally supported the operation in Iraq, all opposed the war at the time of their testimony. For the sake of confidentiality all veterans are identified with a 'P' (for participant) and a number, for example, P1. To protect their identities I have the only copy of the codes linking them to their actual names.

Due to the number of veterans included in this study and the length of the interviews and testimonies, it is impossible to include all of their stories and experiences in this paper. For the purposes of this chapter I have included the stories of as many of the participants as possible in order to demonstrate how the narrative patterns were perceived – or taken up – by this group of veterans. Even so, each interview lasted about three hours, so I had to comb through their narratives for the parts most relevant to this

study. Therefore, the narrative strips found in this chapter reflect the themes I specifically want to explore. Each participant willingly and, I believe genuinely, shared not only their experiences, but also their thoughts and feelings regarding a difficult, life-changing episode of their lives. Thus, even as I had to select parts of their narratives to include here for analysis, I strove to respect their stories by keeping as much intact as possible so their voices could be heard.

Through narrative analysis and positioning theory, I examine the personal uptake of the narratives and the attitudes toward the 2003 invasion of Iraq as it was positioned by the Bush administration. In the analysis I attempt to locate connections among the myths, memories and militarism that I argue in Chapter 4 underpin the administration's storylines. This is a delicate process that often involves some interpretation on my part. I do not mean to impose connections on these individuals and acknowledge that in some cases I am only interpreting. Other interpretations may possibly be made and indeed, any of the participants may challenge the analysis I make here.

I also attempt to identify the emotional responses each participant experienced after 9.11 and through the year leading to the invasion of Iraq. My analysis seeks to reveal the emotive connections between the narrative patterns as they were constructed and the participants themselves. Again, relying on the theories of emotion explored in Chapter 3, I fully acknowledge this as an interpretative account, not a factual one.

Finally, I draw on narrative facilitation to describe agentic aspects of the uptake of the narrative. I use what Elliot Mishler (Johnston, 2000) calls 'grand tour' questions, which allowed the participants to find their voice and tell their stories in a broad space,

rather than limiting them with narrow questions. This carries the disadvantage, however, in that the stories at times moved away from my particular research questions. Thus, I periodically redirected the participants using probing questions³⁰. In Chapter 6 I will follow their stories by describing any attitudinal shifts they experienced, attempting to capture the dynamic process of transformation as it occurred. Drawing on the theories and research presented in Chapter 3, I analyze this process and discuss the implications for conflict studies.

In sum, in order to respect the integrity of each veteran's experience included here, I present their stories in some length, allowing for the necessary expression of their emotions, perceptions, attitudes and understandings. Throughout, I refer back to the underlying theoretical framework of this study – positioning theory – and the theories of emotion and transformation that support and inform the narrative analysis of their stories.

Later in the chapter, I attempt to categorize some of the narrative strips thematically according to the features relevant to the claims of this study. Thus, I group narrative features that represent connectivity with the cultural assumptions underpinning the myths of chosenness, innocence, the hero as well as militarism and public memories. I group these categories together because of their similarities and overlapping qualities. Then, I present an analysis that attempts to demonstrate the uptake of an association between 9.11 and Iraq. I argue that this association played a significant role in evoking feelings of anger, humiliation and revenge toward not only al Qaeda, but also Saddam Hussein and Iraq. The uptake of this link empowered the Iraq War narrative, feeding it

³⁰ See Chapter 2 on methodology for a more detailed explanation regarding how the participants were chosen for this study, the questions they were asked, and how they were prepared for the interviews.

the emotional attachment necessary to make it persuasive. Finally, I attempt to demonstrate a relationship between the participants' narrative patterns and the themes inherent in aspects of revenge and humiliation.

Any claims I make through my analysis are strictly for the purpose of attempting to demonstrate the cultural power of underlying national myths and memories as well as the role of militarism and the often unrecognized presence of humiliation when implied through 'talk' by 'voices of authority'. This analysis is not meant as judgment. Indeed, each veteran I interviewed impressed me with their candor, their passion and their convictions. I am grateful for the time they gave me and for the stories they shared. I do not suggest any part of their stories to be 'right' or 'wrong'. In addition, each experienced some change in their perceptions after serving in Iraq; again, I do not judge a 'good' change or a 'bad' one. Indeed, the aim in this chapter is simply to broaden our understanding of the cultural and emotive power harnessed through discursive practices and to prepare for the next chapter on second-order positioning and transformation.

The narrative patterns that evolved after 9.11 and through the March 2003 invasion of Iraq formed a coherent story, reinforcing existing beliefs through underlying mythological constructions drawn from meta-narratives in American culture. Many of the assumptions inherent in these myths were taken up by the audience, which strengthened the persuasiveness of the storyline. The storyline itself, however, was simplistically constructed, ostensibly consistent with and emerging from the contours of American myths. The myths anchoring it made it easy to understand. Thus, it made sense to many people and made sense out of the events of 9.11 and the 'threat' of Saddam

Hussein. This allowed the story to shape policy, determine behavior and attitudes, and ultimately – constitute reality. The narrative, once taken up, reduced the public discursive space and shaped our ‘talk’. Anchored in the public discursive space, questions regarding its legitimacy produced divisive conversations that questioned patriotism, loyalty and beliefs about the world. Slowly taken up by enough of the public to mobilize it, the linear, binary and rigid storyline reduced any deliberative space, created polarization and led to violence.

In Chapter 4, I analyzed positioning of self and other constituted by the Bush administration after 9.11. The narrative patterns represent an interpretative ‘act’ – an interpretation of the 9.11 event and of the relationship between the U.S. and Iraq. The actions that resulted from these interpretations were two wars. In this chapter I turn to the participants in this study who lived those ‘actions.’ Here they share their own interpretation of the Bush administration’s narrative. I explore their perceptions and the meaning they ascribed to the two wars before experiencing the reality of serving in Iraq. In their own words, they describe below their positions relative to the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns before they lived its natural trajectory (Harré R. and van Langenhove, 1999).

The narrative strips are sequenced according to my own interpretation of the strength of commitment to the values underpinning the cultural myths of innocence, chosenness, hero, and militarism. The narratives exhibiting the strongest value commitments appear first while the strips displaying the weakest commitments are introduced last. For the sake of consistency, the same sequence will be maintained in

Chapter 6, although the degree of transformation among participants does not conform to this sequence.

5.2 The Soldiers' Stories

The first participant introduced here is Participant 11 (P11). In this study, his narratives demonstrates the strongest commitment to the values that underpin the cultural myths described in Chapter 3 and the least degree of change, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. At the time of this interview, he describes how he understood self and other – the U.S. and the enemy. Participant 11 (P11) had planned to join the military all of his life, so 9.11 did not have much influence on his decision to serve – except perhaps to reinforce it. He graduated high school in Northern Virginia in 2001, joined the Air Force in 2002 and deployed to Iraq in 2004. Reflecting on 9.11 he recalls:

First, I thought it was a joke. If anything, it kind of motivated me a little bit because I didn't want to just join and have nothing happen and kind of like I don't get to get the full spectrum. I'm not all about fighting in a war all the time, but like I said, that's kind of your purpose is you want to do that. So even like if you join, you're making somewhat of a difference whether you're helping keep people away or helping make things better (P11, 2007).

P11 remembers feeling confused about the motivation of the terrorists. He states, "First I was confused. I didn't really know why [the attacks occurred] because it wasn't like I had seen a whole lot of things leading up to that; it was just kind of random. So I was very confused and couldn't figure out why all of a sudden this happened. I was a

little nervous when I got in. So I was anxious, nervous, curious, and just really didn't know what to expect at all" (P11, 2007).

As P11 described his emotional reaction to the attacks, he recalled feeling angry:

When it first happened I was angry. It just wasn't right, so let's push to get them back. I remember being very a – almost anxious, but like I couldn't wait for us to respond. It was like, 'What are we're going to do?' We don't just sit around and do nothing. So, getting in it was kind of like I want to get in and get things going. So I was excited about getting over there and seeing (inaudible) and making some kind of a difference. I didn't want it to be a small response. I wanted it to be big, make my presence known and let them know that okay, don't do that again because you know we're not just going to like hit you a little bit (P11, 2007).

As the narrative began to be constructed after 9.11, P11 expressed satisfaction with the explanation provided by the Bush administration, but admits remaining somewhat confused. He describes how he understood the explanation:

As far as why they did it, it could be, you know, conflict of opinion on how we live our life. I didn't feel we were pushing the world around and having a big impact on people's countries... To this day I'm still kind of confused why. But I think I can see there are people out there who have different opinions... We were the biggest and baddest... I was all about going over there and making our presence known. It was something we had to do. We can't sit around and do nothing. I felt like we should have had full support... Not just because you don't like President Bush as a person, but because you like the concept of us, you know,

taking care of the world and trying to stop the bad. You can't stop everybody, but make it known that we're going to try (P11, 2007).

The 9.11 narrative was slowly subsumed under the emerging Iraq War narrative during 2002-2003. When asked to describe how he perceived the enemy, P11 demonstrated a connection with the presenting narrative patterns and the mythological constructs running throughout the storyline. The link to 9.11 that I argue in Chapter 4 was made through continuous repetition (reminders) of the event reveals itself here as well. P11 perceives Saddam as having "had a big influence on how [9.11] happened" (P11, 2007). The constant reminders of 9.11 evoke the feelings of anger (and possibly humiliation/shame) experienced right after the event. The Bush administration constructed a public memory of 9.11, positioned appropriate feelings around the event and linked those with perceived threats from Saddam Hussein. P11 describes his feelings and thoughts about the Iraq War storyline and his perception of Saddam Hussein:

In general, for us to be there is a good thing... People's misconception of what we're doing there is still kind of misconstrued. Now it's more or less just trying to help people get on their feet. ...we're on the defensive over there because they cannot defend themselves. President Bush is doing a good job because he's pretty much making decisions for the whole world. There is nobody else above us we can go to for advice. I think the reason we went to Iraq was because at the time Iraq was dangerous. We knew that if we made the Afghanistan's mad enough they could go to Saddam and say hey, help us out. I think that getting him kind of helped us focus on not having to look over our shoulder every time. I think he

(Saddam) was a motivator and someone to look up to because of the way he kind of dominated the area, dominated his people, and gotten away with things for so long. I think that he had a big influence of how it (9.11) happened. Saddam was a threat. Here's the things he's done in the past. It shows he will do things; he is not afraid to, even to his own people. It showed he would be a threat to us. I also think that Iraq was a country that wanted to be different from what they were. You kind of felt they were trapped under Saddam... so I think that all of that – the whole wanting to make them a better country and the fact that he had done things in the past and we knew he might be motivated to do it again all combined to us... (P11, 2007).

P11 is a patriotic American who willingly served his country when called. The Bush administration, as I argue in Chapter 4, positioned the duty of American servicemen and women to “defend freedom, goodness and justice” (Bush, 2001j) and to “rid the world of evil-doers” (Bush, 2001i). President Bush clearly states: “The only possible response to hate is to confront it and to defeat it; ...to wage war to save civilization” (Bush, 2001d). The president also positions duties by evoking emotions surrounding a sense of honor: “...deep in the American character there is honor and it is stronger than cynicism” (Bush, 2002e).

The narrative strips presented here reveal the affinity between the presenting 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns and the cultural beliefs and value commitments held by P11. The narrative patterns re-enforced what was already understood; they ‘made visible the invisible’ (Shotter, 1993). P11 did not question the explanation provided in the

narrative because he trusted his government and the leaders elected to power – and he relied on his own sense of ‘what feels right’. Also, as a member of the Air Force, he respects and obeys his commanding officers. As of our last conversation, he remains committed to the mission and proud of the good work that he and his unit accomplished while in Iraq. The media, he claims, only reports the bad news.³¹

The commitment to obeying commanding officers is rightfully strong. I argue, however, that the narrative constructed after 9.11 and during the build-up to the invasion of Iraq relied for its strength not just on content or the honesty (or dishonesty) of leaders, but also on underlying assumptions that are implied rather than stated directly in the presenting narrative. The audience infers meaning that doesn’t need to be explicitly presented because the cognitive and emotional connections are made through commonly shared understandings that are pervasive in American education and culture. Thus, the cultural power inherent in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns reveals itself in its uptake.

And of course, while the emotions unleashed from the horror of 9.11 are personally experienced, they are later reinforced through positioning by the Bush administration.³² P11 describes initial feelings of anger. He wants to make ‘his presence known’ and ‘do something big’. Pride was clearly hurt here. The United States is the ‘biggest and the baddest’ but was just ‘lowered’ or humiliated by a group of people who ‘we didn’t provoke’. Humiliation is never mentioned in the 9.11/Iraq war patterns, but indicators of wounded pride and a desire to strike back hard, regaining a public position of overwhelming power and superiority runs through the patterns and is easily taken up.

³¹ Other veterans with whom I spoke shared this frustration.

³² See Chapter 4 for a discussion on the privileging of emotions in the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns.

Two forms of humiliation--honor and exclusion humiliation³³--are expressed through out-group hostility, dehumanization of a perceived humiliator and self-glorification. The goal is to regain dignity and identity; the effect is to cause the in-group to cohere (Wrangham, 1996).

This participant expresses a deep sense of pride and commitment to values and beliefs inherent in American mythological constructs, public memories and militarism.³⁴ The potential relevance of history is unknown or denied, again demonstrating that “lack of humility before history and others” (Hughes, 2004) that permits a veil of innocence and absolution from any complicity. The assumptions of the myth of the chosen run through this narrative as well. The characterological positioning of self in the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns, which glorifies and at the same time victimizes self, is taken up. P11 states, “...because you like the concept of us, you know, taking care of the world and trying to stop the bad...” (P11, 2007). This reflects an image of self as portrayed in the hero myth and in public memories of WWII, of an innocent U.S. that fights evil, saves Europe and spreads freedom and democracy (Hatfield, 2006; Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007).

Providing another storyline of such a positioning system, P11 defines the enemy, the purpose and the justification for the American presence in Iraq below. This excerpt again reveals assumptions of innocence, goodness, victimization and heroism that are pervasive in American cultural consciousness. Under normal circumstances these

³³ Exclusion humiliation occurs when an individual or group is forcefully ejected from society (Lindner, 2006). See Chapter 4 for a discussion on indicators of exclusion and honor humiliation in the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns.

³⁴ See Chapter 3 for description of mythological constructs, public memory and militarism. But briefly, militarism here suggests a sense of anxiety and vulnerability and a tendency toward viewing military power as a solution for many problems (Bachevich, 2005).

assumptions are latent and remain ostensibly innocuous; however, when a crisis occurs, such as a terrorist attack, latent assumptions fed by ‘voices of authority’ rise to the surface and create a dangerous trajectory. Habitual thought patterns tend to suppress the need for critical reflection (Emirbayer, 1998). People seek stability, particularly during a crisis. A narrative that offers certainty and cohesion, constructed upon taken for granted thought patterns conditioned by the past, has high purchasing power. He states:

I don't think there is one person. It think it's a group of people who share a belief and I think they are fighting for what they believe in, which in a way, I can understand, but it's not right and it doesn't flow with the rest of the world, which is where is becomes a problem. I think they feel threatened by us because our presence in the world is so strong. ...they don't have a full picture of what's going on here. They're trying to judge us instead of trying to figure out, they're just going off what they know. But, I think we're starting to show the world we're just trying to make the world a better place. Yeah, we make mistakes, but don't feel we're going to come and take over your country. We're not going to colonize you, we're not going to... you know, we're happy with what we have. I think that we – because we're as strong as we are and we kind of influence and everybody looks up to us. We want everybody to feel free to do whatever they want. I think we're just trying to get everyone free. You should be free to do what you want and if we give you the chance and decide you want to have a dictator, hey, at least we gave you a chance to say that. We'll leave you alone, just don't come throw rocks at our window, that's all we ask. We're trying to

help everyone out. We'll be helpful, but just don't come attack us again. We didn't provoke that, you know, we didn't bomb anybody. There was no reason to do that and no reason to do it in the future (P11, 2007).

P11 accepts America's moral supremacy, a country that people all over the world "look up to" and who "want everybody feel free to do whatever they want" (P11, 2007). There is an assumption that the U.S. has the moral and political authority to provide the opportunity for others to decide how they want to live. This sense of superior moral standing in the world can shape notions of a collective consciousness, seeping into the individual's cognitive constructs about ingroup/outgroup identity and reinforced by emotionally-charged narratives about ingroup glories and outgroup vices. Such constructs have the effect of suppressing the 'dark' side of these myths and turns war and destruction into redemptive instruments (Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007). Heard by the other, in this case anyone not American, the positioning also suggests honor, relegation and reinforcement humiliation³⁵. America positions itself at the apex of nations both militarily and morally; in doing so, anyone else is positioned as inferior. Defending one's honor almost always comes at the expense of the other (Lindner, 2006).

Another participant, P5, also joined the military immediately after graduating from a high school in Charlottesville, VA. He joined in March 2003, the day after the invasion of Iraq and three days before his 18th birthday. When his first sergeant in basic training asked him why he had joined the army, he replied, "Because I didn't want my

³⁵ See Chapter 3 for an explanation of these forms of humiliation and Chapter 4 for a discussion of their presence in official American rhetoric.

country to go to war without me.” *Later he would think: “what that turned into was I went to war without my country”* (P5, 2007).

P5 was a junior in high school when the 9.11 terrorist attacks occurred. He describes himself as feeling angry after the attacks and thinking that “it was kick-ass that we were striking back.” He claims he didn’t care at the time about understanding the historical context or possible motivations behind the attacks. He admits now that he didn’t know, and wouldn’t have believed anyway, about the possibility of the U.S. having had a violent or oppressive relationship with any other nation. He states, “I didn’t know about ‘em [of any past relationship or hostile actions] and I didn’t care to know about ‘em.” Throughout the interview P5 mocked his younger self as something of a ‘know it all’ who received his knowledge of world events from the *Reader’s Digest*.

As an adolescent and young adult he believed strongly that America was a nation of goodness, innocence and righteousness. Any perceived negative aspect of American culture stemmed from ‘watered-down communism’. After 9.11 and through the invasion of Iraq he was a self-described ‘warmonger’ and ‘stalwart warrior’. He fully supported the impending invasion of Iraq, believing unquestioningly in the storyline and the characterizations of the U.S. and Saddam Hussein presented by the Bush administration. If he witnessed demonstrators protesting the war, he called them “damn hippies” and he would ‘flick ‘m off driving by.” He states now that “it just didn’t cross our minds that we could possibly be wrong” (P5, 2007).

In his mind, as a 16 year-old boy after 9.11 and later as an 18 year-old ready to go to battle, he envisioned glory in invading Iraq. He describes the image in his mind that he believes the rhetoric of the Bush administration helped create:

I had this optimistic picture of how it would look without Saddam Hussein, with like Alexander the Great rolling over these hoards of evil-doers in chariots and rebuilding the entire land in some brand new American way and, I mean, that's what it was. ...the American way is the path to a new century. It's like they're [the Bush administration] trying to convince 16 year-old boys that it's cool to invade countries cuz we're building new lands... (P5, 2007).

The Bush administration repeatedly couched justification for the war in patterns of bringing freedom to the Iraqi people. This rationale fit the cultural norms with which P5 grew up. Before arriving in Kuwait P5 didn't question this understanding because he perceived it as the 'right thing.' He demonstrates, as an adolescent and a young man, an intense pride in country and disinterest in historical relationships in which the U.S. might bear negative responsibility.

His anger found an outlet through the enemy positioning and corresponding characterological dehumanization running through the dominant narrative. At the same time, the narrative's positioning of self (U.S.) supported his understanding of the United States as a liberator that would bring freedom to the oppressed. Alexander the Great embodies the superhero myth and military glory. Clearly, the assumptions of chosenness, innocence, heroism and militarism harnessed by the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns resonated with this young man and motivated him to participate in the perceived glory.

Accepting the narrative and the cultural assumptions underpinning it absolves the U.S. from any potential guilt or responsibility. This absolution also eliminates any perceived need or motivation for critical self- reflection, perpetuating instead the habitual thought patterns that are informed by a ‘taken for granted’ understanding of the past. P11 and P5 both maintained this iterational element³⁶ of their agentic capacity, comfortably accepting the stability and order that the narrative patterns provided (Emirbayer, 1998).

As P5 states, he didn’t know of any past relationship and didn’t feel any need or inclination to discover if one existed. In his mind at the time the U.S. was an innocent victim and therefore morally justified to respond militarily. He admits that it never occurred to him that might exist a more complex story rooted in a relational dynamic in which the U.S. played a significant role. The narrative patterns denied both history and the underbelly of our myths, disconnecting the present from the past. Along with the content of the storyline, this underlying denial and disconnection was taken up as well.

Participant 4 (P4) needed a change in her life. She was attending college in Seattle, WA when she decided she needed to do something different. In 2004, she joined the Army. The army appealed to her because of the language school in California. She was also drawn for financial reasons. The army would pay her and pay off her student loans. Her primary motivation was, however, to attend the language school so she could become involved in the intelligence field and “have some kind of impact,” which she clarifies as “do[ing] some sort of good for people” (P4, 2007).

³⁶ See Chapter 3.

While telling her story, P4 revealed the tremendous impact her experience in Iraq had on her identity and life. She truly experienced a profound transformation. Although the details of this change will be analyzed in Chapter 6, it is important to note how she initially identified herself here. She describes her former sense of identity as “very religious, sort of a Pentecostal Christian and very into that, but not anymore.” She further comments, “Well, I have no religion now” (P4, 2007). Long before this personal transformation, however, P4 accepted unquestioningly the narrative patterns, the storylines and the assumptions underpinning them.

To capture her story, and others, in fuller context while depicting indicators for the features I argue pervaded both the dominant narrative and its initial uptake, I present some of the narrative strips in uninterrupted narrative segments in table form throughout the rest of this chapter. After all of the narrative strips have been presented, I categorize many of these statements thematically to demonstrate the narrative features I argue in Chapter 4 are present. Thus, Table 5.1 depicts P4’s reaction to 9.11 and her original understanding of the impending invasion of Iraq. The narrative strips in this table capture the cognitive-evaluative process that compelled P4 to take up the storyline constructed through the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns.

Table 5.1: The Initial Response of P4 to 9.11 and the Iraq Narrative Patterns.

| <p align="center">Initial Response to 9/11 and the Iraq War Narrative Patterns (P4, 2007)</p> |
|---|
| <p>I was pretty disconnected from it, you know? I was on the other side of the country. ...I was pretty shocked by it, you know, there's definitely a mournful kind of experience, like, "Wow, I can't really believe this is happening in my country." But my experience wasn't different from anyone else's.</p> |
| <p>Well, on thing is that at the time, I was very, very much into this Christian community and I was very blinded, I think, by everything because of that. And my church taught me very much to trust everything that Bush said or says, so I took basically whatever was out there at face value, like, "Okay, this is what they're saying, this is like God's truth, all right."</p> |
| <p>I just believed kind of what everyone was putting out there, you know, Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden and all of these kinds of things, but really I didn't know or really, sadly, care too much specifically about what's causing this and where it is coming from, you know, I just kind of believed the standard things. You know, this is like terrorists hit our country and they're all from the Middle East and they wanna kill us all, like this kind of bullshit really.</p> |
| <p>I felt like some action should be taken and if this is like the most direct location we can have to pinpoint the people who we're saying caused this then I thought, yeah, I mean, you know – it was sort of, I mean especially when I look at it now and I remember what I was thinking then, it was almost like, "Well, maybe this isn't the best place to go, but we have to something, so we'll do it anyway." ...it was like saving face. You know, we're this great big country, kind of wanna be in charge of the world and you're gonna hit us, so we have to hit something back just to, you know, stand up, really, just to make people feel like "Okay, we're not gonna take this. We don't wanna look bad to you. We don't wanna look like little wimps, so we're gonna have to do something to fight back even if it's the wrong person to hit back," or something like that.</p> |
| <p align="center">Transition to Iraq Narrative</p> |
| <p>I'm in college and still had the same kind of attitude, just go through life, do what my church tells me to do, which was what the government tells me to do, like this kind of silliness. But I was starting to question things a bit more. I think I was just kind of scared to think about [Iraq] because, well, what if they're [the Bush administration] wrong, you know, what if – I mean, that would just make me question everything that I had ever been told about life in general. So I think I definitely had doubts about this sort of story that was being told, but I didn't have really sort of the inner strength or whatever to really let myself question those doubts. They were there, but I was just still trying to go along and not really think about it.</p> |
| <p>Well, the enemy was Saddam, and I really didn't see a whole lot of connection to this Bin Laden terrorist idea, and it was just, the way I understood it, a completely new enemy. And Saddam and WMD really was, that's what I understood at the time, I</p> |

don't know, like they [Iraq] got new guts or something like that. I believed it [the explanation] for the most part. I mean, because I just kind of trusted that like, "Hey, this is the government; I'm sure they know more about it than I do. And I kind thought the government was like a movie (*laughter*) and... and so I was just thinking, "Well, sure, if they're saying it, it must be true. I don't know anything more, so what reason do I have to doubt it?"

I think that I really didn't think about it a whole lot. I'm just sort of shocked by it now that I didn't, but for what I did consider, yeah, I think that I thought, you know, well, like we kind of had this duty to police the world sort of thing and if they're gonna try to, you know, if Saddam and Iraq is gonna try to drop nuclear bombs on America – well, [Bin Laden] already did, whole 9/11 thing, so maybe... so it was really kind of mixed up; but yeah, I think that I thought it was justified that if you're gonna lose a couple of lives to save a bunch of lives then I guess you have to do it kind of thing.

I really thought that the Army in Iraq was doing some kind of good for the people. Like I believed this whole liberator thing, you know? That we're gonna go in there and set people free from this dictatorship and give them a new government and help them find economic stability. And it was fed really because I didn't know anything about Iraq... And so it was very easy to believe that we could be that, you know, this kind of propaganda thing that people could love us, they could pull down Saddam and cheer for us.

Her initial response to the narrative patterns captures the dominant iterative element at the time in her thinking and decision-making. Strongly attached to the beliefs and value commitments embedded in cultural myths and public memories, she intuitively relied on the assumptions they carry, assumptions that also shaped her experiences with her family and religious communities. When niggling doubts surfaced she pushed them away because they were destabilizing. The coherence of the story of certainty remained comfortable and secure enough to cling to until her experiences in Iraq shattered it completely. The dynamic process of her profound change will be analyzed in Chapter 6.

Participant 2 (P2) spent his high school years in Lafayette, Indiana. After graduating in 1996, he joined the military. He describes his motivation for joining the service as 'complicated,' but categorizes his reasons under the umbrellas of benefits and

patriotism. He explains: “I’ve always grown up with this romantic idea of the soldier, the protector of freedom, the patriot guard keeping the world safe for democracy, keeping it safe from the Russians” (P2, 2007). He argues that this romanticism of the military stems from what he perceives as a culture that contains “a lot of cues, especially for boys, in regards to militarism.”

P2 describes some of these cultural cues – cues of militarism, innocence and heroism. “We watched G.I. Joe, and we might watch the *Transformers*, both of which were violent. Then we’d go play army in the woods. And then there were the *Rambo* movies, the Swarzenegger movies”. He doesn’t think this is specific to his childhood, but that, “it is our culture. Violence is manly. Most of our sports are violent. Look at football; look at wrestling. Soccer is considered unmanly largely because there’s no physical contact.” The cultural cues he experienced as a child shaped his sense of national identity and purpose. He states, “I was brought up to think that if we went to war as a nation that we were on the side of angels. But I also felt a duty, though” (P2, 2007).

Assumptions inherent in the cultural mythological frameworks of innocence, chosenness and superhero as well as strong tendencies toward the glorification of the military all support the positive response P2 felt toward the dominant narrative patterns. The narrative strips below portray excerpts from his story that reveal an attachment to the cultural constructs underpinning the narrative patterns. He doesn’t question the response to 9.11 or the subsequent shift to Iraq because the images conveyed through the dominant

narrative ‘feel right’ to him. The narrative supported his cultural beliefs and value commitments, indeed his sense of an American identity. He states:

My initial gut reaction was I want to find these people and kill them. I knew people that had family in the World Trade Center. My homeland had just been attacked. To me, the initial reaction was anger and rage. My country was just attacked. I was pissed off and that’s acceptable. It was perfectly okay to have those feelings. If you weren’t sad or pissed off, or if you didn’t have any emotional response at all then I think there’s something wrong with you. Our job was to defend the U.S. We failed. We were supposed to defend the US. They hit us on our home turf. We took that personally.³⁷ And so the thought was, well, I want you to go find those people and kill them. And so it didn’t matter how you defined the enemy. You give me the order and then we’ll go (P2, 2007).

He also admits that a perceived need to restore a sense of wounded honor to America emanated from the narrative although it was never stated directly. He says:

... part of it was to restore a sense of honor in America, but I mean, that was almost an underlying cultural thing, something that’s in our culture. They [politicians/administration] didn’t have to hit that overtly because it was in the culture. We were going to be wanting to restore our honor and that’s also where that whole ‘support our troops’ kind of came in because the restoring the honor of the military idea and the so-called Vietnam Syndrome.

³⁷ P2 later feels that the emotional response of taking it personally is ‘ridiculous.’ But at the time, this reflects how he felt.

At the time of this interview P2 had contextualized with personal experience the trajectory of the narrative. Thus, the storyline grew in complexity, allowing him to embrace more perspectives through the ambiguity his experience invited. He states now that “to some degree [I think] the terrorists wanted us to feel the same way that they felt when the civilian populations were attacked, when someone blew up a nightclub somewhere or someone leveled a village... then it was also... there was also the message to the leaders, which was hitting the financial center” (P2, 2007). This reveals a capacity for empathy and competing moral frameworks that did not exist for him before serving in Iraq. Prior to that personal experience P2 resisted critical reflection of the presenting narrative. He states thoughtfully now that he “absolutely did not scrutinize it” [the presenting narrative] (P2, 2007). Chapter 6 will explore in detail the chain of turning points that opened space for uncertainty.

A nurse who served one tour in Iraq in 2005 – 2006 also initially accepted the presenting narrative but would later counter it. Participant 6 (P6) is from a family with a long military tradition. For generations, he claims, every oldest son went to West Point and served in the military. He spent five years of his youth in Belgium, where his father was stationed. When they returned to the U.S. they landed in Kansas, which P6 hated. He dropped out of school at 16, earned a General Educational Development (GED) degree and joined the army on his 17th birthday. His goal was to learn Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterrey, CA, which he did. He left the army in 2000, but after the terrorist attacks on 9.11, P6 enlisted in the Reserves as an Arabic interrogator and began nursing school.

Disappointed that he wasn't sent to Afghanistan, P6 completed his one-year enlistment and finished nursing school. By this time the U.S. had invaded Iraq. In 2004 P6 re-enlisted, served nine months in Walter Reed Military Hospital as an intensive care nurse and then requested and was deployed to Iraq. P6 supported both the mission in Afghanistan and in Iraq; he accepted the Bush administration's positioning of self and other as well as the positioning of purpose – the storyline. Only when he arrived at Walter Reed did he begin to question the war (P6, 2007). Table 5.2 depicts his story – how he understood and responded to 9.11 and later to the Iraq War narrative patterns. In Chapter 6, I will continue to analyze his story from his experiences at Walter Reed through his service in Iraq.

Table 5.2: The Initial Response of P6 to 9.11 and the Iraq Narrative Patterns.

| Initial Response to 9/11 and the Iraq War Narrative Patterns (P6, 2007) |
|--|
| <p>I was shocked by what happened and I was angry. And you know, there was a little while there when none of us knew what was gonna happen next – was there gonna be more, you know, all all of that. And I just thought, “Okay, that’s it. This is a declaration of war.” And then they’re putting out video tapes and said they were gonna do more and the Americans should be scared. ...and so I guess I felt an obligation to join the military cuz I thought we were gonna do something instantly. You know, we were gonna be around the world, every terrorist training camp, we were just gonna be kicking in doors that weekend with paratroopers and everything. ...but 9.11 was definitely, it made me feel like having – I had been in the infantry during, basically a peacetime Army, and I had this commitment to defend America and we’ve been attacked, so it’s time for people to ante up and their money where their mouth is, you know, get the people who did this. ...there was also a thing, “Well, okay, they hate us. They have good reason³⁸ but now they’re attacking us, so I guess we have to kill</p> |

³⁸ P6 studied Arabic and Middle Eastern history; he also lived in Belgium as a child. He felt he had an understanding of why some Middle Easterners might hate the US. He found the U.S. foreign policy to historically be hypocritical, oppressive and humiliating to those in Muslim countries. Even so, he supported both wars.

them.” Because the other thing we could’ve done would take so much thought on the American people and such a policy change that I just thought going to war would be easier than actually getting Americans to wake up and look at who and why we support the things we do overseas – what it looks like to these people. It’s just...it’s just absurd and everyone else overseas sees it.

Transition to Iraq Narrative

It’s a bit like the allegory in the cave in that, you know, before my experience there and all the reading I did while I was there, you know, I was reacting to the shadows on the walls. You know, I believed Colin Powell. I mean, I remember having arguments with my friends in California about going to war and I said, “Look, you know, Colin Powell is an honorable guy and like I watched him in the U.N., like they must know something we don’t. He wouldn’t be on board.” You know, I knew about Tenant all those jackasses, but when he pulled him out, it was kind of like the knight in shining armor that’ll never lie to you or steal or tolerate those that do... (*much later, after serving in Iraq, P6 felt differently*) but as the information slowly started coming in, you know, no WMD, etc., etc., etc., it became harder to defend, and then I quit defending it.

A recurring story exists about the difficulty of financing higher education. Many of the veterans with whom I spoke chose to join the service or the ROTC in order to pay for college. Participant 12 (P12) tells a similar story. He was an Eagle Scout as a boy but never planned to join the military. He did well in school and wanted to go to college. His father “broke down one day and told [him], ‘I don’t have any money. I’m way in debt. I just don’t even have the ability to borrow money to send you to college’” (P12, 2007).

In the end, he signed up with the Army ROTC and received a full four-year scholarship. After graduating in 1996 he was commissioned in the Army. P12 eventually served a tour in Iraq, and while his experiences led him to eventually counter the presenting Iraq War narrative patterns, he did not become a member of the *Iraq Veterans Against War* organization, as many of the other participants in this study did. When 9.11 occurred he was in the Reserves, working full-time in advertising. He

remembers feeling: “I think like most people, in shock and then disbelief and then a little bit of anger” (P12, 2007). Table 5.3 chronicles his reactions to the narratives.

Table 5.3: The initial response of P12 to 9.11 and the Iraq narrative patterns.

| <p style="text-align: center;">Initial Response to 9/11 and the Iraq War Narrative Patterns (P12, 2007)</p> |
|--|
| <p>Ok, this is serious. So I called my unit to see if we had any units to deploy. It was funny because I didn't know if I was coming back or not to the house. So it was a little bit of apprehension...</p> <p>It's funny, I recall having a conversation with one of the soldiers. They were saying, “What are we doing? Are we gonna go? Are we gonna go overseas? What's the story? At that time there was no message – it only started to grow. I said, “We're not here to make decisions... You just need to get yourself ready to go” and in the end we did.</p> <p>We went to Texas. The question with soldiers was always, “What are we doing? Why are we here?” Trying to come up with an answer is tough. I mean, it definitely was, “We're under attack and our country's under attack and our way of life is under attack, and we have to be vigilant.”</p> <p>I'd say it was about 98% of people really fully felt that was the way it was (<i>the 9.11 narrative: the positioning of the enemy and the need to invade Afghanistan</i>), that hey, regardless of whether – well everybody in Afghanistan is evil, so we still need to go over there and bomb the hell out of them. So yeah, we were absolutely right to go in there and root them out. And oh, by the way, the side message was, “Hey these people are so oppressed by the way and we're gonna go, we're gonna free them.” That was always one message that worked really well, that we could really buy into very, very well.</p> <p>Pressure would have mounted and mounted and mounted until we did something. I mean some kind of military action, I think. I think people were afraid. Suddenly... - we've never been attacked before, nothing really big, and I just think people were afraid. I think it's our culture to - that action, physical action is the thing that you do to kind of pull yourself out of this fear and I think that's why. A lot of people wanted that, whether it's the right move or not, you know?</p> <p>(<i>Responding to the 9.11 narrative's explanation for why the U.S. was attacked</i>). I struggle with that. I think the immediate answer to me is I think they generally do view us as – I think they generally do view Western culture as evil. I really do. If you</p> |

ask somebody, you put them on a lie detector and you ask them, "Would you really like to see the U.S. crash and burn and everyone die in that country?" In their heart of hearts, I think they would say, "yes". They see us as this, what's the word? Just excessive culture of excess and that we're sinful... I think it really comes down to a culture clash. I think we've done plenty of things to be offensive and troublesome in the world, like our relationship with Israel, but in the end those things are just excuses for that they really want to see. If you ask the hardest core politician in Syria, "Do you want to go over and try to make everybody in American Islamic?" I think they would say, "Yeah, absolutely."

I do think we bear some responsibility (*for 9.11*) but why did those guys come over here? I think there is a sincere desire on the part of the extremists in that culture to absolutely destroy us, to destroy our culture. It's a culture war.

Transition to Iraq Narrative

I didn't really believe this thing is really happening. The story started to come out about how they were looking for weapons of mass destruction. I heard it and thought, "No, that's not gonna happen. There's no way that we're gonna be able to do these two things at once." We've been gone a year. We were Reservists that had never in the world expected that they would be – whether they should have or shouldn't have, the bottom line was that most most of them came to the Reserves and they thought, "One weekend a month, two weeks a year, that's all we do." We were gone for a year from the families and people were missing their school. They were not happy. Two weeks after we got home (from Texas) they said, "You need to call the soldiers back and tell them that you guys are probably going." "Oh my God," I thought. "I can't call these kids back." But I did. And we were gone in January.

I was listening to Colin Powell from the mobilization station at Fort Dix. He was testifying in front of the U.N. They were gearing up to go and I thought, "They're making this case? All these units are already here." These units were already here. I thought, "This is all political theater because we're going." I mean, I didn't mean like that, that what Colin Powell was saying was inaccurate or anything like that. I just meant that they're putting this stuff out there to get consensus, but whether or not they get consensus, they've got it in their head; they're doing this thing.

I remember watching him (*Colin Powell*) and I thought, "Wow, this is compelling. What he's saying, if true, they have these planes that are spraying chemicals and we know they killed the Kurds, and all this bad stuff." And I was thinking, "Well then it's legitimate. This is legitimate. This is a real threat."

I believed it, yeah, absolutely believed it.

Number one was I believed they (Iraq) had links to terrorists, terrorist organizations, or in the very least, that they were supporting them financially, right? That there was some relationship there between organizations. That was number one in my mind,

probably that thing that motivated me. Number two was that he's a bad guy and he has shown before that he's willing to use force and of course, the whole Chamberlain and Hitler thing comparison that was constantly being made. If only when Hitler invaded Poland, we'd said, "See that's a bad dude. Let's go kick his ass." If we'd only done that in World War II, how many lives would have been saved? So in our minds we were – it's funny how many times we related back to World War II analogies. We just said, "Well, this is what happened then. This is what happened then." None of those Vietnam analogies.

So that and then the third thing of it was, - so terrorist ties and then Saddam Hussein's a bad guy who has weapons of mass destruction. Third is, these people are oppressed and we can probably help them.

(Recalling an early moment in Iraq)

I thought about this *(the rationale for being in Iraq)* when I was trying to think of like, "What the hell are we going to talk about here?" We were in Iraq. We were already there and this general came by our fort operating base, which didn't happen very often, and he came in. We were working with the National Guard and he was the chief of the National Guard. He pulled in all of the officers and senior NCO's from our fort operating base and he had us all in one room. He was giving us, "Here's what's going on," but it was more of a "rah-rah" speech. He said to us, "Why are we here?" Some lieutenant raised his hand and he said, "We're here to free the Iraqi people and make sure that America is safe from weapons of mass destruction and people who would want to hurt us." He (the general) said, "No. Wrong." He said, "You want to know why we're here? We're here because on September 11th we played a home game. We don't like to play home games and we re-wrote the schedule and from now on we're playing all away games."

I thought, "Wow." That really resonated with the officers there. We're playing on their field, not ours. It's easy to let that resonate with you without really thinking about the third and fourth effects of that kind of rationale. I think about that a lot. Is that what we're really doing? Are we just keeping them as busy as we can out there so that it doesn't happen here again?

P12 demonstrates the initial acceptance of a story he didn't create but one in which he was forced to participate. The dominant element of agency underpinning the narrative reveals itself as iterational; he falls back on the default position of cultural conditioning and relies on the stability a cohesive narrative, constructed on familiar cultural themes, provides. The connection the Bush administration made between 9.11

and Iraq strongly compels this participant to accept the Iraq War narrative patterns. The participant reaffirms this link. Even when the storyline constructed for the Iraq invasion raises doubts, this link serves to quell those doubts. 9.11 embodies the emotional connection the Bush administration needed to mobilize the new narrative. P12 expresses some uncertainty, but the 9.11 connection overpowers his concerns.

Once in Iraq P12 experiences the first significant turning point. Uncertainty emerges again, but stronger. Living the trajectory of the narrative in Iraq, he begins to use his experiences to counter previous beliefs. At this point the practical-evaluative element of agency reveals itself. He is beginning to close the gap between belief and experience. I will explore that path in Chapter 6.

In December 2004 Participant 10 (P10), who had volunteered to go to Iraq, deployed. A Marine since joining in 1999, right before his senior year in high school, P10 enlisted because of patriotism. He wanted: "...to be part of national defense, and that's allowing me to have my life on the line for my country and to be the first in combat" (P10, 2008). At the time of the 9.11 attacks he describes himself as being very 'detached.' He expressed feeling sad for the victims themselves, but he doesn't remember feeling anger toward the terrorists or those responsible; instead he experienced apathy. When the 9.11 storyline was presented by the Bush administration P10 "agree[d] with it conceptionally; [he] saw it like – they attacked us, it's their responsibility, blah, blah, blah." He remembers: "I didn't bother to educate myself to thoroughly understand it. I just thought like, cool. No bother against it. Whatever." Although he was disinterested, the narrative patterns suggested to him that "[restoring honor] was part of

the narrative.” He states: “I don’t feel ‘restore American honor’ was ever used, but I’m sure it was. There was like a suggestion in the central part of the narrative, but it definitely was an undercurrent for the whole time” (P10, 2008).

When the narrative patterns shifted to Iraq he recognized a tension, seeing the shift as, “a stretch to make it an extension of that [9.11] narrative” (P10, 2008). Yet, he believed the intelligence:

I believed all that. I was still against the war, but I believed everything. Believe me, I might have been skeptical, but I believed it. Especially when Colin Powell gave his speech. I was like, man, I believed it. I didn’t question. Not a lot of people did, but I had no question at all. I was only thinking about if it was going to be worth it (P10, 2008).

Even though P10 states he was against the war, he volunteered to go. He explains that he was against the war only because he wasn’t sure the war was ‘worth it’.

Elaborating on this P10 adds: “Something that made it worth it would have been like Saddam having actually fired a rocket at us or attacked a U.S. ship. That would have made it worth it because that’s a real threat. The thing is, I mean I believed all of the ideas. I just didn’t believe the way they were being given” (P10, 2008).

In the end, he wanted to go because he “thought what we were doing was responsible foreign policy... and [we were] trying to be a good buddy to the Iraqi people” (P10, 2008). P10 describes the official mission as having changed over time; by 2004, when he deployed, he supported what he perceived as the mission at that point: “...the general mission at that point was rebuilding Iraq.” He states:

Yeah, well as soon as the war was over it was like, all right, let's rebuild it. Let's install a democracy. Go to Home Depot, open the box, follow the instructions and install a democracy. Then, while we're still there, we should definitely be looking for weapons of mass destruction. Rebuild to find the weapons (P10, 2008).

Although P10 initially opposed the war, he didn't find enough in the narrative patterns to reject the storyline. In fact, he states that he believed both the 9.11 and the Iraq War narratives. At this point in his life, however, he didn't have the interest to question the story. While he recalls considering the link between Iraq and 9.11 'a stretch', he remained comfortable enough in habitual thinking, or the iterational element, to finally accept the positioning in the narrative. His thought patterns before serving suggest an attachment to the assumptions of innocence, militarism and chosenness. He sees the military as an ideal place to express his sense of patriotism and he unquestioningly accepts the military response to 9.11 as appropriate. He also aligns his sense of national identity with a sense of goodness ('good buddy to the Iraqi people', P10, 2008) and with the idea of building a democracy. The tone of his narrative implies he is mocking his former thoughts as naïve.

Later, while serving, P10 began to question even the humanitarian reasons for being in Iraq. Eventually he turns completely against the war and any of the narrative patterns rationalizing it. He transforms from apathy to activism and he questions the depth of general American patriotism. After months of patrolling, he "...realized we're in the middle of something fucked up here. It didn't shatter [his] view of America as much as

[his] sense of the immediate state of America” (P10, 2008). He elaborates further, “I wasn’t ever a fan of Bush, but I least believed him to be a decent guy, a fair leader. That eventually was shattered at some point.” (Chapter 6 will analytically explore the process of change P10 experienced.)

Growing up in a family that had to struggle to make ends meet, Participant 7 (P7) joined the Oklahoma National Guard after high school in April 2001 in order “to receive free college tuition and maybe learn a little responsibility” (P7, 2007). From 9.11 through the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions P7 “agreed with the way the Global War on Terror was being prosecuted.” After the attacks of 9.11 many friends advised him to retract his military contract, as he had not yet been to basic training. But he chose to honor the contract, stating, “I felt like it would be a cowardly move and a part of me wanted a piece of that revenge.” Like most of the country, he felt “stunned” after 9.11.

P7 describes how he understood the narrative the Bush administration presented to the country after 9.11. He states:

After the attacks, the president spoke a lot about freedom and how some people out there hate our freedom and what we stand for. He implied that our goodwill was being rewarded with deadly attacks on our soil. ...having a country to point to and say, ‘that’s who did it’ was good for the country. It gave the country a finite place to point their anger. ...It was hailed in the media and by the president as a liberation. Those who opposed the attack were considered unpatriotic, cowardly, treasonous, or all of the above. In fact, those men and women were the intelligent ones (P7, 2007).

He wasn't deployed to Afghanistan but would later serve in Iraq. He describes how he felt once he learned of his deployment: "I felt nervous, scared and excited. It all seemed different when it was *me* [emphasis his] who had to sacrifice and risk my life for the war" (P7, 2007). As the storyline shifted from Osama bin Laden and Afghanistan to Saddam Hussein and Iraq, P7 followed closely and accepted the positioning in the narrative. He understood the storyline as:

...the justification for war with Iraq was that Saddam Hussein had stockpiles of nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) weapons and that he had ties to al Qaeda. The enemy was said to be specifically Hussein, but there was such an anti-Arab fervor at the time that it was easy to demonize any Arab country. Later, ... a humanitarian element was added, which worked to pull at heart strings and move the debate from an argument of national security and legality to one of human rights and morality (P7, 2007).

Today P7 describes feeling "humiliated knowing that I fell for all that propaganda; sadly, it took a tour in Iraq for me to see things differently." He comments:

We were the most powerful nation on Earth; ask any American and they would have told you that. Americans take pride in being intimidating and kick-ass. Once the bully gets punched in public, he has to regain his street cred. That's what happened psychologically; we had to regain our reputation (P7, 2007).

The Iraq war narratives, as repeated in the President's speeches, harnessed the emotions experienced after 9.11 and kept those emotions vivid by repeatedly invoking images of 9.11 and positioning appropriate feelings associated with the memory. P7

(and other veterans interviewed here) clearly indicates that a link was made between 9.11 and Iraq. This link made it easy for him to direct his anger over the attacks toward first Osama bin Laden and later Saddam Hussein. The narrative successfully kept the painful memory of 9.11 alive and helped create an almost metaphysical gap between self and other (Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007). The public memory being created drew its emotive and persuasive power from the norms embedded in the fabric of American culture and from the emotions experienced as a result of the collective trauma of 9.11. Rage, anger, and fear are common emotions expressed by the veterans interviewed in this study. I argue that the presence of various forms of humiliation and shame is indicated through their stories and reflects the uptake and privileging of emotions expressed through the dominant narrative itself.

P7 openly admits to having had a desire for revenge. He felt angry and the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns provided a blameworthy target. The storyline made sense to him because it was presented “as a liberation” by the president – an idea that fits comfortably within the underlying myths and public memories that subconsciously shape a sense of national identity. P7 alludes to the possibility that honor-humiliation³⁹ was present. If he didn’t fulfill his contract and participate in whatever response to 9.11 was coming, it would be “cowardly.” And, he suggests that the U.S. had to “regain its street cred” or reputation as “the most powerful nation on Earth.” This is an indicator of the presence of relegation humiliation and of the exceptionalism (superhero myth) and militarism running through the American cultural fabric: while at the apex of world

³⁹ See Chapter 3.

power the United States was “forcefully pushed downwards within [this] existing status hierarchy” (Lindner, 2006). Our sense of economic and military superiority and invincibility were suddenly vulnerable and clearly shaken. The United States was humiliated before the world by a group of people from a region considered militarily, economically and indeed, culturally, inferior. American honor had been wounded. The need to preserve the position of “the most powerful nation on Earth” (P7, 2007) through military interventions or displays of that power was articulated through the hegemonic narrative patterns and taken up by many Americans – including P7. A military response was seen then as ‘the right thing to do’ and as morally justified (Lindner, 2006).

Participant 3 (P3) never wanted to go to Iraq. He joined the National Guard to take advantage of the financial assistance military service offered for college. His family could not help him with the costs. He explained that while his mother always worked, his father had abandoned them when he was three; they often had to turn to welfare services as he grew up. In addition, his brother graduated from college with \$65,000 of debt, and he wanted to avoid similar circumstances. He recalls walking into the recruiter’s office: “I went in there knowing they did that. I went in knowing that they paid for four years of college. That’s the only reason” (P3, 2007).

War was something P3 never counted on. His family promoted nonviolence and he had inculcated those values. He chose the National Guard largely because traditionally the Guard does not participate in foreign wars. He states: “Even though when I joined they said I wouldn’t go to Iraq, well Iraq hadn’t started at that point, but they said I wouldn’t go to a foreign war. You’ll be there if we get hit by a tornado...if

the Mississippi River floods... You're not there for war" (P3, 2007). At this point he understands what it means to sign the contract differently. He states: "I signed under those conditions, but it's a unilateral contract meaning that I have to oblige what I sign but they can change what they want you to do, so they can extend you, they can change your MOS, your job, they can do anything. That's what they don't tell you. They can change anything they want to" (P3, 2007).

On 9.11, P3 had already been in the National Guard for two years. He joined in November 1999 and was working on his college degree. He feels that while he was always patriotic, joining the service heightened his sense of patriotism. At the time of this interview he was unemployed having just lost his job in construction. He wants to return to school to finish his degree, which was interrupted when he was deployed to Iraq, but he is struggling to find the money.

According to P3, the National Guard will only provide the college tuition money if the person is actively drilling. In other words, after being pulled from college to serve in Iraq, P3 cannot receive the money to finish his education unless he re-enlists and is 'actively drilling' again. This is a risk he feels he cannot take because he fears being redeployed to Iraq rather than re-enrolled in school. As he sees it now, "You might start school right away, but then they take you out in the middle of the semester; that's what they did to me. I missed two years of school... This could go on for three years – two, three deployments. You're getting maybe one year of school for this agreement. You join the military for six years for one year of college" (P3, 2007). But this anger and resentment was still ahead of him when the terrorists attacked on 9.11.

He describes how he felt after 9.11: “I think I cried a lot like a lot of people did, you know. ...just seeing that massive destruction was pretty intense. ...I didn’t know a whole lot but...but I didn’t know why they [terrorists] hated us, why there was such a disdain for Americans” (P3, 2007). As the narrative shifted to Iraq and Saddam Hussein P3 experienced some skepticism but decided he didn’t possess the knowledge to question the storyline argued by the Bush administration. He states:

Well, I believed that there could have been weapons of mass destruction as a lot of people were fooled into believing. I believed that, I remember telling my mom that I know this guy is a bad guy and if he does have weapons of mass destruction it’s something that needs to be taken care of. I don’t believe America has the sole right to declare war, which we never did. But I told her in this situation I didn’t have enough evidence to say that I shouldn’t go to this war, so that’s why I decided I would go.

Like most of the other veterans interviewed for this study he experienced intense emotions after the terrorist attacks, emotions that were evoked repeatedly through 9.11/Iraq War patterns. Although reluctant to fight any war and distrustful of President Bush, P3 believed in his country and identified with many of the assumptions inherent in the myths and public memory pervasive in the culture. Rather than question the public storyline, he remained in the default position of accepting what intuitively felt right. This position is attractive because of its stability and coherence.

At 17 Participant 1 (P1) enlisted in the National Guard. A need for recognition and respect propelled him to the service. He describes the cognitive-evaluative processes that led to his decision:

Well, it was a lot of things. I mean, the first time the military recruiter approached me I was fifteen. I was sitting in – in a high school lawn chair eating chicken nuggets. It's – it's weird that I remember that but I really do. He sat down. He was a Marine Corps recruiter, full dress blues. He looked awesome and like – like the medals were shining. It was just – it really impressed me heavily. And he – he sat down next to me and I was pretty much a loner in high school, you know. And he sat down next to me and he knew my name, my – every class I was taking, the sports I was taking, the class I wasn't taking. I mean, it's incredible what he knew about me and he just – never once did he mention the military. He just talked to me (P1, 2007).

Clearly the impact of being recognized was significant. P1's father died when he was just five and he grew up in New York in a "pretty poor neighborhood." He adds, "to see that much respect being paid to one individual was really very deep to me. And I looked at it as an honorable thing, as something that I could do that would be something not everybody did" (P1, 2007). He also saw the military as "a way to get out, you know, get out of this town that I really didn't like being in, get some experience, be out there, you know, and money for college would come."

He chose the National Guard so he could also go to school. At this point in his life, he had never questioned the cultural constructs and public memories that he had

absorbed his entire life. But for P1 college would change that; a shift in his consciousness came early and originated in a history class. He recalls:

And then I went to junior college and I was majoring in business – I have a – an applied associate’s in science and business. And I was just taking those classes and wrestling at the time, but I needed a history class just to fill my requirements and this – one of the wrestlers said, “You should take this African-American studies class.” Right. He’s like, “There’s no test. It’s so easy.” So I took it and it blew my mind totally. It like totally changed everything for me. I started reading – like really reading everything.

The more he read the more he began to question all of the narratives he had learned in school. He says that he was suddenly looking at everything through a new lens and he was angry that “stuff was hidden from me.” At this point in his life he was conflicted. A new feeling of uncertainty about the history he had been taught through his public school education opened space for questions about his beliefs and his cultural/national identity. His sense of identity and the coherence of a stable narrative had been shaken. By the time 9.11 occurred, the practical-evaluative dimension of his agentic capacity dominated his thinking and his emotions. For a time he swung back and forth between habitual, coherent past patterns of thought and the more frightening world of uncertainty. This ambiguity reveals itself through his discourse. Table 5.4 captures his story as he is called from school to serve first in New York after the terrorist attacks and later, when he must leave school again for a deployment to Iraq.

Table 5.4. The initial response of P1 to the 9.11 and Iraq narrative patterns.

| <p align="center">Initial Response to 9/11 and the Iraq War Narrative Patterns (P1, 2007)</p> |
|--|
| <p><i>(Through National Guard, P1 served three tours at the World Trade Center after 9/11.)</i> And, you, know, while I was down there my first reaction was as a soldier, you know, this is – this is a time of war and I was pissed. I was really mad. I was like, we were attacked and I’m a soldier. I should be going to war.</p> <p>I was so proud to be in the Guard at that moment, you know, like that, I felt so good about signing up at that point. I still had all this rage and stuff about being attacked but as far as my unit goes, man, they stepped up to the plate there. That was awesome.</p> <p>And then I was on the phone with that professor in the African-American studies class and I told him about this and he said, you know, he basically said, “I know – I know you’re angry and that’s okay. You should be angry.” And he says, “I – I understand you want to go to war. You’re a soldier. But answer me one question first. Who do you want to go to war with?” And I couldn’t answer that and that made me more pissed off.</p> <p>For the first time I was learning all this stuff – about American history and I was like really starting to question everything, you know. It was like before that I was totally gung ho, like really hardcore. I wouldn’t have questioned the war with anyone for any reason. I never would have even thought to question policy.</p> <p>I think that, especially right after 9.11, I was actually really pissed. I thought, to me, it looked like all the politicians were using this as their stepping stone. It was like, you know, it was their Berlin War falling...</p> <p>All of a sudden, we’re in his [President Bush] agenda. We’re in his world, and I hated it... I was pissed about that. I hated it.</p> <p>At first I was behind Afghanistan. It was like, all right, if that’s where – if that’s where these people are, that’s where we go. We – but then the way that we conducted that really troubled me. I could see they weren’t serious about Afghanistan. And it – the conduct of that war really made me question even more. And it was like – well, why aren’t we taking this seriously? And then, all of a sudden they started talking about Iraq. I’m like, wait, how did we go from Afghanistan over to Iraq, where – how did this work? I really didn’t get it.</p> |
| <p align="center">Transition to Iraq Narrative</p> |
| <p>So to me its like – it’s just all the reasons they gave for war didn’t make sense. And again, I kept studying history and we’re talking – then they start talking about links to al Qaeda...I’m just getting more and more to the point of not being able to believe anything they can tell me. [But] they ratcheted up the fear and they ratcheted up the fear until they could pretty much do what they wanted. People were afraid.</p> |

...[Bush] he didn't get more complex [than that] because there – he couldn't get too complex without exposing the truth of it. Like...we couldn't talk about [U.S./Iraq and Afghanistan history] because if we talked about that then we have – might have to say that America is not always the good guys. And he wanted to paint it – he painted this really black and white picture of like evil-doers and good guys. It was just like a comic book. ...and I'm like, I'm living in a fucking Batman comic. Like he really thinks these people are like evil-doers. Like the – you know, what is this – f- Gotham City here? What the hell's going on?

Well, there's a lot of things [about why many people supported the Iraq war]. The biggest thing is fear. Next to that is ignorance. They [American people] don't know [history/historical relationships] these things and our educational system certainly doesn't teach us it.

And our media – the media is probably the biggest to blame...as soon as 9/11 happened we should have gotten objective pieces about this region. We should have learned the history. ... every major media should have had exposes on Osama bin Laden. Instead what we got were emotionally hyped stories about 9/11.

[*Just activated*] I used to sit on the banks of the Niagara River and I'd stare over and I was so internally torn apart about going to the war. Like on this one hand I totally disagree with the war. It's everything that – that I've ever hated about foreign policy. You know, there's – they're – they're killing soldiers for policy. It's stupid. You know, no one should've ever died in this war. They're killing civilians over policy. None of them should've died in the war and it's just – it was just pissing me off so bad. And I'd sit on the banks of the Niagara River and I used to think, you know, about - I used to think about going to Canada and I thought, you know, that's what they did in the 60's, right?. ...but it wasn't like real 'cause I was like, how am I gonna work? How am I gonna live? Am I gonna go to school there – what, you know. Going to another country, it's just – it was frightening to say the least. And so the next thing that I thought of doing was just refusing orders and just going to jail.... ...I didn't know there was this huge history of GI resistance so it didn't seem real. ...so I was just – I went, you know, kind of with the expectation that this is what soldiers do. It's a time of war. We go to war and it's up to our government to tell us when we do and when we do not go to war.

Participant 8 (P8) who served in Iraq and filed for a conscientious objector status while there did not accept the initial positioning of the 9.11 narrative and was skeptical of

⁴² This would support John Burton's Basic Human Needs theory. This is a foundational theory in Conflict Analysis and Resolution studies. He proposes that when basic human needs, such as dignity, recognition, development and security, are denied or oppressed, conflict is present. Although we could argue that the U.S. didn't directly attack those who attacked us, Galtung and Burton might agree with P8 (and other participants) that a negative peace has existed between the U.S. and many Muslim groups in the world because of oppressive U.S. policies and power imbalances. Applying this theory to the storyline of the attacks would result in a very different narrative with different action and outcomes (Ramsbotham, 2008).

the Iraq War narrative patterns. While he questioned the presenting storylines themselves, he did not turn against the war in Iraq completely until he was deployed. P8's skepticism of the narrative patterns did not insulate him from experiences of surprise and shame while serving. Hence, although his perception of the presenting narratives did not transform as much as some of the participants' presented here, he nonetheless experienced personal transformation. His original understanding and positioning of the narrative patterns will be presented here.

P8 attended high school at the Cairo American College in Egypt. On September 11, 2001 he joined the U.S. Army Reserve, not because of the attacks, but because he felt alienated and dissatisfied with college life. He also sought "to mark [his] transition from adolescence to adulthood with some kind of formal process" (P8, 2007). After the attacks occurred P8 did not feel a desire to retaliate. Initially, he "...felt fear, confusion and excitement" and later "an acute sense of our vulnerability as a nation and a sense of patriotic fervor and community spirit" (P8, 2007).

Even so, the storyline constructed immediately after 9.11 did not resonate with P8. He states that he understood the storyline as:

An insidious worldwide network of Islamic terrorists [that] seeks to overthrow the American government and destroy the American way of life. They do this only because they 'hate our freedom' and desire totalitarian rule over the world.

He rejected this positioning, believing instead that "the administration was distorting the facts to minimize its own failures and miscalculations." He describes the storyline and characterizations as "vague and xenophobic" and so "broad that it could apply to anyone

who opposed U.S. policies.” The storyline relied on “simplistic, moralistic and ethnocentric” patterns and was constructed as a “knee-jerk response to placate American desires for action and response.” He adds that the invasion of Afghanistan was “...conceived more as face-saving measure than a tactical response, a desire to do SOMETHING [emphasis his] to make it appear like America was taking a pro-active stance” (P8, 2007).

The 9.11 storyline that P8 would have found more credible has its roots in the proposition that the perpetrators of those attacks acted more from a deep-rooted sense of perceived humiliation and anger⁴² than from an abstract hatred of American freedom. P8 offered this alternative storyline: “They [the terrorists] feel their way of life is threatened by U.S. policy and by the spread of Western cultural values, thus, knowing no other way to resist what they see as the destruction of their way of life they lash out at any Americans who become symbols for the specific policies they oppose” (P8, 2007). He goes on to explain the 9.11 attacks as the work of terrorists whose primary objective was to humiliate Americans, that is, to create a sense of collective shame for failing to protect the ingroup “innocents” in the tumult that they (the terrorists) generated:

They didn’t chose a military target but a ‘soft’ one, a target designed to drive home the idea that we cannot protect our women and children. In many ways, I think the terrorists were attacking the masculinity and image of our society as much as the society itself. I believe they may have been trying to replicate some of the humiliation they felt themselves, by making America feel weak and

helpless just as many of their home countries have felt weak and helpless against America in the past (P8, 2007).

During deployment to Iraq many of the participants in this study moved away from the Bush administration's storyline to one conveyed by P8. In the narrative above, P8 describes his sense that humiliation was a significant factor in the 9.11 attacks.

According to P8, the terrorists experienced conquest humiliation⁴³. Rather than a hatred of the American freedom, the perpetrators perceived their way of life threatened. He also suggests that the U.S. response reflected honor, relegation and exclusion humiliation⁴⁴. He calls the response a 'face-saving measure' and suggests the terrorists offended a particular sense of identity couched in images of masculinity and invulnerability. Thus, for P8, a humiliation cycle (Lindner, 2006b) was unleashed.

As the storyline shifted during 2002 from Afghanistan to Iraq P8 remained very skeptical. He describes how he understood the new storyline: "Saddam Hussein is building weapons of mass destruction and if successful could use them against his neighbors or the U.S.; in addition, he is in collusion with terrorist groups that facilitate him doing the same" (P8, 2007).

Here, as with many of the participants in this study, the storyline rests on weapons of mass destruction and links with terrorist organizations. It becomes increasingly clear that the Bush administration successfully created a connection between 9.11, including

⁴³ Conquest humiliation occurs when a strong power reduces the autonomy of rivals and forces them into a position of subordination (Lindner, 2006).

⁴⁴ Relegation humiliation occurs when an individual or group is forcefully pushed downward within an existing status hierarchy and exclusion humiliation occurs when an individual or group is forcefully ejected from society through banishment, exile or physical extermination (Lindner, 2006). See chapter 3 for more details and for an explanation of honor-humiliation.

the anger and pain associated with those events, with Saddam Hussein. The relationship that the narrative patterns evoked conjured memories not only of the horrifying physical event, but also of anger, rage and a sense of sudden vulnerability. Evoking those emotions in the new storyline provided the connection between speaker and audience that the administration needed; it fed the narrative's persuasive power.

Resurrecting the emotions experienced after 9.11 rendered continued reverberations throughout the country in the year that followed (Müller-Fahrenholz, 2007). According to P8, emotions played a key role in the American response to 9.11 and to the eventual mobilization behind the invasion of Iraq. He believes:

9.11 absolutely triggered strong feelings of vengeance in America. Although I did not experience those emotions myself, I definitely saw their consequences around me. Not only did America feel humiliated militarily in the sense that all our armed forces were incapable of preventing this low-tech attack, I think many Americans felt humiliated on a personal level, the idea that we were unable to protect our own citizens from violence and especially that we were unable to protect women and children. All these feelings of shame and disgrace were a large driving factor in the subsequent violent response. ...Many of the soldiers around me [in Iraq] believed that by striking back at other Arabs, other Muslims, they could erase the feelings of shame and anger engendered by Sept. 11 (P8, 2007).

While P8 rejected the 9.11 narrative he was unsure of the Iraq War narrative. He demonstrates a willingness to make historical connections and to locate the U.S. in a relational perspective rather than a position of the innocent and unsuspecting victim. He

begins his journey without the certainty that existed for others, but rather a healthy ambiguity.⁴⁵ Ambiguity opens space for questioning and critical reflective thought. Before deploying to Iraq, P8 was operating in the ‘critical mediating point’ of the practical-evaluative dimension of agency (Emirbayer, 1998). He is not as attached or committed to the schemas constructed through myth and public memory; therefore, rather than sustain the identity and meaning associated with these assumptions, he questions them. During this ‘critical mediating point,’ the actor (P8) continues to draw on known cultural narratives although uncertainty is present. Later, P8 moves from the practical-evaluative to the projective dimension where the contextualization of his social experience radically problematizes the Iraq War storyline and results in his own identity transformation.

The final participant I will include in this chapter is Participant 9 (P9). P9 dropped out of an all-boys high school, earned his GED and then joined the army. Although he was accepted to college before enlisting, he didn’t feel happy with himself. He wanted a structured environment in which he could grow. Once in the service, he studied Korean at the Defense Language Institute, interrogation with the Army Interrogation School and finally counter-intelligence at the Joint Counter Intelligence Training Academy in Maryland.

P9 was not a member of the organization, *Iraq Veterans Against the War*, nor did he experience the kind of transformation that other participants in this study describe (as

⁴⁵ I can conjecture that this space was more readily available to P8 because of his already significant personal experiences outside of American culture. He attended high school in Cairo, Egypt, which may have insulated him more from the tendency toward engulfment.

part of Chapter 6). From the beginning P9 did not support President Bush. Initially he questioned the 9.11 storyline and characterizations, particularly the hyper-militant response he witnessed in the Army, which he describes as vengeful, violent and somewhat lacking in complexity. Eventually he accepted this storyline and wanted to serve in Afghanistan, which he viewed as less morally ambiguous than Iraq.

As the narrative shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq, however, he states that he rejected the positions and storyline emanating from these narrative patterns. Through his personal narrative, however, it appears he accepted some of the assumptions that drive those patterns. I would argue that this represents a partial repositioning of the storyline rather than a complete rejection and ultimately a repositioning of self within the existing discourse. He remained comfortable enough to harbor a desire to serve the mission. This comfort may have emanated from deep-rooted assumptions in American culture around spreading democracy and fighting for the freedom of others that stem from cultural myths and public memories.

While P9 opposed the invasion of Iraq and repositioned slightly the characterizations and justifications in the narrative from the beginning, he ended his tour with a positive outlook of the mission and a desire to return to Iraq once he completed his education. His experiences in Iraq led him to question earlier assumptions about his own ideology, thus propelling him along a course of his own transformation. His personal shift in consciousness moves him in a different direction from many of the other participants in this study. I will explore this shift in Chapter 6. In Table 5.5, P9 describes

his initial reaction to 9.11, the Iraq War narrative and to his first two years in the army (P9, 2008).

Table 5.5. The initial response of P9 to 9.11 and the Iraq narrative patterns.

| <p style="text-align: center;">Initial Response to 9/11 and the Iraq War Narrative Patterns (P9, 2008)</p> |
|--|
| <p>As it happened, we were at PT and we were just coming back from a run and a drill sergeant came out and said planes hit the World Trade Center and then over the course of the next two hours, everything changed. It really changed for us. I mean, it was just, we went from just being trainees in the army to all of a sudden total lock down. You don't, you couldn't move, for weeks, I mean, you couldn't go anywhere without showing people your ID. Very highly regulated. There were guards everywhere. It was a big change.</p> <p>I didn't know much about international relations. What mattered to me was what was around me. I didn't like Bush. I felt I had been cheated in the election.</p> <p>So, I was surrounded by people who were very, very militant and they, a lot of people were saying, "Oh, we've got to get the Muslims and the idea of Afghanistan was not about going in and liberating people, then it was about payback. We were going to go in and we were going to kill them. And so, that really soured me. And it's funny in retrospect; no one, it seems, opposed the invasion of Afghanistan. Everybody thought it was okay. But I remember in November 2001 thinking, "this is just awful, what we are going to do in Afghanistan." I guess it was just because I was on the inside of this organization that was so - it was just seething with anger and so filled with desire for revenge. I just thought it was overboard from the top.</p> <p>I guess to an extent I shared it. But, I certainly don't feel this way anymore, but at that time, I felt that not having the political ideology that was prevalent in the Republican, conservative, um, really put me at odds with a lot of people around me. Um, so I guess that what I felt was that a lot of the reaction was, a lot of it was anti-Islam.</p> <p><i>(asked about the emergence of the 9.11 narrative)</i></p> <p>Yeah, once that happened, I suppose I accepted it. I accepted that Osama bin Laden was responsible. I accepted the argument that we needed to, we shouldn't tolerate countries that were harboring terrorists. So, as time went on I thought, okay, fine, invading Afghanistan was the right thing to do. Um, and actually, I really wanted to be part of that mission. There is no controversy surrounding it. It's and I think it is directly related to September 11th and nobody can dispute that.</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Transition to Iraq Narrative</p> |
| <p>Um, he's, (Saddam Hussein) to me, at the time of the axis of evil included North Korea, which is I guess what shocked me most because I was living in Korea.</p> |

The interesting thing is I never really believed it (*the link to 9.11*). I didn't support the invasion of Iraq. I never really believed any of that stuff, but clearly a lot of people did. I don't think we invaded because of weapons of mass destruction. I think we did invade because of the doctrine of preemption, but I don't think it was an al Qaeda connection necessarily. It was the idea that this is an unstable country and that unstable countries that are enemies of the United States are likely to be breeding grounds for terrorists. So that is what happened in Afghanistan. That's what happened in Iraq.

And you, it was, well, two things were true. One, it was true that Saddam Hussein did have these relationships with terrorist groups, just none of them were anti-American groups. And then the other thing that was true was there was this al-Qaeda connected terrorist cell packing in Iraq, but they were intent on overthrowing Saddam Hussein. And they had some al Qaeda connections really, but I mean, I don't know how much.

Ultimately I think we went to Iraq because the ideas, the doctrine of preemption gave us a reason for us to invade in order to establish some kind of democracy there because if we could create a stable democracy there it would have this trickle down effect.

I think most Americans, and people now always say, you know, there's lots of bad guys in the world, why don't we get rid of them. But he stood apart as somebody who had tried to assassinate an American president. He was excessively belligerent and hostile towards the United States and who, whose intelligence service had been going around the world for a couple of decades assassinating (*inaudible*). They were careful never to do it in a way that would necessarily offend the country that would attack them. But there is a feeling, at this point, that maybe they would. The thing is, it was also a regime that was in a decline.

By the time I left I felt that the decision to invade Iraq was the wrong decision. My political inclinations had shifted quite a bit over the course of time I was in the military, particularly with the war going on, but I was opposed to the invasion. But, once the invasion happened, we had invaded Iraq, so I lost that debate and moved on. At that point the question was, how to make the best of the situation and that part of it. I am still really committed to it. So, I didn't have a problem. I wanted to go to Iraq.

In the end, P9 remains opposed to the act of invading Iraq, but his narrative demonstrates a variation of the dominant narrative rather than its rejection. His desire to participant in the mission, coupled with the positioning of that mission – building a democracy – assumes a highly positive self positioning of the U.S. that is anchored in

myth and memories. This position carries within it a form of reinforcement humiliation by inherently positioning self as superior (hero; chosen myths) and other as inferior. It establishes an order in which the U.S. is the benevolent savior that will bring freedom and democracy to people who cannot do better for themselves.

This shift still positions the Iraqis as helpless within their own reality and the U.S. as the 'hero' coming to save them. P9 repositions the narrative early (this same repositioning comes later from the Bush administration). But, while he anchors his understanding in a different antecedent condition, i.e., spreading democracy and freedom rather than eliminating WMD, an evil dictator and someone involved in 9.11, he remains attached to the same cultural assumptions and memories that drive the original narrative patterns. Reinforcement humiliation may not be visible to most Americans, perhaps due to the certainty of, and in many cases, genuine good intentions. But, the self-images of chosen, hero and innocent embody dark underbellies that are ironically exposed to others the more Americans bring these myths to the surface and act from them.

5.3 Shared Narrative Features

In Table 5.6 I have isolated segments of the participants' narratives that illustrate the presence of assumptions that underpin the cultural myths of chosenness, innocence, and hero as well as militarism. Speech-acts that reflect an attachment to one or more of these meta-narratives are presented thematically to demonstrate the connectivity between the patterns in the presenting narrative and the audience. These themes surface in varying degrees for each participant, with some more influenced by the hero myth, which

shares many qualities of militarism, and others by the myths of chosenness and innocence. Importantly, a few of the participants understood the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns to be anchored in those assumptions, but, while recognizing their presence and power in the discursive space, themselves selectively rejected certain aspects.

Table 5.6: Narrative indicators of attachment to value commitments and beliefs underpinning American cultural myths and public memories.

| Narrative Indicators of Attachment to Value Commitments and Beliefs Underpinning the American Cultural Myths of the Chosen, the Innocent, the Hero and Militarism | |
|---|---|
| P11 | <p>I didn't really know why [the attacks occurred] because it wasn't like I had seen a whole lot of things leading up to that; it was just kind of random.</p> <p>I didn't feel we were pushing the world around and having a big impact on people's countries.</p> <p>I felt like we should have had full support... because you like the concept of us, you know, taking care of the world and trying to stop the bad.</p> <p>In general, for us to be there [Iraq] is a good thing. Now it's more or less just trying to help people get on their feet... we're on the defensive over there because they cannot defend themselves.</p> <p>We were justified to go in there not just because of who he [Saddam Hussein] was, but because it would make the world that much easier and you would help the country in the long run keep the peace or give them a better life. At least they have a choice now.</p> <p>I think they feel threatened by us because our presence in the world is so strong... But I think we're starting to show the world we're just trying to make the world a better place. We want everybody to feel free... I think we're just trying to get everyone free. We're trying to help everyone out.⁴⁶</p> <p>I think we are the guidance counselor/dad/older brother of the world. We've shown that we can take a country that doesn't exist, is under someone else's country, and over the extent of 500 years, you can make it the most powerful country around. I think we should be motivation to countries like Iraq who are</p> |

⁴⁶ These narrative strips also suggest the presence of assumptions underpinning the public memory of the American role in World War II.

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| | <p>trying to get out from under somebody...</p> <p>We have the biggest military, we have the most motivated people, people love being here, people come here from other countries because they're free to do that, we have the most support behind us... because we are the biggest and the baddest in a good way and the strongest, if people look up to us to help them out because they're so small, anytime we don't go that extra mile to show that we're going to defend the good side, it makes other people wonder, are they going to help us if we get in trouble?</p> |
| P5 | <p>I didn't know about 'em [of any historical relationship between the U.S., al Qaeda, or Muslim societies in general] and I didn't care to know about 'em.⁴⁷</p> <p>I remember my step dad talking, "You know, maybe they wouldn't have attacked us if we wouldn't have shelled Lebanon." I'm like, "What are you talking about? We never shelled Lebanon."</p> <p>Anything bad in America came from communism, watered-down communism.</p> <p>I had this picture of how it would look without Saddam Hussein, with like Alexander the Great rolling over these hordes of evil-doers in chariots and rebuilding the entire land in some brand new American way, and I mean, that's what it was... the American way is the path to a new century.</p> <p>And so I started, I had this pseudo intellectual basis for what I believed at the time to be the justification to go to war, you know, "Saddam is bad, well, let's get rid of him," you know. "Freedom is good," you know, "Let's get freedom."</p> <p>I was a stalwart, a warrior... it just didn't cross our minds that we could possibly be wrong.</p> <p>I remember watching Donald Rumsfeld on this ABC news show one morning, as an 18 year-old, [talking] about the war...you know I was transfixed by this, this, this, literally...And I don't know why I found it so transfixing. To be part of that and to support that and to know, "I'm gonna join the Army," and I'm gonna go to Iraq." It was the glory of the thing.</p> <p>You know, we shot 400 missiles into the camps, right. Like, "Yeah, we got 'em," you know.</p> <p>And I used to joke, like, you know, "Will you still be my girlfriend when I go to war, when I have to go kill Arabs?"</p> |

⁴⁷ This ahistoricism is prevalent in the myths of the innocent and the chosen.

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| P4 | <p>I just kind of believed the standard thing. You know, this is like the terrorists hit our country and they're all from the Middle East and they wanna kill us all...</p> <p>My church taught me very much to trust everything Bush said so I took basically everything that was out there at face value, like, "Okay, this is what they're saying, this is like God's truth."</p> <p>You know, we're this great big country, kind of wanna be in charge of the world, so we have to hit something back, just to, you know, stand up just to make people feel like, "Okay, we're not gonna take this. We don't wanna look bad to you. We don't wanna look like little wimps."</p> <p>Well, like we kind of had this duty to police the world sort of thing. I really thought that the Army in Iraq was doing some kind of good for the people. Like I believed this whole liberator thing, you know? That we're gonna go in there and set people free from this dictatorship and give them a new government... And so it was very easy to believe that we could be that, you know... that people could love us, they could pull down Saddam and cheer for us.</p> |
| P2 | <p>We [as children] watched <i>G.I. Joe</i> and we might watch the <i>Transformers</i>... Then we'd go play army in the woods. And then there were the Rambo movies, the Swarzenegger movies. It wasn't special to me or my childhood. That's, that's our culture. Some more than others. But largely war is manly. Violence is manly.</p> <p>I was brought up to believe that if we went to war as a nation that we were on the side of the angels.</p> <p>My initial reaction was I want to find these people and kill them.</p> <p>I've always grown up with this romantic idea of the soldier, the protector of freedom, the patriot guard keeping the world safe for democracy, keeping it safe from the Russians.</p> <p>[After 9.11] So I mean, I knew a little bit, but I didn't know anything about him. And in the next few days Osama bin Laden was demonized and these were cowardly acts and they were Muslim extremists who had done this to us because they hate democracy and they hate freedom, and that's what the United States is. And the definition of enemy basically became people who hate freedom.</p> |

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| P6 | <p>Okay, that's it, this is a declaration of war... and so I guess I felt an obligation to join the military cuz I thought we were gonna do something instantly. You know, we were gonna be around the world, every terrorist camp, we were just gonna be kicking in doors that weekend with paratroopers and everything. I had this commitment to defend America.</p> <p>...you know, get the people who did this.. there was also a thing, well, okay, they hate us. They have good reason but now they're attacking us so guess we have to kill them.</p> |
| P12 | <p>We're under attack and our country's under attack and our way of life is under attack and we have to be vigilant.</p> <p>I'd say it was about 98% of people really fully felt that was the way it [positioning in the 9.11 narrative] was, that hey, well, everybody in Afghanistan is evil, so we still need to go over there and bomb the hell out of them. So yeah, we were absolutely right to go in there and root them out. An oh, by the way, the side message was, "Hey these people are so oppressed by the way and we're gonna go, we're gonna free them."</p> <p>I think it's our culture to – that action, physical action is the thing that you do...</p> <p>I think they [terrorists; Muslim extremists] generally do view Western culture as evil... I think there is a sincere desire on the part of the extremists in that culture to absolutely destroy us, to destroy our culture. It's a culture war.</p> <p>I believed that... number two was that he was a bad guy.. and of course the whole Chamberlain and Hitler thing comparison... Third is, these people are oppressed and we can probably help them.</p> <p>(A lieutenant speaking to the participant) "We're here to free the Iraqi people and make sure that America is safe from WMD and people who would want to hurt us."</p> |
| P10 | <p>...to be part of the national defense and that's allowing me to have my life on the line for my country and to be – and in that it meant a lot to be part of the Marines, to be the first in combat...</p> <p>Well, I went to Iraq in 2004 because I thought that what were doing was responsible foreign policy and trying to clean up our mess and trying to be a good buddy to Iraqi people.</p> |

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| | <p>Well, Saddam got caught right before I got there... and I was sitting around in my dorm and I was like, "Shit, now I can't catch him." You know? Like for me, it was cool, like Saddam sucked... but that wasn't really why I was going.</p> <p>I thought the general mission at that point was rebuilding Iraq. ...let's install a democracy. Go to Home Depot, open the box, follow the instructions and install a democracy.</p> <p>...and my love for America isn't because it gives me a TV and a paycheck and a toaster oven, but because it's America, historically from before 1776. The idea, the ideals, the philosophy. That's why I love America.</p> |
| P3 | <p>I didn't know a whole lot. ...I didn't know why they [terrorists] hated us, why there was such disdain for Americans.</p> <p>I believed there could have been weapons of mass destruction... I remember telling my mom that I know this guy is a bad guy and if he does have weapons of mass destruction it's something that needs to be taken care of.</p> <p>I was literally in college before I learned anything about the Korean War. ...I never studied the Vietnam War either. I thought Columbus was a hero. Instead of raping and pillaging and killing millions of Indians, I thought Columbus was a hero... It's just an average shame.</p> <p>America is a country that thinks it's shit doesn't stink.</p> |
| P7 | <p>After the attacks the President spoke a lot about freedom and how some people out there hate our freedom and what we stand for. He implied that our good will was being rewarded with deadly attacks on our soil...</p> <p>It was hailed in the media and by the president as a liberation.</p> <p>We were the most powerful nation on Earth; ask any American and they would have told you that. Americans take pride in being intimidating and kick-ass... we had to regain our reputation.</p> |
| P1 | <p>He was a Marine Corps recruiter, full dress blues. He looked awesome and like – like the medals were shining. It was just – it really impressed me heavily.</p> <p>And I looked at it [joining the military] as an honorable thing to do...</p> <p>It was like, before that [taking a college American history course] I was totally</p> |

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| | <p>gung-ho, like really hardcore. I wouldn't have questioned the war with anyone for any reason. I never would have thought to question policy.</p> <p>I was pissed. I was really mad. I was like, we were attacked and I'm a soldier. I should be going to war. Like, enough of the bullshit, let's go to war.</p> <p>[Bush] he didn't get more complex because there – he couldn't get too complex without exposing the truth of it... Like we couldn't talk about it because if we talked about that then we have – might have to say that America is not always the good guys. ...Well, there's a lot of things [about why many people supported the war in Iraq]. The biggest thing is fear. Next to that is ignorance. They [the American people] don't know these things [history] and our educational system certainly doesn't teach us it.</p> <p>...so it was just - I went, you know, kind of with the expectation that this is what soldiers do. It's a time of war. We go to war and it's up to our government to tell us when we do and when we do not go to war.</p> |
| P9 | <p>I didn't know much about international relations. What mattered to me was what was around me.</p> <p>...I suppose I accepted it. I accepted that Osama bin Laden was responsible. I accepted the argument that we needed to, we shouldn't tolerate countries that were harboring terrorists. So, as time went on I thought, okay, fine, invading Afghanistan was the right thing to do. And actually, I really wanted to be part of that mission.</p> <p>Ultimately I think we went to Iraq because the ideas, the doctrine of preemption gave us a reason for us to invade in order to establish some kind of democracy there because if we could create a stable democracy there it would have this trickle down effect.</p> <p>He stood apart [Saddam Hussein] as somebody who had tried to assassinate an American president. He was excessively belligerent and hostile towards the United States... The thing is, it was also a regime in decline.</p> <p>...Yeah, and General Shoomaker, when he was Chief of Staff, had a speech he went around military installations giving and it was about the difference between this war and World War II, the long war. They say it's an existential threat, it may not be an existential threat to the United States government, but it certainly is an existential threat to the American people, American interests...</p> |
| P8 | |

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| | [After 9.11 he] felt fear, confusion and excitement and an acute sense of our vulnerability as a nation and a sense of patriotic fervor and community spirit. |
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Table 5.7 depicts narrative strips from participants that support the claim that the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns included a strong implication that Saddam Hussein and Iraq were associated with terrorists, terrorist organizations or the events of 9.11 itself. This association played a key role in evoking emotional connection to the Iraq War narrative and thus to the acceptance of the moral and strategic legitimacy of the Iraq War.

Table 5.7: Participants' understanding of the connection between terrorism and Iraq.

| Participants' Understanding of the Connection between Terrorism and Iraq | |
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| P11 | <p>We knew that if we made the Afghanistan's mad enough they could go to Saddam and say hey, help us out. I think he was a motivator and someone to look up to because of the way he kind of dominated the area, dominated his people, and gotten away with things for so long. I think that he had a big influence of how it [9.11] happened.</p> <p>I remember thinking well, I can understand why people – these specific people in general get bored and become terrorists because when you're out in the middle and have nothing to do and it's just your house for miles and miles, you get bored and start to [inaudible] with kids you're going to want to do something and maybe that's why they start blowing things up.</p> |
| P5 | I had this optimistic picture of how it would look without Saddam Hussein, with like Alexander the Great rolling over these hoards of evil-doers in chariots.... |
| P4 | And if they're gonna try, if Saddam and Iraq are gonna drop nuclear bombs on America, well, they already did this whole 9.11 thing, maybe it's connected, maybe it isn't... |
| P2 | I mean the three tenants of it [Iraq War storyline] were nuclear, chemical and |

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| | biological weapons and harboring terrorists. |
| P12 | <p>Number One was I believed they [Iraqis] had links to terrorists, terrorist organizations or in the very least, that they were supporting them financially, right? That there was some relationship there between organizations.</p> <p>He [an officer from the National Guard] said, "You want to know why we're here? We're here because on September 11th we played a home game. We don't like playing home games...from now on we're playing all away games."</p> |
| P7 | ...the justification for war with Iraq was that Saddam Hussein had stockpiles of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and that he had ties to as Qaeda. |
| P9 | <p>It was the idea that this was an unstable country and that unstable countries that are enemies of the United States are likely to be breeding grounds for terrorist.</p> <p>And you, it was, well, two things were true. One, it was true that Saddam Hussein did have these relationships with terrorist groups, just none of them were anti-American groups. And then the other thing that was true was there was this al-Qaeda connected terrorist cell [inaudible] in Iraq... And they had some al Qaeda connections, really, but I mean, I don't know how much.</p> |
| P8 | Saddam Hussein is building weapons of mass destruction and if successful could use them against his neighbors or the U.S.; in addition, he is in collusion with terrorist groups that facilitate him doing the same. |

Finally, Table 5.8 demonstrates the presence of various emotional responses to 9.11 and to the narrative patterns leading up to the invasion of Iraq. I argue in Chapter 4 that the Bush administration positioned self and other (first the terrorists and then Saddam Hussein) in terms that suggest different types of humiliation, such as honor humiliation for self and exclusion, relegation, reinforcement and humiliation for other. Speech acts positioning the enemy with negative attributes contain the perlocutionary force (see Chapter 4) to humiliate in different ways. These humiliating and

dehumanizing attributes were picked up by many audience members, which gave persuasive power to the overall storyline.

The speech acts coded in Table 5.8 are used to differentiate among types of humiliation and to identify indicators for the presence of aspects of vengeance. These codes are used in Table 5.9 to indicate this interpretation of the speech acts represented in that table. In some cases the speech acts denote the position of the speaker, in most cases as they felt before serving in Iraq, in other cases as they felt at the time of the interview. In other cases, the participant is ‘managing the voice of the other’ (see Bakhtin in Chapter 3) by expressing their perception of the position of those around them and/or the American public in general. In the example drawn from P8’s narrative, he positions the terrorists. In each case, however, I argue that aspects of vengeance or different types of humiliation are present, whether explicitly or implicitly.

Table 5.8: Coded aspects of humiliation and feelings of revenge.

| Codes | Aspects of Humiliation and Revenge |
|--------------|---|
| RV | Revenge |
| HH | Honor Humiliation |
| RLH | Relegation Humiliation |
| RFH | Reinforcement Humiliation |
| CQH | Conquest Humiliation |
| EXH | Exclusion Humiliation |

These codes are used in Table 5.9 to distinguish among different aspects of humiliation and to indicate aspects of revenge. The speech acts analyzed below indicate

rhetorical instances of these aspects rather than physical. Evelin Lindner (Lindner, 2006) delineates these aspects and argues that a strong relationship exists between them and violent cycles of conflict (see Chapter 3 for a summary of this argument).

Table 5.9: Speech acts indicating the presence of aspects of humiliation and revenge.

| Speech Acts Indicating the Presence of Aspects of Humiliation and Revenge | |
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| P11 | |
| RV HH | When it first happened I was angry. It just wasn't right, so let's push back to get them back... I couldn't wait for us to respond. ...I didn't want it to be a small response. I wanted it to be big, make my presence known and let them know that okay, don't do that again because you know we're not just going to hit you a little bit. |
| RLH | President Bush is doing a good job because he's pretty much making decisions for the whole world. There's nobody else above us we can go to for advice. |
| HH RV | I do think that we all felt insulted. I mean it was a slap in the face... I do think that our bitterness over the situation definitely helped to give support for the initial 'shock and awe' campaign... as it should. That is a sign of a country coming together to stand up for what they felt was wrong. I think we all wanted to make an international statement that if you slap us when we aren't looking, that you will be straight punched in the face when are are. |
| RFH | We're on the defensive over there because they cannot defend themselves. |
| RLH | ...because we're as strong as we are and we kind of influence and everybody looks up to us. ...I think we're just trying to get everyone free. ...and if we give you the chance and decide you want to have a dictator, hey, at least we gave you a chance so say that. |
| RLH | [After first arriving in Saudi Arabia] I didn't know how the people felt about us yet because we didn't get to see people off base. We could see them through the gates and they kind of just looked at us, but just kind of like well, do they like us, do they hate us? ... you see how bad they have it – well, how good we have it, I should say. So it taught me that this is a different area and you can't go in it thinking it's going to be Arizona or going to Germany or somewhere where there's been years, years, years, and years of people who have a life. Things over there are still pretty basic. |

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| RLH | We started going off base and patrolling the cities [now in Iraq] and that's the first time I got to see the people. Again, I wasn't sure how they were going to feel about us, you know, we're driving through the town all day long, but surprisingly the people around that base and in that city were very open, very friendly, they were always offering us fruit and vegetables from their gardens... kind of like they knew we were there just to keep them safe. |
| RFH | We'd go through the towns and the kids would run along with us in the car and we'd give out books that show like how to brush your teeth... and educational things. |
| P5 RV & HH RFH | ...it was kick-ass that we were striking back. ...rebuilding the entire land [Iraq] in some brand new American way... |
| P4 HH & RV | ...it was like saving face. You know, we're this great big country, kind of wanna be in charge of the world and you're gonna hit us so we have to hit something back... We not gonna take this. We don't wanna look bad to you. We don't wanna look like little wimps, so we're gonna have to do something to fight back... |
| RLH | well, like we kind of had this duty to police the world sort of thing and if they're gonna try to, you know, if Saddam and Iraq is gonna try to drop nuclear bombs on America -... |
| CQH | That we're gonna go in there and set people free... |
| EXH | And you know, just sort of in the same way that maybe it isn't George Bush saying, "We wanna get rid of Saddam so that we're safe," maybe it's, "we wanna go in there and work our own agenda." |
| P2 RV HH | My initial gut reaction was I want to find these people and kill them. My homeland had just been attacked. To me, the initial reaction was anger and rage. Our job was to defend the U.S. We failed. And so the thought was, well, I want you to go find those people and kill them. And so it didn't matter how you defined the enemy. |
| HH | ...part of it was to restore a sense our honor in America... We were going to be wanting to restore our honor and tat's also where that whole 'support our |

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| | troops' kind of came in because the restoring the honor of the military idea and the so-called Vietnam Syndrome. |
| RLH | To some degree I think the terrorists wanted us to feel the same way that they felt when the civilian populations were attacked, when someone blew up a nightclub somewhere or a military force leveled a village. |
| RFH | I'm big on metaphors. Look at the way the enemy so far in the so-called War on Terror has been portrayed. They are not – they are weak. They are, they're bullies on one hand, but they're not particularly strong bullies. They hate freedom. Their religion is just wrong and archaic and hasn't evolved. Their entire culture is inferior and so they need our help. |
| RFH | It's basically the same metaphor – we want to help you. I think that humiliation is a significant piece in any mass mobilization to work. I mean you always downplay and humiliate the enemy. And it's effective in mass mobilization. |
| RFH EXH | Well, they did this same thing [referring to dehumanization processes during basic training] with this march to war. It didn't just come out and say Saddam Hussein is evil. It was, it took a little less than two years and they went just a little bit further, just a little bit further, just a little bit further until eventually everybody was there.... Dick Cheney said so many times – coming down on the wrong side of history. Well, nobody wanted to come down on the wrong side of history. |
| RFH EXH | [After 9.11] So I mean, I knew a little bit, but I didn't know anything about him. And in the next few days Osama bin Laden was demonized and these were cowardly acts and they were Muslim extremists who had done this to us because they hate democracy and they hate freedom, and that's what the United States is. And the definition of enemy basically became people who hate freedom. |
| P12 RV HH EXH | I'd say that about 98% of people [American people] really fully felt that was the way it was, that hey, regardless of whether, well, everybody in Afghanistan is evil, so we still need to go over there and bomb the hell out of them. So yeah, we were absolutely right to go in there and root them out. |
| RFH | And oh, by the way, the side message was, "Hey these people are so oppressed by they way and we're gonna go, we're gonna free them." |
| RV HH | Pressure would have mounted and mounted until we did something. I mean some kind of military action, I think. I think it's our culture to – that action, physical action is the thing that you do... A lot of people wanted that, whether it's the right move or not, you know? |

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| RFH | Third is these people are oppressed and we can probably help. |
| RFH | I said, "Look, these are – that regime [Afghanistan] over there, they're not – it's not good people. They are oppressing their people. |
| RV HH | Yeah, I don't think it was [desire for revenge] the top note in our [American] conscious actions, but yeah, I think under the surface that was absolutely one of those things. You even heard people say that... "I'm gonna show you that if you do this, you're gonna suffer." Maybe there's a legitimacy to that argument but I don't think it's really been proved. |
| P10 HH | I didn't feel that [restoring honor] was ever used, but I'm sure it was. There was like a suggestion in the central part of the narrative, but it definitely was an undercurrent for the whole time. |
| RHL | ...but I remained motivated while we were there because I did appreciate that as fucked up as things were, we were there to help people on a local level. ...but even the most aggressive Marines in Iraq were more on the mentality of policing and killing the bad guys and saving the good guys. It wasn't – it was still more about saving the good guys. They still had a sense like the common Iraqi people were the ones needing to be saved. ...that's how we called it. We considered it our mission as Marines. |
| P3 RV | We didn't even look at why there could possibly be, well it seems to me that Bush has been set on, it seems that Bush has been set on some kind of vengeance for a long time. |
| RV | I think the terrorists, I think that revenge, there's a certain amount, we would have definitely wanted Osama, but I don't think that we would have been easily as dragged into Iraq as we were... the right thing, I mean, why do we punish another country for Osama's shit? Why are we in Iraq? The Iraqi people, they're just struggling to survive. |
| CQH | It's like our country right now, we want to push our country on other countries but we're not perfect. We're just as fucked up as every other country. America is a country that thinks its shit doesn't stink. |
| P7 RV HH | I felt like it [retracting his military contract] would be a cowardly move and a part of me wanted a piece of that revenge. |
| RV HH | We were the most powerful nation on Earth; as any American and they would have told you that. Americans take pride in being intimidating and kick-ass. Once the bully gets punched in the stomach he has to regain his street cred. That's what happened psychologically; we had to regain our reputation. |

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| <p>P1 RLH EXH</p> | <p>It's your first briefing in the country [Iraq] and they say – they talk about going north and they talk about how you can't trust any of these fucking hajjis. All these fucking hajjis are out to kill you. I mean, it's just part of the culture there. Like, they're just hajjis, they're not people. ...It starts the second you get to basic training. ...It's a matter of conditioning... And so that's what makes it easy to dehumanize... It's a persistence of being in this.</p> |
| <p>P9 RV HH</p> | <p>So, I was surrounded by people who were very militant and they, a lot of people were saying, "Oh, we've got to get the Muslims," and the idea of Afghanistan was not about going in and liberating people, then it was about payback. We were going to go in and we were going to kill them.</p> <p>Everybody thought it was okay. But I remember in November 2001 thinking, "this is just awful, what we are going to do in Afghanistan." I guess it was just because I was on the inside of this organization that was so – it was just seething with anger and so filled with desire for revenge. I guess to an extent I shared it.</p> |
| <p>P8 HH RV RLH RV HH</p> | <p>It [the invasion of Afghanistan] was conceived more as a face-saving measure than a tactical response, a desire to do SOMETHING [emphasis his] to make it appear like America was taking a pro-active stance.</p> <p>They [9.11 terrorists] didn't choose a military target but a 'soft' one, a target designed to drive home the idea that we cannot protect our women and children. In many ways I think the terrorists were attacking the masculinity and image of our society as much as the society itself. I believe they may have been trying to replicate some of the humiliation they felt themselves, by making America feel weak and helpless just as many of their home countries have felt weak and helpless against America in the past.</p> <p>9.11 absolutely triggered strong feelings of vengeance in America. Although I did not experience those emotions myself, I definitely saw their consequences around me. Not only did America feel humiliated militarily in the sense that all our armed forces were incapable of preventing this low-tech attack, I think many Americans felt humiliated on a personal level, the idea that we were unable to protect our own citizens from violence and especially that we were unable to protect women and children. All these feelings of shame and disgrace were a large driving factor in the subsequent response. Many of the soldiers around me [in Iraq] believed that by striking back at other Arabs, other Muslims, they could erase the feelings of shame and anger engendered by September 11th.</p> |

5.4 Conclusion

In Chapter 5, I attempt to demonstrate the features of the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns that were picked up by some of those who eventually served in Iraq, fulfilling the narratives' trajectory. In the previous chapter I analyzed the narrative patterns employed by the Bush Administration, arguing that the strength of the narratives was anchored in cultural mythological constructions, public memories, and militarism as well as the privileging of certain emotions. As the administration constructed the storyline a new public memory was being constituted – that of 9.11. The constant reminder of both this traumatic event and the emotions associated it, coupled with its explicit and implicit link with Saddam Hussein, provided the emotional connection necessary for many to take up the Iraq War narrative and mobilize behind the Iraq invasion. Clearly, most of the veterans in this study found that connection compelling, and its emotional pull created the moral justification needed to support the Iraq mission.

Chapter 5 illustrates through narrative analysis how many of these features were taken up by some of the participants in this study, which shaped their early understanding of self and other. I also suggest that the terrorists themselves might have acted in part from a perceived sense of conquest humiliation as a result of the relationship between Muslim countries and the United States. Finally, I demonstrate that a cycle of humiliation was created and embedded in an implicit desire for revenge, which is implied through speech acts that provoke and sanction violent retaliation and perpetuate positions of self and other that shape construction of group identity and difference.

The narratives included in this chapter represent a small number of men and one woman who ‘tested’ war’s rhetoric against its reality. Throughout their stories allusions can be found to the master narratives that permeate American culture, narratives found in the foundational myths of chosenness, innocence and heroism. Normally located in the American subconscious, these myths can be harnessed and brought to the surface during a crisis, such as 9.11. Particular emotions, hyper-pride, for example, are constituted through these myths just as righteous anger, a sense of victimization and wounded honor were constituted through the narration of 9.11.

These participants demonstrate the frequency with which these myths and memories shape thinking, feeling and behavior. What feels natural and indeed, innocuous, can become dangerous, rendering previously prohibited behavior suddenly acceptable. The analysis of the personal narratives reveals a frequent reliance on these myths, a reliance that is comfortable, coherent and safe. Unfortunately, this default position limits agentic capacity to the iterative element, robbing actors of inhabiting a broader and more complex range of possibility. Narratives anchored in familiar thought-patterns that shape coherent stories are often linear, simplistic, and binary. They rely on certainty, the certainty that can only exist in habitual patterns of knowing. By closing the gap between habitual thought and personal experience, they increase the distance between self and other, creating an intense environment of engulfment and closing any potential gap for ambiguity. This ripens the discursive space for dehumanization of other (through humiliation) and glorification of self to flourish. Often the dehumanization and glorification are explicit, as we see in the 9.11/Iraq War narratives,

but just as often this tendency goes unnoticed, as seemed to be the case in many of the soldiers' stories shared here.

This is perhaps the most dangerous aspect of narratives constructed from foundational myths that glorify self and deny complicity or history. They simply 'feel right,' thus easing its acceptance. Once taken up, they silently but insidiously frame perceptions. Conflict occurs the moment self and other and their attributes are positioned along poles of difference. Anchored in certainty, these narratives and the perceptions they shape will construct a reality that escalates conflict and hardens people's cognitive-evaluative judgments – their thoughts and hearts. Without space for questioning or ambiguity, the 'purchasing power' of these narratives will be too strong to resist and a conflict dynamic emerges. Chapter 4 demonstrates the construction of such a narrative and Chapter 5 reveals the challenge of resisting it.

Chapter 4 and 5 demonstrate the salience of positioning emotions and employing emotions to position others or a storyline. Goldman & Coleman (Goldman, 2005 work in progress), as described in Chapter 3, argue that how we conceptualize emotions and respond to them "are influenced and constructed by social cultural messages and norms." They also argue that certain emotions can be privileged to allow certain behavior that would normally be disallowed. Chapter 4 demonstrates the positioning of privileged roles for anger and its associated desire for retaliation against a blame-worthy target as well as various aspects of humiliation used to characterologically position other (Osama bin Laden, terrorists, Saddam Hussein) as well as a storyline that sanctions dehumanization and morally legitimizes violence. The privileging of these emotions was picked up by

many audience members, as demonstrated by the responses of some of the participants in this study and by their observations of others around them.

Chapter 5 argues that humiliation, in its various forms, was a salient feature, although often subconsciously, in the response to first 9.11 and later the invasion of Iraq. Honor humiliation was used to position self (the U.S) while other, more dehumanizing aspects of humiliation, was present in the positioning of other and in the storyline itself. Indeed, the underlying master narratives that anchored the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns inherently humiliate others while glorifying self. The presence of this powerful form of framing usually goes unnoticed to those embracing these cultural norms. The latent humiliation, when these myths are framing the public discourse, is easily revealed to and experienced by others.

Once in Iraq the raw personal experiences of witnessing the reality of the narrative struck discord into the stability and comfort of the habitual thought patterns and the certainty of the narratives. In Chapter 6 I follow the stories of the soldiers represented in Chapter 5. As I present the progression from uptake to personal experience I attempt to analyze the dynamic process of change the soldiers included here experienced. For all of them their experiences bore holes in the certainty they once felt, opening space for the questioning and ambiguity that can shift perceptions. For some of them, the shift was small, but an opening nonetheless. The majority of the participants in this study encountered people and events in Iraq that opened gaps into their earlier ways of thinking and feeling that became too large to ignore. For them, the once dominant narrative patterns fell apart, not to be replaced with a new, coherent narrative necessarily,

but with healthy ambiguity and enhanced reflective and imaginative agentic capacity. As they contextualized their social experience emotional and cognitive judgments shifted; for some, the result was not only the construction of possible counter narratives, but also a transformation in their very identity.

Chapter 6: Living the Narrative

“If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”⁴⁸

6.1 Introduction

On March 20, 2003, the United States invaded a sovereign nation and launched the powerful – and deadly – Shock and Awe air assault. At the time of this writing, six years later, the war, or what many now call the occupation, goes on. Many Iraq War veterans I interviewed offered solemn testimonies of events both witnessed and committed since the Iraq War began. They revealed the personal grappling of intense and difficult questions they faced as they journeyed not only through the physical landscape of war, but also through the interior emotional landscape of personal transformation. As a consequence of the questions raised by their experiences in Iraq many of these veterans are now engaged in the critically reflective act of challenging the categories of old belief systems and of creating new ones.

The dynamic process underpinning shifts in personal and/or group understandings of perceived categories of reality can be illustrated through an analysis of speech acts,

⁴⁸ Lila Watson, an aboriginal activist in Queensland, Australia in the 1970s.

storylines and positions. This chapter uses positioning theory and narrative analysis to attempt to capture moments of change as individuals begin to challenge a hegemonic narrative that is anchored in a specific storyline and oppositional qualities of the ‘other’. In this chapter I explore the lived experiences of individuals⁴⁹ who served in Iraq, but who, over the course of time, began to question their previous thought- patterns and belief systems. For many of them, their personal experiences in Iraq, living the reality of the dominant narrative patterns, induced the gap between belief and experience to narrow. This process, for most of the participants in this study, resulted in the personal construction of a counter narrative, which challenged the presenting narrative’s identification of the enemy, the characterizations of self and other, the mission, and the cultural assumptions underpinning it that provided the moral justification and legitimacy of the war.

In Chapter 5 I explore initial personal understandings of the narrative, but here I shift to an analysis of the dynamics of narrative transformation present in many of their stories. The interviews reveal the interface between the soldiers’ lived experiences and the macro discourse. This chapter seeks to discover when, how and why shifts occurred in their thinking that opened space for a personal reframing of the narrative (Cobb, 2005). In particular, I explore whether or not shame was a significant emotion experienced once serving in Iraq, particularly shame experienced for the dehumanization of Iraqi soldiers and civilians and for the assumptions underpinning the metanarrative. A positive

⁴⁹ This is not meant to be representational of Iraq War veterans in general. I spoke with or heard from many veterans and each had their own stories, experiences and feelings about the war. The testimonials included here provide an opportunity to analyze transformational experiences.

consequence of feelings of shame is the raising of conscious awareness (T. J. Scheff, and Retzinger, S.M., 2001). Once awareness of the other has been raised, the presence of a ‘reflective double voice’⁵⁰ can be heard, opening space for personal transformation.

In the year following 9.11 the dominant discourse evolved into a narrative that positioned Saddam Hussein as an ally in the terror campaign against the west and a dangerous enemy of the U.S. The discourse, both literally and implicitly, called this a glorious and noble cause – the protection of the ‘homeland’ and ultimately freedom. The Bush administration constructed an ahistoric narrative that offered a simplistic us/them explanation for the causes of 9.11.

The explanation for the attacks embedded in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns fits an understanding of the world in Manichaeian terms of absolutes. Both good and evil exist as competing forces, each with a life force of its own. This creates an easily understood moral order in which characters and acts can be aligned. Bush appealed to the simplicity in this narrative and in doing so, eliminated all complexity from the conflict. People could understand that evil existed within certain people – the others – and that such people would resort to the most heinous violent acts because they were evil. This local moral order sets up boundaries of good and evil with the U.S. on the ‘good side.’ A storyline emerges easily within this frame, situating actors and action in predictable positions. At their most pernicious these thought-forms position oppositional characters and traits: if one is evil, one is irrational; therefore, rational dialogue becomes pointless. Only a violent response would counter the forces of evil.

⁵⁰ See Chapter 3 and page 6 in this chapter.

President Bush implicitly resorts to the wartime rhetoric of a political extremism, which amounts to a social/political determinism whereby some within a national group remain fixed in their beliefs and are unified by the beliefs of their leaders. By accepting the narrative constructed by his administration approval is given to the assumptions – or beliefs – underlying the storyline. Thus, approval is given to the simplistic division of absolutes and to the underlying value commitments and belief system inherent in American cultural myths and public memories that anchor the presenting narrative (see Chapter 4). The implicit cultural assumption in this binary construct is that America is inherently ‘good’. In this social/political determinist scenario, nothing else can be done except to “smoke [evil-doers] out of their holes”⁵¹ and eliminate the forces of evil altogether. America, as the heroic force for good, must take up that challenge.

President Bush and the American public backed into a corner of social/political determinism and an intractable conflict with the explanatory and retaliatory narrative that served to justify the U.S. unilateral and pre-emptive use of force against Iraq – a sovereign nation unconnected to the 9.11 attacks. But, questions concerning the veracity of the narrative patterns, particularly the existence of WMD, the connection to the 9.11 terrorists, and the dehumanization of Iraqis, began to surface in the minds of many of the soldiers who lived the reality that the narrative created. The questions emerged slowly for some and suddenly for others. In this chapter, I use narrative analysis and positioning

⁵¹ President Bush used this phrase in various speeches and press conferences after the 9/11 attacks.

theory⁵² to examine the dynamic change and subsequent repositioning of the hegemonic discourse experienced by many of the veterans who participated in this study.

According to Rom Harré & Luk van Langenhove (Harré R. and van Langenhove, 1999) a position is a ‘cluster of rights and duties that limit the possibility of action.’ Positions “exist as patterns of belief in the members of a relatively coherent speech community.” Positions are fluid and can be transformed – or repositioned. Storylines emerge as social episodes unfold. Examining narratives by listening to the stories people tell help us determine the storylines through which peoples’ realities are constructed and hence, how meaning is derived (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003).

The acceptance of the narrative by internal as well as external parties solidifies the narratives. The language of the discourse is then controlled as the storylines themselves carry the positions. President Bush used presumptive positioning throughout the 9.11/Iraq narratives as he positioned Saddam Hussein as a deadly enemy to the United States. This technique established and maintained the moral high ground for America (R. Harré, and Moghaddam, F., 2003).

Second order positioning occurs when those positioned begin efforts to reposition both self and other. A ‘conversation’ about the positioning occurs and through that, repositioning may emerge (Cobb, 2006). Through the interviews with the soldiers I demonstrate the second order positioning that many experienced as they began to question old thought patterns and challenge the dominant narrative and the local moral order it created. Shifts in thinking and feeling that generate questions concerning a

⁵² See Chapters 2 and 3.

hegemonic narrative and the moral justification upon which it rests indicate a dramatic repositioning, thus transforming not only the storyline, but also previous belief systems.

In this chapter I draw from the literature on the conflict resolution practice of narrative facilitation. Narrative facilitation stems from the assumption that perspectives can be transformed by expanding narratives. Often, presenting narratives are ‘skinny and trivial’ (Cobb, 2005) and therefore cannot respond to complexities. The objective of narrative facilitation is to increase complexity through multiple voices, circular plots and fluid rather than static characters. In this chapter I explore the dynamic process of narrative expansion experienced by the soldiers. Once deployed to Iraq, the narratives grew more complex. More voices were added – particularly voices of Iraqi soldiers, civilians and American military personnel. The linear storyline grew more circular and the fixed character roles fell apart. As these changes occurred, in most cases, perceptions and sense of identity began to change as well.

Bahktin, (as cited in (Cobb, 2005) argues that the world’s categories and structures are determined through dialogic processes; we interactively make meanings of experiences as we recount such experiences. A ‘turning point’ is the critical moment when the weight of positive and negative traits shift. A shift occurs during the presence of reflection, what Bahktin refers to as the ‘reflective double voice.’ The reflective double voice uses the voice of the other to question the self. It is this voice that opens space – the liminal space between one place and another – for turning points to occur and narratives to expand (Bahktin, as cited in Cobb, 2007).

Within critical turning points – or critical moments - is uncertainty. At these points an individual begins to recognize the paradox that competing moral frameworks exist and are circularly interdependent. The liminal space is a location between social identities where roles can shift, positions can alter, and old identities can be stripped of fixed traits. As a new, more complex and interdependent narrative emerges positive change in the relationship can occur and polarization can be reduced. This process occurs naturally when a triggering event or a series of events evokes an emotional and cognitive response. Engaging both aspects of intellect opens the reflective space necessary for people to begin to question in new ways. This chapter explores the presence of reflective liminal space⁵³ in the transformation of perspective.

6.2 In Iraq: Living the Narrative

Girl

You came to us eviscerated one day
Not a sound did you make; we were all amazed
Bowels tied with a t-shirt, dark dried blood on you soft brown skin
Just haunting curiosity at the death of your kin

We bore your fear and disgust with self-righteous displays
You sat quietly on a gurney all day
We were so shocked at the carnage and pain
You were so accepting and knew no blame

⁵³ Also considered in this chapter and throughout the study is ‘attunement’ (see Scheff & Chapter 3) and the ‘projective element and practical-evaluative element’ of agentic capacity (see Chapter 3).

You are the young and innocent we thought
We had so much to learn so much to be taught
We learned much later that you were a sage
In a time and a place consumed by rage

Now we are back and can't settle down
Because we were educated on pain's fertile ground
Too bad the others don't know what we know
Or maybe it's better to just let her go

(P6, 2007)

President Bush, in constructing the dominant narrative that shaped public opinion about the war positioned the enemy as Saddam Hussein and his regime, not the Iraqi people. In positioning the enemy he states: "Iraq's weapons of mass destruction are controlled by a murderous tyrant... This same tyrant has tried to dominate the Middle East... and hold[s] an unrelenting hostility toward the United States." Bush further positions Saddam Hussein as a "threat and a danger" (Bush, 2002i), and his regime as an "outlaw regime[s] arming with weapons of mass destruction" (WMD) (Bush, 2003c). He claims that Saddam Hussein is a dictator or "tyrant with close ties to terrorist organizations" (Bush, 2003c), and that he "possesses weapons of mass destruction... and provides funding and training and safe haven to terrorists who would use weapons of mass destruction against America" (Bush, 2003d).

Embedded within the Bush's storylines about the war is a characterlogical (or presumptive) positioning of the perceived enemy. The positions and storyline constituted by the Bush administration after 9.11 to build support for an invasion of Iraq are repeated

in various forms from the 2002 State of the Union until the invasion on March 20, 2003 (see Chapter 4). Two aspects of the storyline were particularly persuasive to the public: the claim that Iraq had betrayed the west by reconstituting its WMD program and that Saddam Hussein had ties to terrorist organizations and the 9.11 perpetrators.⁵⁴ The persistent repetition of dehumanizing characterological positioning of ‘other’ and a threatening, fearful storyline by the ‘voices of authority’, in tones that express anger and urgency elevated this narrative to a dominant position. Taken up by the majority⁵⁵ of the American public, it established the cause as necessary and just.

President Bush is careful, however, to distinguish the Iraqi regime from the Iraqi people. He positions the United States in relation to the Iraqi people as ‘friendly’:

“America is a friend to the people of Iraq. Our demands are directed only at the regime that enslaves them and threatens us” (Bush, 2002d). And later he states: “Iraq has the potential to be a great nation. Iraq’s people are skilled and educated” (Bush, 2003a). The public distinction Bush makes between the Iraqi regime and the Iraqi people drew its persuasive strength from underlying cultural assumptions anchored in the hero myth, but when lived, the features of the myth didn’t necessarily carry over to the reality on the ground.

Many of the veterans I interviewed expressed varying degrees of anger, shame and guilt over both the public storylines, which they soon discovered to be false, and the

⁵⁴ By March 17, 2003, when Bush delivered his ultimatum speech, 88% of Americans believed that Saddam was involved in supporting terrorist groups that plan to attack the US, while only 9% said he was not. 51% of Americans believed he was directly involved in the 9.11 attacks. And finally, 32% of those surveyed said that Saddam Hussein’s involvement with terrorist groups was the main reason they supported the invasion while 43% said it was one reason. Only 13% said it was not a reason (Carlson, 2003).

⁵⁵ According to Gallop, support between June 2002 and February 2003 was relatively constant, ranging from a low of 52% to a high of 59% (J. M. Jones, 2003).

dehumanization of Iraqi soldiers and civilians, which contradicted the values and beliefs anchoring the narrative. For many of them, a new storyline emerged which challenged not only the basis of the old, but also the underlying cultural assumptions upon which the presenting narrative was constructed. The soldiers sent to confront the ‘evil betrayer’ too often became the betrayed.

In Chapter 5 I introduced each interview partner sequentially according to my interpretation of the strength of their attachment to the value commitments and beliefs in the presenting narrative, beginning with the strongest attachment. For the sake of consistency I maintain that order in this chapter, although the degree of change does not necessarily follow the same sequence. Interestingly however, the participant I claim had the strongest attachments experienced the least change while the participants I rank with the second and third strongest attachments underwent the most dramatic transformations. It would appear from this study then that very strong attachments to cultural value commitments and belief systems result in either of two extremes when challenged through social experience: heightened and more defensive attachment that significantly increases a sense of certainty in those beliefs *or* an almost complete abandonment of previous attachments, which is replaced with ambiguity and yields dramatic shifts in identity. I describe these processes beginning with Participant 11 (P11).

6.2.1 P11 Strong Attachment/Increased Attachment

In April 2003, at age 19, P11 arrived in Kuwait, his first time out of the United States. After an “interesting” month he transferred to Saudi Arabia where he spent

almost six months. He describes this period as an opportunity to “get me used to being away from home, get me used to being over there, and the changes in how you live, take things for granted...” (P11, 2007). Finally sent to Iraq, he arrived in Balad, about 40 miles north of Baghdad. He served there for five and a half months, from May through October 2004. He describes his first experience off base in Iraq:

We started going off base and patrolling the cities looking for the IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and people shooting mortars and that’s the first time I got to see the people. Again, I wasn’t sure how they were going to feel about us, you know, we’re driving through the town all day long, but surprisingly the people around that base and in that city were very open, very friendly, they were always offering us fruit and vegetables from their gardens when we were driving through, kind of like they knew we were there just to keep them safe. They were just trying to live their life and they were caught in the middle of it. They were people that just – you know... they don’t want to be bothered by these terrorists. ... It made me feel a little more relaxed, we weren’t going to get shot in that town, like, you know, Somalia or something (P11, 2007).

His first personal encounter suggests he experienced surprise by the character and life styles of the Iraqi civilians. Neither the presenting narrative nor his own assumptions prepared him for what he describes as “surprisingly open and friendly” people. At this moment he adjusts his previous thinking and acquires a warm and pleasant feeling toward the people living in the city he patrols. During his recollection, he goes on to detail later

frustration, not with the mission or the presenting storyline, but with the manner in which the media portray the events on the ground.

We helped rebuild some schools and that's the stuff I wish people could see more often, but unfortunately good things happening isn't what makes news popular. They [journalists] don't want to cover the fact that 15 convoys never got attacked; they only want to cover the one that did. They didn't want to cover that the kids were happy to see us and gave us vegetables, they want to cover that someone got hit by a stray bullet. That's where it gets frustrating now because people don't know how good it is over there, how nice people like us, and we're making progress. They're still scared because they know if they stand up they're going to get shot by some rebel in the city, which happens, and buses blow up. That further delays the process. All in all, they seem happy. I wouldn't mind going back if they told me I had to. It was different. It was very different and I'm glad I went. It was a learning experience more than just the military itself, just seeing that part of the world was very interesting (P11, 2007).

The violence against Americans and Iraqis that P11 witnessed did not lessen his commitment to the mission, as he understood it. During his deployment he suggests that attacks were random or incidental rather than actions of an organized rebellion. He shared the following account of an incident at a checkpoint while he was patrolling:

There were a few times when you would stop cars and people – because you see a town of farmers and you see a car roll through, it looks kind of suspicious. We would check the cars for explosives and see if they had anything that would link

them. ... It wasn't really a big threat. And then the last convoy that we did before we left Balad, we were stopping cars at nighttime, probably 9:00 or 10:00 at night so it was dark. We let the car go and they drove down the road and got about, I guess, 100 yards away and their car blew up. They hit an IED, which was very – made us all nervous because we realized it could have been us if we would have gone before the car. So, a lot of kids got very scared because they were going to lead the convoy and it's kind of one of those that could have been me situations. But, aside from that when the mortars hit the PBX and places on base, for the first five months I wasn't really scared, which was kind of weird. I think it's because so many mortars hit somewhere and didn't hurt us that I didn't feel threatened (P11, 2007).

This illustration seems to indicate that although he witnessed civilian deaths, the positive consequences of the U.S. invasion and mission outweighed the negative, random but unfortunate ones. Although he did not express indifference to civilian deaths, experiences such as these did not sway his commitment to the mission or to a belief system supported by the assumptions in the presenting narrative patterns. In another story he described additional incidents that affected him, but again, these did not diminish his support for the American presence in Iraq.

It was just kind of weird, I mean, you would be sitting out and you'd hear boom, boom, boom, boom and you're just kind of like, oh, no big deal. I think you get to that point because if you jump every time then the time seems longer and the days seem longer and you go pretty much nuts. Right before we left again, they

had hit the PBX and about ten people died just from remnants and stuff and it caught on fire and that was kind of rough, but it died down for awhile and then right before we left, someone launched one on base and the town we lived in.... there was like a rec [recreational] tent where you'd go on your time off and play games and stuff and one of the fellow cops was walking back to his tent from the rec tent and a mortar hit in front of him and he lost both legs and an arm and they came on the radio and asked if anybody had blood to go to the hospital. That was the first time they asked for that so we knew it was a big deal and the fact that he was like ten tents from my tent made it even more. I mean, he was on base on his day off just walking back to his tent. It was just a freak accident and a lot of people got injured. That's when I started getting nervous. It made the last weeks more nervous. But, for the most part, I think 75% of the troops over there don't fire their guns anymore, which is good and people think if you're not firing your gun you're not doing anything, but that's not true. Now, it's more of just freak accidents here and there. It's a lot different than people think it is (P11, 2007).

Aside from what he describes as random violence, or 'freak accidents', occurring, P11 categorizes his experience and work in Iraq as positive and humanitarian. Any anger or frustration he felt was directed toward the media for failing, in his view, to report the positive work being done and the good relations that existed between the Iraqi people and the American soldiers. He returned to the U.S. in October 2004, long before 2006 and the escalation of violence in Iraq. While he patrolled he witnessed schools being built and American troops helping to train Iraqi police. He experiences validated his earlier

value commitments and belief system and perhaps strengthened them. At the time of this interview in 2007, he regards the original storyline and moral justification for the invasion still legitimate and misunderstood by many Americans. He states:

I don't think with the original actions, I haven't changed my opinion about them.

I can sit back now and judge it, so we could have done this differently, but I think what we did got us where we are, then we've done pretty well. Then again, we've lost a couple thousand people in the span of four or five years, but considering what we've lost in other wars, it's pretty good and the fact that we don't lose them because we can't fight, right? We lost them because they're freak accidents that we can't predict. It speaks volumes that we're prepared (P11, 2007).

This passage suggests an attachment to particular assumptions found in one version of the public memory of the Vietnam War. P11 states that we lost lives in Iraq through accidents, but that the soldiers were 'allowed' to fight back. This alludes to a popular narrative of the Vietnam War, which argues that America did not 'lose' the war but was prohibited by civilian leaders from fighting it properly. P11 refers to the assumptions in this Vietnam War narrative to compare the planning and execution of the Iraq War in a positive light.

In the narrative strip below, he continues the passage from above, arguing that the problem lies not with the conduct or justification of the war, but with its portrayal by media and political actors at home. He also suggests that to manage the daily stresses of searching for IED's, one must become emotionally numb and "just do your job." As demonstrated in Chapter 3 and later in this chapter, questioning existing value

commitments and belief systems originates both cognitively and emotionally. If one's emotional state is numbed, it is possible that the space necessary for ambiguity or uncertainty to emerge becomes inaccessible. As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) point out, past or habitual thought patterns provide stability and order and are largely unreflective. Resisting emotional responses protects this stability, inhibits the affective intellect from reflection and closes the space for uncertainty. Closing off emotional responses would also inhibit the 'voice of the other' to be recognized. Nearly all the narrative strips here suggest that the voice of the other is being managed passively rather than heard actively (Bakhtin, as cited in Cobb, 2005). P11, while sympathetic to the Iraqis he encounters, remains focused on self – both personal and national. He states:

Well, they started putting them [IED's] in dead animals, they started putting them in things that we didn't look at. But, you can't live your life like that over there; I mean, you have to, in a sense, get to where you're numb and you just do your job. I don't think my motivation towards how it was in the beginning has changed. I think that if anything, how it is now, the government or the president or whoever is running the show – they need to do a better job of showing society what's going on over there. I feel a lot of people have the impression that it's still a war and that we're still trying to go over there and bully our way through town. And the fact they're not explaining it because they're just trying to do their job or they got tired of doing it is why a lot of our support died down. I think we would have a little kindness if they saw how much good we're doing and I always try to tell people, you know, there's a lot of good things... but I think whoever becomes

president next or someone now, they need to do a better job about just telling the world, not just us but everybody who doubts us and thinks that we did go over there on the wrong reasons, show how happy the people are in the villages that like us, they're everyday people (P11, 2007).

P11 does not experience a transition from sympathy to empathy and there is no evidence of a personal identity shift. The narrative that he shared with me does not reveal strong emotional responses to his social experience or environment. When talking about the other (in this case, Iraqis) his stories lack emotion, other than perhaps pity. Indeed, he states that he preferred to remain 'numb' while there so that he could better deal with his experience. Without engaging the emotional intellect the process for shifts in thinking is inhibited, in fact, only very few of limited impact occur. The emotion P11 does express is in response to his personal feelings of being undervalued and misrepresented by the media, rather than in recognition of the other. This sense of not being valued produces anger, frustration and resentment – in short, humiliation. To defend himself from this perceived humiliation and unfair judgment, his attachment to the narrative and its assumptions strengthens.

6.2.2 P5 Strong Attachment/Strong Transformation

Participant 5 (P5) describes a dissimilar experience from P11 and consequently a contrary response. At the time of this interview P5 had been in counseling for the last six months and found it difficult to express his experiences. It is clear that he has had a

strong emotional response to what he lived and witnessed during the war and that he is still grappling with the destabilization that that caused.

Reflecting back to before the war he states: “When my first sergeant in basic training asked me why I had joined the army, I told him because I didn’t want my country to go to war without me, and what that turned into was, later on down the road, was I went to war without my country” (P5, 2007). P5 initially supported the invasion of Iraq because he believed: “Saddam is bad, well, let’s get rid of him, you know? Freedom is good, let’s get freedom.” He believed completely in the presenting narrative and the underlying cultural assumptions inherent in it. After 9.11 and at the point of the invasion of Iraq he believed in American goodness, innocence and righteousness. With the experience of serving in the war now behind him, he describes his former thinking:

I [had] this optimistic picture of how it would look without Saddam Hussein – with like Alexander the Great rolling over these hoards of evil-doers in chariots and rebuilding the entire land in some brand new American way, and I mean, that’s what it was. And come to find out years down the road - this is what George Bush thinks, it’s like what a 16 year-old boy might be thinking at the same fucking time! Right, you know, the American way is the path to a new century. It’s like they’re trying to convince young boys that it’s cool to invade countries ‘cuz we’re building a new land (P5, 2007).

P5 describes himself as a ‘stalwart warrior,’ and ‘warmonger’ before arriving in Iraq. He states: “And those damn hippies [protesting the war], we’d flick ‘em off driving by, and I mean, it just didn’t cross our minds that we could be wrong.” Soon after

arriving in December 2005, he says: “Oh God, my world shattered. It was like being shot and killed and then you’re in Hades and everything’s a different plane of existence” (P5, 2007).

Small questions began to surface for P5; early on these questions remained mostly at a cognitive level. As he became personally familiar with the conflict he realized that they were not being attacked by foreign terrorists, as he had believed, but by Iraqi insurgents. At this point he is processing information that conflicts with the ‘facts’ as they had originally been presented, so he enters a stage of wondering. He does not, however, reach a critical turning point until his emotional intellect is engaged. He describes his first encounter with a ‘real Iraqi’ during an interrogation as a moment when he felt himself truly begin to change. Again, this moment brings together the intellectual elements with which he had already begun grappling with personal emotional engagement. In this moment of ‘attunement’, (T. J. Scheff, 2005) the old belief system, rooted in the iterational element of habitual and unreflective thought patterns (Emirbayer, 1998), was shaken. The narrative lost its simplicity and grew in complexity (Cobb, 2005). P5 began repositioning the 9.11/Iraq narratives and the cultural assumptions upon which the narrative was framed (R. Harré, and Moghaddam, F., 2003). In the process, he began to change as well. He describes the following incident as critical to this change:

It’s like, ‘oh, let’s do a raid this morning,’ and they just happen to go down and nab this guy and bring him in for tactical questioning, and he’s like my age, this skinny Iraqi guy. He’s my first encounter with a real Iraqi and they’re like training me how to interrogate without actually interrogating. This is very

controversial. You have 24 hours before you even have to put someone on the books. If you can't get anything out of them, then you can't put them on the books. So, unless you have a signed statement, or like physical proof, you know, finding a bomb under his bed, you can't put him in jail. So what is it? Twenty-four hours to abuse these people until they tell you the truth and I mean, it's like my first day in Iraq at 4:00 in the morning and I hadn't slept – and I go and there's like five guys – DAT's⁵⁶ (detainees) lined up, and there's like all these kids (Americans) who've been here for a year and want to go home and they're like, "Get the fuck up!" and throwing chairs, and slapping them around – and like every time he'd (the Iraqi) like look over at me in the corner, it's like, "Whack!" They'd slap his head back. The poor guy is standing like this and every time, the interpreter is circling him and like abusing him and like, "Crunch!" you know, steps on his foot. And here I'm just watching this. I'm like, "Wow, this is what war is. This is what we are doing here (P5, 2007).

In this narrative strip P5 expresses a considerable amount of emotion – emotion directed toward the other (the Iraqi') rather than himself. Significantly, he states that the detainee is "like my age." Here, he demonstrates an equalizing attitude toward the Iraqi civilian rather than a pitying one. He sees himself reflected in the person being abused - a shift in perspective that at once humanizes and dignifies the other as a whole and equal human being. In this moment, P5 is experiencing what Scheff describes as 'attunement' (T. J.

⁵⁶ The term DAT represented human beings; this term is itself dehumanizing.

Scheff, 2005) an emotional and cognitive connection between persons or groups.

Attunement decreases alienation and increases solidarity.

As Scheff (T. J. Scheff, 2005) argues, surprise and the sudden presence of emotions not recognized or experienced before converge. Scheff states that surprise moves us from one emotion to another – or from one attitude to another. Between the two – surprise and the recognition of a hidden emotion – is attunement⁵⁷. Attunement is a brief moment of cognitive and emotional unity. This formula, which supports the theories of narrative facilitation (Cobb, 2007a) and the interplay of habit, imagination and judgment (Emirbayer, 1998), provides a way for understanding the dynamic process of change that can occur when a narrative is expanded and actors move from the iterational element of their agentic capacity through the practical-evaluative to the projective dimension. This interplay creates the ambiguity necessary to create a counter-narrative by repositioning both self and a storyline.

The result can be devastating – but also transformative. Letting go of patterned and stable thought patterns and willfully entering a place of ambiguity challenges one emotionally and cognitively. In the narrative strip above, P5 experiences attunement not by the act of witnessing the abuse of a detainee, but by seeing beyond that – by recognizing himself in the other. Significantly, in this moment he also becomes aware of his own complicity: ‘Wow, this is war is. This is what we are doing here’. More than surprise, this passage reflects shock and a sudden, if not yet identified, sense of shame. A

⁵⁷ See Chapter 3 for more on attunement. Attunement is similar to the liminal space described in narrative facilitation, the reflective double voice from Bakhtin and representational thinking conceptualized by Arendt as cited by Emirbayer and Mische, also in Chapter 3.

turning point occurred and the liminal space between an old identity and a new extended its invitation; at this point he doesn't realize it, but he does not reject what he had yet to understand.

P5 claims that racism was overt. They used terms such as "Haji" for almost anyone non-American and the "usual raghead, camel jockey, and brown people." He specifically remembers:

The DAT's would sit there all day in the sun or the cold surrounded by wire. We really treated them shitty. We would drive them around blindfolded for hours to confuse them, and then stop the car, make them get out, still blindfolded, get on the ground, and watch them start shaking. They thought we were going to murder them (P5, 2007).

After many similar experiences P5's former certainty in his beliefs and value attachments are shaken. In place of certainty is ambiguity – a complete destabilization of the coherence in his old sense of identity. Finally, he rejects the dominant narrative and his old belief systems and begins to imagine a different sense of self, based on a different belief system. In his words, "I pulled out." His understanding of the narrative patterns and his previous beliefs is now "diametrically the opposite of what it was" (P5, 2007). He describes his transformation below:

I have seen both sides of this conflict and I have judged it, and this is my final judgment. We've killed or displaced one in five Iraqis now and it's only getting worse. ... I guess I'm still (sigh), um, American. I'm ashamed to be American. All these things we claim as ours, like – we're gonna give the world democracy,

you know, cuz democracy is good. Don't tell me, you have no idea. You never pulled a trigger. Go talk about how proud you are to drop bombs on people you've never met. In my opinion we perpetrate massive fraud on the rest of the world and under the guise of this fraud we are responsible for millions of deaths and all sorts of depravity and things happen under our guard and nobody in this country cares. They're too busy watching television and reading *Reader's Digest* and playing video games and debating trickle-down economics to give a notice. And how can [people in other countries] feel empowered about anything if you're one of these non-people living in a non-country and the people [Americans] that control your life don't even know the name of your country or can point to it on a map? Of course they're gonna hate us. [We have the] Alexander the Great syndrome. Let's roll across – let's go roll over Iraq and then we'll roll over Iran. It's pure Alexander the Great syndrome... (P5, 2007).

The experiences of P5 demonstrate the processes of change described throughout this chapter. P5 ardently supported the war and firmly believed in the cultural assumptions inherent in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns (see Chapter 5). But, like other veterans represented here, he began reading history and paying closer attention to media. This led to small moments of surprise and questioning on a cognitive level. When he arrived in Iraq, however, he experienced intense emotional feelings of shock, which created moments of attunement and revealed the hidden reflexive double-voice within him (Cobb, 2005; T. J. Scheff, and Retzinger, S.M., 2001).

By adopting new perspectives, especially those of the other, P5 allowed himself to expand his framing of 9.11 and the Iraq War in more complex ways, thus generating a personal repositioning of the presenting narrative along with the belief system and values anchoring it (Cobb, 2005; R. Harré, and Moghaddam, F., 2003). Hidden feelings of shame and empathy for the Iraqis emerged as more voices were added to this narrative, and with the combination of cognitive and emotional engagement P5 moved from the iterational element, through practical-evaluative and into the projective (Emirbayer, 1998). With the capacity for critical reflective thought now highly engaged, P5 began to question everything he had previously taken for granted. He repositioned himself and created a new trajectory of action. Thus empowered, he transformed himself from a ‘stalwart warrior’ and ‘warmonger’ to a college student, writer and peace activist.

6.2.3 P4 Strong Attachment/StrongTransformation

Another Iraq veteran I interviewed experienced similar, perhaps even more intense, personal and national identity transformation. She began questioning some of the positions in the dominant narrative patterns before serving in Iraq, but once there, she repositioned the narrative completely. In doing so, she also transformed her own sense of identity. P4 was only a junior in high school when the 9.11 attacks occurred. She was young and lived on the west coast, far from the actual events. Although “pretty shocked” and “mournful”, she felt “disconnected” (P4, 2007) from the experience. As the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns were constructed and characters positioned, she felt no reason to question the storyline, the positions, or the underlying assumptions. She states:

I was very, very much into this Christian community and I was very blinded, I think, by pretty much everything because of that. And my church taught me very much to trust everything that Bush said, so I took basically whatever was out there at face value like, ‘Okay, this is what they’re saying, this is like God’s truth, all right.’ You know, I just believed kind of what everyone was putting out there, you know, Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden and all of these kinds of things. . . . I just kind of believed the standard things. You know, this is like terrorists hit our country and they’re all from the Middle East and they wanna kill us all. . . . I felt like some action should be taken. . . . and I remember thinking then, ‘Well, maybe this isn’t the best place to go, but we have to do something, so we’ll do it anyway. It is like saving face. You know, we’re this great big country, kind of wanna be in charge of the world and if you’re gonna hit us, so we have to hit something back just to, you know, stand up, really, just to make people [Americans] feel like, ‘Okay, we’re not gonna take this. We don’t want to look bad to you. We don’t want to look like wimps (P4, 2007).

P4 graduated high school and attended a Christian college. During this time period the United States invaded Iraq. Throughout the build-up to the invasion, P4 recalls being mostly disinterested – not really thinking about it at all. It shocks her now that she could have been that indifferent to what the country was preparing to do and did, but she claims the church created a form of insulation for her: “I’m in college and still the same kind of attitude, just go through my life, do what my church tells me to do.” And she did not question the Iraq storyline. She thought,

Well, they already did this 9.11 thing so maybe it's connected... and I really thought that the Army in Iraq was doing some kind of good for the people. Like, I believed this whole liberator thing, you know? That we're gonna go in there and set the people free and help them find economic stability. And it was so very easy to believe that we could be that, that people could love us (P4, 2007).

For P4, it was essential that the 'talk,' or storyline she was receiving from the 'voices of authority,' align in a clear and meaningful relationship with her social milieu – in her case, a devout Christian community. As long as this connected relationship existed, the categories of reality it supported went unquestioned. The language used in the 9.11/Iraq narrative patterns correlated with an already established ethos. In other words, P4 was able to 'feel' that the narrative patterns were true because they resonated with her existing thought patterns and belief system. The relationship between speaker and audience as well as between intellect and affect determine how ideas and behavior are produced and reproduced (Shotter, 1993).

Today however, P4 describes herself as having undergone a "monstrous change." She is "unconverted from her religion and an incredibly strong believer in nonviolence" (P4, 2007). She states:

The whole premise for going to the war is ridiculous. And the more I learned about Iraq, about the people, about the Army, about contractors, it was just like everything that I had heard pretty much ever was totally wrong and it was confirmed to be totally wrong. It wasn't just me having a conspiracy kind of thinking – it was wrong; it was definitely wrong. It changed everything about the

way I look at life, about who I am, about the things that I think, and of course, especially about my attitude towards the war and towards the people, the soldiers and the Iraqi people and the people of any country that our government's gonna set its eyes on (P4, 2007).

P4 transformed completely. The original narrative became far more complex as more voices and experiences were added (Cobb, 2005). It lost its simplicity. But how do we understand this dynamic process of change? Over time P4 began to slowly question the habits and assumptions underpinning cultural norms. Her first memory of uncertainty regarding her fixed ideas and attitudes occurred during college. She experienced small moments of surprise through reading and class discussions, which produced a crack in the liminal space necessary for shifts to occur. But, her cognitive questioning lacked emotional engagement; thus, she initially resisted her own questions, clinging instead to a safe belief system. Once she joined the army, however, the barriers began to fall away.

Emirbayer and Mische, (Emirbayer, 1998) as described in Chapter 3, offer another way to understand the process of dynamic change, which supports and broadens Scheff's (2005) formula. They understand the process of change by reconceptualizing human agency as a dynamic interplay between habitual thought patterns, imagination and judgment as individuals come to make decisions, form attitudes, take positions, and act. These aspects converge in individuals internally and within different structural contexts of action (Emirbayer, 1998).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) attempt to capture this interplay by reconceptualizing human agency as an "a temporally embedded process of social

engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment).” Furthermore, to capture the complexity of the agentic dimension of social action, the analysis should be “situated within the flow of time” (p. 963).

In their study they consider these dimensions of agency by posing a critical question: “How are actors capable of critically evaluating and reconstructing the conditions of their own lives?” (Emirbayer, 1998). With this question they attempt to “open the black box of agency” by analyzing its “inventive and critical aspects.” This requires that any analysis consider actors as temporally situated and that the agentic processes involved when actors reach decisions be understood through the dynamic interplay of routine, purpose, and judgment within different structural contexts (pp. 963-967).

Although habitual action is agentic, it is mostly unreflective and largely conditioned by the past. Actors rely on social experiences from the past to sustain identities, meanings and interactions over time through dialogical processes that support belief systems or cultural norms (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 975). The practical-evaluative dimension of agency is the critical mediating point⁵⁸ between the iterational and projective aspects. Reflective space, like liminal space or attunement, opens when taken-for-granted habits of thought become questionable or unsatisfactory in a particular

⁵⁸ A critical mediating point can be understood also as a critical turning point or a critical moment in the work of Bakhtin and Cobb.

situation. They argue that although such periods allow actors to imagine reformulated action, there is always a high degree of uncertainty present (pp. 991-993).

P4's (and indeed P5's and others I will describe here) story captures the dynamic process of change as understood by the theorists presented here. As an agent (or actor), over time and interacting in different structural situations, both participants engaged in that dynamic cognitive and emotional interplay described above. This process invites ambiguity by problematizing once taken-for-granted thought-forms. Once a situation is perceived as problematic an actor's thinking becomes open to 'reflective judgment'. Reflective judgment (or liminal space) allows the actor to perceive the problem in relation to the schemas, principles or typifications from the actors' past experiences but recognizes that the ambiguity challenges that past understanding. As P4 and P5 problematized their experiences within the context of the reality the narrative created, they began a deliberate search for a new course of action. This requires emotional engagement and "stands on the borderline between the intellectual and the passionate, partaking of both natures" (Emirbayer, 1998).

P4 remained comfortable in her patterns of thought, which shaped her identity and provided coherence and stability, until the subtle, almost imperceptible questioning began during college. From reading different literature and participating in discussions she started to think: "Maybe everything that my parents and my church has told me growing up isn't exactly true, and so it kind of slowly spread from there" (P4, 2007). But she also realized that she wasn't thinking too much about it. This experience, perhaps because it lacked emotional engagement, wasn't enough to move her from the iterational element to

the projective element. She remained mostly unreflective about her patterns of thoughts until she joined the army. She says, “Later on... I just had this huge earth shattering, like Wow! Everything’s hugely different. It was very surprising (P4, 2007).

P4 spent two years in the Army before deploying to Iraq. During that time she studied Farsi at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, CA. While there, she was exposed to other Army personnel who had different ideas about the war in Iraq. She continued to silently question some of what she had previously believed, but still didn’t think about it too much. She did not want to go to Iraq; by this time, the idea of America as liberator had morphed into America as occupier, so she didn’t see the point of going. Her job was collecting signals intelligence, so she drew some comfort thinking she might be helpful in saving lives. Once in Iraq, though, the uncertainty she had been experiencing deepened her earlier subtle questioning. She became highly emotionally engaged – ‘partaking of both the intellectual and passional natures,’ (Emirbayer, 1998) such that she discarded many of her previous beliefs and thought-forms and experienced a sense of identity transformation.

P4 states: “It was sort of a gradual process, but then it was like, “Bang!” Here I am and this is it and you know, the curtain’s torn and I can’t go back to this anymore” (P4, 2007). While the seeds for intellectual questioning had been planted and were growing for some time, the clear moment of transformation occurred within the liminal space when the intellect met a highly emotional incident, creating attunement. P4 moved from the practical-evaluative dimension to the projective. In that moment, the direction of her life changed.

She describes the moment when the ‘curtain ripped’:

All of these things had kinda been piling on for a long time, and of course, all of these reports and the things people were saying and really, the – that moment when I told you about the captain who wanted to cut off the guy’s balls and his fingers,⁵⁹ that day was for me like the day when I was just like, ‘No, this is it, I can’t think this way anymore.’ And I started seeing myself as a murderer, and I started, you know, yeah, just everything right then; that was it. Everything combined, everything put together, and it was over. I couldn’t do it anymore (P4, 2007).

The hidden emotion that followed the surprise that P4 experienced was a combination of anger, shame and complicity. She acknowledges her own participation in something she recognizes in the above narrative strip as ‘murder’. P4 felt angry and ashamed of many of the incidents she witnessed while deployed in Iraq. One day she was excited to hear Iraqi children playing outside. Her platoon sergeant responded to her excitement by saying, “Oh, they’re probably putting IED’s out there; you should go climb the wall and shoot them.” She didn’t believe he was serious, but the act of saying it was “just amazing” to her. A sense of shame emerges when she describes the environment:

People are dying all the time. It’s, you know, it’s everywhere. They filter the rivers so that they can pull out the bodies. I mean, there’s just bodies, bodies,

⁵⁹ P4 relayed this incident to me earlier in the interview. The captain shocked her with his intense desire to capture an Iraqi man, who she claims hadn’t done anything. She states that in order to advance his career he had to capture so many men (MAM’s – military-aged men) a month. This particular man was apparently an easy target. She could not understand his aggression or his apparent thrill at writing down another number in the logbook.

people dying, people wounded – Iraqis. And we're not even talking about things that Americans did necessarily, but just people dying everywhere. And in addition to that, the American attitude towards all those people dying was really shocking to me... but I mean, how do you really be a part of that every day and not tell yourself things in order to get yourself through it? (P4, 2007).

P4 ultimately felt betrayed. She expresses her sense of betrayal here:

Here I am, especially later on in the deployment, I was getting hit by rockets and mortars every day, you know, people were dying around me, and I really can die at any minute and I'm gonna die for what really, you know, what's this about? I'm here because somebody lied to me, basically, and lied to my country and lied to my family and lied to the world, I think, and I'm gonna die for that. And really, it's just to pad these fuckers' pockets. I just, I was completely betrayed by it and just, not just by the government, the Administration... but also, really, I think, betrayed by the Army itself (P4, 2007).

Finally, P4 describes herself now as “completely in every way not at all the same person I was three years ago or even one year ago. I feel like I've stepped out of my life and my body and my entire self and I'm just this completely different person right now. Everything has changed, just everything” (P4, 2007). As her understanding of previous narratives expanded and grew in complexity, P4 repositioned herself and formulated a new storyline. In giving voice and humanity to the other, she felt shame for and complicity in the deaths and destruction she saw around her. Ultimately, this led to a transformation of her value commitments, her belief system, and her very identity. After

leaving the Army, she left her church and her country. Looking for an entirely different life, P4 moved to Germany where she rides a bike to work every day and teaches English to children.

Profound moments of attunement created the space for reflective critical thinking (T. J. Scheff, and Retzinger, S.M., 2001), pushing her far beyond the iterational element of unreflective, habitual thought (Emirbayer, 1998). Originally, she accepted the positions and the storyline the Bush administration constructed. Slowly, mostly cognitively, she began to question the narrative. But, when she deployed to Iraq she lived the reality that the narrative created, and her emotional engagement heightened considerably. Once empowered, she challenged not only the 9.11/Iraq narratives, but also the assumptions underpinning the narratives from her church and her childhood. She repositioned herself and produced a new narrative, creating in the process an “alternative trajectory of action”(Emirbayer, 1998). In her own words: “I feel like I’m an incredibly more aware person and, I mean, I don’t know, even, I’m just much happier... I’m happy with the change on every level” (P4, 2007).

6.2.4 P2 Strong Attachment/Significant Transformation

In the days following the attacks of 9.11 Participant 2 (P2) states that Osama bin Laden, a name and person he claims he knew nothing about at the time, was “demonized” (P2, 2007). He recalls that the storyline - “Muslim extremists who had done this to us because they hate democracy and they hate freedom” - emerged effortlessly. In direct

contrast to the ease with which the 9.11 narrative was constructed and accepted, he argues, the Iraq War narrative took time. He claims:

I kind of come back though to Goebbels... at his trial at Nuremberg he made that famous quote, that comment that people never want to go to war, but it is easy for the leadership to bring them along because all you have to do is convince them that they're being attacked and then denounce the censors for their lack of patriotism. And it's never done all at once. It's never done in the blink of an eye. It's never done very, very quickly. ...They didn't just come out and say Saddam Hussein is evil. We're going to *make* [emphasis his] it happen. Let's go back to September 12th. It was, it took a little less than two years and they went just a little bit further, just a little bit further until eventually everybody was there and never thought the question was kind of – the problem with dissent was always, well, what if I'm wrong? I don't think I am. I'm pretty sure, but there's always that little, that piece of doubt of not wanting to – Dick Cheney said so many times about coming down on the wrong side of history. Well, nobody wanted to come down on the wrong side of history (P2, 2007).

P2 did not want to “come down on the wrong side of history” so he lent his support to both wars and did not examine the niggling doubts that periodically tugged at his mind. At the time of this interview those early doubts had evolved to a complete rejection of not only the presenting narrative patterns, but also a shift in his understanding of the value commitments and belief systems underpinning them. He states: “The American people, again, you have to understand that the people's perception is going to

be largely shaped by what is done by the leaders. ... But this administration [the Bush administration] was completely incapable of making that happen [a response to 9.11 that did not involve retaliation or war] for several reasons, one of which being our ideology is very narrow and very simplistic. ... They wanted the cowboy. Unfortunately, when you govern with cowboys you get a Wild West frontier” (P2, 2007).

Resisting those early doubts, P2 remained in the iterational element of agentic capacity, protected by the patterned and conditioned thinking that offers stability and order. He recalls that he “absolutely did not scrutinize” the dominant narrative. Eventually, however, he did, and the reflective judgment that slowly emerged led to a transformation in his life.

You know, it always starts somewhere for everybody and it’s, it’s always these snapshot moments. The first church service that I went to in Kuwait was Day 1, I think. A regimental chaplain from the 7th Marines came over and did a non-denominational service that used the phrase “going to war with Islam”. And that seemed really weird to me. Going to war with Islam, sort of like a - ... and you have to understand that when I say that I, that that was like one of those question mark moments - if that was it, if there wasn’t any more story to this – we, okay – that would have been insignificant, but it was just one of those things that it, how does that relate to national security? Going to war with Islam? What difference – and again, totally devoid of context you could insert the color purple or lust or chocolate chip cookies. It just didn’t make a whole lot of sense (P2, 2007).

This critical reflection initiated the early uncertainty that causes discomfort but also curiosity and eventually reflective judgment. It is an early turning point but alone not enough to abandon previous perceptions and open oneself to competing frameworks. P2 describes each significant moment as the balance of weight between a storyline of certainty and one of ambiguity began to shift.

Fast forward to, I want to, where do we want to fast forward to next – different chaplain. We had just gotten power. A bunch of contractors had come in, largely Pakistanis, engineers who traveled to Kuwait making – they make decent money to support their families back home. We were forbidden to talk to them. We weren't allowed to talk to them at all. They had to be escorted by two armed guards at all times. But then the chaplain's talking about, first he calls them Hodgies, which is becoming the, was becoming the accepted term. And I thought it was a local term until I talked to a bunch of other guys who had served in other places.... And everybody kept slipping and saying the word Hodgie... and that's a racial slur. But he said that we should be proselytizing the Hodgies, and we should be showing them what Christians are like and offering them food and water if we could. And I told him afterwards that I really object to him using this word. It's offensive to me. And he said, "Why?" I said, "It's a racial term." And he said, "Oh no, no, no, no. It's just a pet name." No. it's a dehumanizing term is what it is (P2, 2007).

Realizing that soldiers in every war have ascribed dehumanizing terms to the enemy and that civilian and military leaders use them for mobilization, P2 still resisted

the troubling questions although they were becoming harder to ignore. Yet, with more time in Iraq he encounters incident after incident that eventually force him to examine the doubts festering in his mind. He relays the next turning point:

We'll fast forward again, Baghdad, April. You're not allowed to, if you're an Iraqi you are not allowed to drive out of the city, out of Baghdad. ... We're just kind of hanging out. Nothing is really happening. And we're watching all of these people and it's really hot... And so I don't know whose idea it originally was. We decided that if I was walking from Cincinnati to Toledo I would want somebody to give me some water, and we had, there was a road pool set up turning, desalinizing, turning sea water into fresh water and the lines were pretty good for getting water at that point so we decided we didn't mind doing it. And a couple of people were using canteens or water bottles and we thought we had these MRE sleeves – that works perfectly. And we were primarily targeting women and children. And that was a large percentage of the people that were walking out anyway. And I saw a guy with a small child on his shoulder, cradled, and he was walking and so I came up towards him and I said, "Water?" And I thought he didn't hear me at first because he just kind of tucked his head down and he kept walking and I said it again. And he said, "No." And I said, "No, no, for her." And he kind of turned his back towards me so I could see that the little girl was dead. She had been hit in the head with something, most likely fragments. We had dropped thousands of missiles and bombs in Baghdad up to

this point. And in broken English he said, “No, you’ve done enough.” (*long pause*) This kid’s maybe a little bit older than my daughter.

Forward again, when we got into Sadr City, the Shia were always asking, were always saying thank you for getting rid of Saddam, when are you leaving? That happened several times. And then again, a little boy came up for one of my MRE trash. He came up on me very suddenly. I didn’t know he was there. He shouldn’t have actually been able to get that close to me and suddenly he was less than an arms length away, and I ended up pistol-whipping him. He wanted my trash. And these are all the things, where, that’s where the questioning starts (P2, 2007).

In the narrative strip above we encounter another situation in which the participant connects empathically with the ‘other’. He allows himself to see his daughter in the little girl carried by the father – dead. In that moment the reflective double voice (Bahktin, as cited in Cobb, 2005) is present and he sees himself and those he loves in the ‘other’. Attunement is present, shifting the weight from certainty to uncertainty even further. P2 explains this process of change as skillfully as any scholar in the narrative strip below. He describes how despite several incidents, which raised questions and collectively amount to small turning points, he defended his commitment to the dominant narrative and the beliefs to which it was anchored. As with many of the participants in this study who experienced significant perceptual (and indeed identity) change, P2 navigated along this course of small turning points, drifting in and out of the iterational and practical-evaluative aspects of agentic capacity, the latter dominating for brief

interludes until the comfort of the iterational aspect reasserted itself. Finally, the moment came when, as P4 (P4, 2007) put it, “the curtain ripped” and P2 abandoned old beliefs.

In this critical mediating point, where judgments are made both cognitively and emotionally, P2 imagined the possibility of competing perspectives, storylines and moral frameworks. And it changed his life. He reflects on his personal journey toward ambiguity and the moment when the story ‘fell apart’:

You don’t do anything with it initially. It just kind of sits there in the back of your mind because you can’t do anything with it. It’s not like I could have just said, “You know what? I’m done. I’m going home now.” But it just sits in the back of your mind where you’ve asked the question, “Why are we doing this? What is this? This isn’t what I thought we were doing, or worse, Americans don’t do this.” And then from there it festers until eventually you have to look at it. You have to do something about it. It’s sort of like if you’ve ever had a toothache or something, you just hope maybe it will go away. Part of the festering is that you are not really looking at it, so a lot of things you are buying are emotions. But... you have to remember that the ‘machine’ [military; government] is also trying to reconcile this and the ‘machine’ is telling you, well, these are the things that just happen in war. These are the things that, these are unfortunate things, but the larger cause is good.

General Mattis told me personally as part of a small group discussion, we were all waiting in line for the phones in front of his headquarters and he came out and he’s the commander of the division. He gathered everybody, I mean he

did this a couple of times, and said in no uncertain terms that we know where the weapons of mass destruction are. We know where the terrorist training camps are. We found terrorist training camps in the records and we found WMD and we just have to.... we just have to dig it up. If anybody tells you that it's not here they are lying to you or they don't know.

Well, I really internalized that to the point where I actually, some kid was working for me in my clinic and said something about the WMD not being there and I hit him. I ended up, one of the, one of my fellow second classes ended up separating us, pulled me outside to the smoking deck.... But my mother kept asking me questions about this, other family members, some people from my church, I clung to that.

WMD... I heard it from General Mattis and [he] was one of the charismatic Marines... one of those leaders that really inspires personal connection - one of those good leaders that you would follow anywhere. And so General Mattis told me, I know it's true - (*long pause*) except it wasn't true.

And that's where then you get the next piece of this, which is the betrayal. So then here you have a mission that was distorted, was overblown, was sold to you because they couldn't just, and whatever the reason that we were going to Iraq was, and I don't know what that is, ... but whatever it was, they couldn't tell us about it. They had to sell it to us. Well, that's kind of insulting to begin with.

That's betrayal on so many different levels. So many different leaders from the President of the United States all the way down to the generals and the

regimental commanders.and on top of that I believed it. I told it to other people, a whole lot of other people. And that means that now I have a part in this. I have a hand in this (P2, 2007).

As with other participants in this study, P2 demonstrates the dynamic process of change: early questioning that remains mostly at the cognitive level and can be safely ‘tucked away’ so that the coherent narrative can continue to provide stability and a sense of confidence; then later surprise that opens space for emotional engagement, often as a result of personal encounter in which attunement occurs, and finally, the realization of previously hidden feelings, which seem to consistently be shame and a sense of complicity – guilt. Within this new space uncertainty thrives, destabilizing what was previously comfortable and effortless. But the discomfort yields new clarity as P2 begins to act from reflectively contextualizing personal experience rather than from the scripted plots available from publicly constructed metanarratives, cultural myths and public memories.

Eloquently, but with a touch of sadness, P2 goes on to describe the experiences that compelled him to embrace this new space and a new life. And his life is completely different now on many levels from when he first deployed to Iraq. He no longer has the house, the cars, the dog – or his wife. He lost all of what he had loved; he lost the normalcy, the comfort and the stability of his previous life.⁶⁰ He had reached the critical mediating point where the liminal space opened too far to shut out the questions. P2 details his own experience in this space:

⁶⁰ Although for the record, P2 is currently happy and has rebuilt his life. He has used his experiences in Iraq for a new trajectory.

Oh boy. I was brought up to think that if we went to war as a nation that we were on the side of the angels essentially. And so I am a lot more skeptical about anything they say now...It's also made me much more a student of history and also to question accepted history. It's, fortunately, my life is completely, completely different... I couldn't do the job anymore. The job wasn't really what I thought it was anymore either. And I'm almost starting over. And it certainly does change my personal identity. But, then again the question is always whether we regret it. The answer that that is, well, that depends on the day of the week you ask me because I have a very innate understanding of a lot these things... What is democracy? What does it mean to be American, not to be American, to be un-American? And what is our duty as citizens of a representative democracy? And I wouldn't have had these understandings if I didn't go to Iraq. I just wish I didn't have to kill anybody to do it.

It's, I mean you have to understand that this is very quick and it's very visible and it's very, yeah... Now the final, when the reality of having been betrayed really, well, it fits. ... that's not a moment of questioning. That's when, that's when the house of cards falls down. That's, I mean, that is anger, that is sadness, that is frustration, that is grief, that is guilt, it's sorrow. It is, I mean it is everything - every emotion you've got is there. Let's see, with the exception of joy. And those moments, when that thing, that first, "hey, what are we doing?" That's confusion... and anybody that's gone through it goes from one extreme to the other, back and forth, back and forth, back and forth... until eventually you

process to a point where you understand to a better degree what is, what's happened and what it means and what you have to do. Ultimately, some people never wake up. Some people don't want to wake up. Some people may come right to the edge and ask all the questions and decide they don't really want the answers and they're perfectly happy to go back to sleep. And there are a lot of reasons for that. But, once you cross, it takes an act of willful disobedience to know all the answers to all those questions, to understand them and then to say, 'but I'm not going to do anything about it. I'm going back.' And in a lot of ways that's more difficult than crossing to begin with.

6.2.5 P6 Moderate Attachment/Significant Transformation

P6 is a nurse who served in the Army right after the 9.11 attacks and during the Iraq War. He was deployed to a medical unit in Iraq in mid 2005 where he served one year. He returned home in October 2006 and has since left the army. P6 came from a military family; he grew up in Europe and Northern Africa where his father was alternately stationed. When he reached high school the family moved back to Kansas. Unhappy in high school there he dropped out, earned his GED and joined the Army at 17. He served three years, in the Special Forces Unit and studied Arabic at the Defense Language Institute in Monterey. His service ended in 2000, but he re-enlisted after the 9.11 attacks.

Immediately after 9.11, P6 went back into the Army because he viewed the attacks as a "declaration of war." He felt "shocked" and "angry" and unsure of what

would happen next. He states that the government and media ‘fed’ the public fear so he “felt an obligation to join the military because ... we were gonna be around the world, kicking in doors with paratroopers and everything” (P6, 2007). He wasn’t sent to Afghanistan, however, so after his one-year service expired he left the Army again and went to nursing school.

P6 had lived around the world, particularly in Muslim countries and had studied Arabic and the history of the Middle East. He was critical of U.S. foreign policy in many countries before either of these wars occurred and believed that many people and nations experienced humiliation under U.S. dominance. Still, he supported the war in Afghanistan. He was, however, ‘surprised’ by the war in Iraq. Even so, he felt “this commitment to defend America... [and felt] it’s time for people to ante up and put their money where their mouth is, you know, get the people who did this” (P6, 2007). And he felt ashamed: “I was raised in this kind of West Point family tradition where you share the burden and the danger of combat. When there’s a war going on and you’re in for three years and you haven’t been to combat at this point then you should feel ashamed of yourself, and so it was my thing. I mean, I went [back] in specifically to go to Iraq” (P6, 2007).

Over the course of his year of service it became harder and harder to “legitimize anything we were doing over there; ... It’s a bit like the allegory in the cave in that, you know, before my experience there and all the reading I did while I was there, you know, I was reacting to the shadows on the walls. I believed Colin Powell... and when they [the

Bush administration] pulled him out,⁶¹ it was kind of like the knight in shining armor that'll never lie to you or steal or tolerate those that do, but as the information slowly started coming in, you know, no WMD, etc., etc., it became harder to defend, and then I quit defending it" (P6, 2007).

One of the first things that happened to make him question the honesty of leaders and the moral legitimacy of the mission occurred during a medical conference while in Iraq. He tells this story:

Everyone answered the questions correctly at the conference, but I was sitting in the audience going, 'We don't do that.' There's always this scenario: we have three units of blood left and we have ten patients and one of them is American. They all have similar wounds and similar needs and one is American, two are Iraqi army and two are Iraqi civilians, one of those being a child, and then an insurgent. And then they would play with that scenario and say, 'Okay, the insurgent has a slightly higher need than the rest for the blood.' And so not looking at who they are you're supposed to treat the higher need first unless they're not expected to live. You know, everyone knows the right answer ethically is to treat the most need – we're not there to judge what anyone is except as people. You know, they said, 'yeah, well the most need would get it first.' You know, I just started laughing. I'm like, 'We don't do that ever.' Like the way we – we had an order of who we treated. Americans were always first and then came Iraqi civilians, then Iraqi army, then Iraqi police and then insurgents – and it

⁶¹ P6 is referring to President Bush sending Colin Powell to speak at the United Nations in an attempt to gain international support for the Iraq narrative.

wasn't even when things were close, it was like, you know, the insurgent could have a terrible need for OR and the American could really wait awhile and they would take the American first. And the Kurdish population, they're very supportive of us. They were higher than, say, an Arab family on the triage list because you assume an Arab family is producing more insurgents, you just assume that (P6, 2007).

The dehumanizing experiences of Iraqis that P6 observed were deeply disturbing. He wrote poetry and short anecdotes of events that struck him harder than others. He wrote of one incident after a bad night filled with trauma patients from an IED blast.

A major piece of shrapnel was seen on an X-ray of an Iraqi Army soldier who had lost his right arm. The decision was made to remove the piece. There was much concern that the image on the X-ray was an unexploded ordinance. Many of the docs and nurses didn't want to go in and risk being injured for a fucking 'Haji.' No one would have questioned going in for an American (P6, 2007).

He attempted to capture his conflicted feelings through writing:

It is interesting to see what a bomb does to bodies. The force blows human bone fragments into others. I once saw a person that had another person's finger lodged in his belly. Our orthopedic surgeon was quite pleased with himself when he determined it was the medial and distal phalange of the third digit. After that, he went to the gym with an interesting story to tell his friends at the ping-pong tournament... With time and fewer caregivers to feed my personal defenses, I don't laugh anymore. Funny how that stuff is, laugh one month, cry the next. I

am ashamed of the things we made light of there. I wish I could go back sometimes and slap some people, including myself. I just took my Ambien and went to bed most of the time (P6, 2007).

P6 also talks about the influence of extensive reading. After six months in Iraq he “kind of went numb and checked out – just stayed in [his] room and read” (P6, 2007). He began to avoid the news. He felt frustrated because the only news station shown to them was Fox News in the chow hall on plasma screen TVs. The newspaper they received was called the *Stars and Stripes*, which many mockingly referred to as the ‘*Stars and Lies*’.

On R&R in April of 2006 P6 had the opportunity to view a segment of *60 Minutes*. This moment also contributed to the increasing uncertainty towards the dominant narrative, his old thought patterns and the war itself. He states:

It was all about Colonel M- and Talifar and how he has quelled the insurgency there and come up with a new model, and apparently that’s what the surge is based on... it’s all based on him and Talifar. I was working at the hospital at that time and Talifar was just a piece of shit. It was a Wild West show. We were getting patient’s all the time from bombs and snipers and – but on, on television, I’m sitting there watching, you know, they show this one guy, I think it’s a Civil Affairs guy, walking down the street, and all the kids were yelling his name. And they were making Talifar look like this haven, and I’m sitting there going, ‘That is nonsense’. It’s like one of our worst areas as far as casualties go. Things like that started really making me question everything (P6, 2007).

P6 experienced depression and an inability to sleep during his last six months in Iraq. He gained a lot of weight and began drinking more. His experiences began to contradict what he had previously believed or thought. He felt shocked, surprised, ashamed and finally disillusioned. He states now that he is “probably more ashamed to be an American when I travel overseas than I have ever been in my life” (P6, 2007). And when he discusses the torture that took place in some prisons he states: “We should all be ashamed of ourselves at this point.” P6 came from a family with a long military tradition. He believed Colin Powell’s testimony at the United Nations and actively sought to be sent to Iraq to serve his country (ironically because of the shame he would feel for *not* serving). He believed in something he later came to see as a fabrication.

Working in a hospital where the helicopters flew in and out incessantly with new casualties, he saw first-hand the horror of war. And he states that most of the patients were not Americans, but Iraqi civilians and soldiers. After six months of witnessing lesser value placed on Iraqi lives and what he perceived as prevarications from media and leaders, he felt betrayed. As his experiences added complexity to his understanding of the presenting narrative, the basis for its simplistic storyline began to crumble. He experienced what Scheff (T. J. Scheff, 2005) describes as a transitional emotion of surprise, which leads to the recognition of a hidden emotion.

P6 was clearly surprised, again and again. And in moments of attunement⁶², gleaned from personal experiences, reading and media, the hidden emotion of shame

⁶² Or liminal space.

surfaced, creating critical mediating or turning points. Together, these moments transformed his consciousness. He argues now that:

We need to move past the image of what tough is and what tough isn't. Not using military force or even now not torturing or saying you're against torture I think is perceived as weakness. To say 'I don't want any kind of torture...' is seen as weak, you know, from this sort of American male militant perspective. We need to like somehow get rid of that (P6, 2007).

P6 described critical turning points of uncertainty. That uncertainty and critical reflection opened the liminal space necessary through which he recognizes competing moral frameworks. In this space of attunement, as it were, lies the location between social identities. Roles can shift, positions can alter and perspectives can be stripped of rigid, fixed traits (Cobb, 2007b). Indeed, for P6 positions and previous belief systems did shift. It took him well over a year to come to terms with those changes.

6.2.6 P12 Moderate Attachment/Moderate Transformation

In April 2003 Participant 12 (P12) entered Baghdad. Present for the initial "push through Baghdad," he remained there until January 2004. Persuaded of the moral and strategic legitimacy of the invasion by Colin Powell's speech at the U.N. right before the invasion and by the Bush administration's arguments, he arrived believing in the mission. It didn't take long for it to begin falling apart for him:

So, Dr. (*inaudible*) and the Iraq Survey Group were there and they were hustling, hustling, trying to find the weapons and all those kinds of things. We were there

through June and then it was July and August and I thought, “Damn, we can’t find these things yet?” I remember thinking that because our colonel went over to a meeting at General Sanchez’s headquarters and they had gotten a briefing on what was going on with the Iraq Survey Group and I said, “Have they gotten anything? Are they just waiting to announce it?” I thought maybe there’s a political motivation. Maybe they got this information and they’re gonna release it right before the election to increase some.... But then it didn’t happen around the election. I thought, “They’re not gonna find this stuff.” So then when one piece of it comes apart, you go, “Oh, wow. Well, maybe they’re not gonna find the other pieces. Maybe there’s not – maybe that whole rationale wasn’t legitimate.” There were other things playing into that, too. Just seeing it from the ground floor, seeing just – I mean the Iraqi people and they were very warm-hearted and they wanted this thing to work out, for the most part. There were guys shooting at you, too and putting bombs in the road.

I wanted it to succeed. Everybody did. I remember talking to this one fellow, Ali. We were driving together somewhere. He said to me, “Do you think this is gonna work? Do you think this is gonna work out?” I said, “I really hope so, Ali.” I said, “I really hope one day to bring my son here and show him the country.” That’s the thing. You don’t know. I don’t know what happened to Leila or Ali or Hussan or any of those guys. I have no way of knowing. [They] personalized it for me. For me, it gave me a new rationale for wanting to – it replaced the others [rationales] to say, “Ok, we’re here. It’s kind of screwed up,

but there's real people behind this with kids and families and marriages. You just ache to want them – and then they ask you to do stuff that you just can't, you don't even have the power to do, like, 'take my son home. Take my son back to the States.'” How the hell do you do that? I couldn't even get a cat back. You know what I mean? I think a lot about it. It still makes me really sad and a lot of my friends are going back. I'm in a unit that's not deploying and I have a lot of guilt about that. I don't know why. I was gone for two years. I didn't see my son for two full years. I didn't see Amy [his wife] for two full years.

The justifications given in the dominant narrative began to 'fall apart' for P12 when the evidence – the WMD and terrorist links – was not found. However, his personal encounter with the people also had a tremendous impact on the broadening of his own perceptions and beliefs regarding the 'other' – in this case, Muslims in general and Iraq's in particular. He describes the surprise he felt when the image he had of the people collided with the reality he discovered.

Well, for the most part you see women... but I kind of expected it to be this very severe Islamic culture where everybody's got the ninja suit on and it wasn't like that at all. In fact, it was probably 50% wearing [the burka] and I would think it wouldn't be. There were women in blue jeans and they were just much more – it was much more – we had much more in common than I ever thought we would. I know that sounds cliché, but I really expected it to be this kind of archetype of Islamic society and it really wasn't. It wasn't.

I remember I was in the market one time and it was a very tense place to be... and the call to prayer goes off. ... and I expected the whole market to drop down and go into prayer. The place didn't stop. The place didn't stop at all. There was no – nobody cared. They did a lot of prayin' and stuff, but it wasn't a central beehive mentality that I thought the Islamic culture would be, which is very different. It was much more liberal than I thought it would be. Not to say it was liberal, but it was just more liberal than I thought it would be. ... and the more I got to understand Iraqi culture – and I don't claim to be any expert on this – it's my own personal experience – the more I changed what my opinion was about what the right course of action was (P12, 2007).

An incident that occurred from an encounter with P12's military superior over a question regarding treatment of prisoners at Camp Croper brought emotional and cognitive processes together more forcefully and resulted in further questioning and uncertainty – but an uncertainty that led to decisive action. As he describes this incident it becomes clear that he is resisting default thinking as he constructs new judgments both cognitively and emotionally and then importantly, acts from them.

Personal transformation emerges from this experience; the 'right thing to do' ceases to come from cultural power, but rather from an individual's critical reflective thinking. Acting within the projective dimension of agentic capacity (Emirbayer, 1998), P12 finds his voice and listens to it. The simplistic, linear presenting narrative no longer held any power for P12. The many voices he heard in Iraq expanded the narrative and for him, altering its intended trajectory (Cobb, 2007a). The reflective double voice (Bahkin,

as cited in Cobb, 2007) found the space necessary to be recognized and heard.

Something changed in P12, something he may not have been able to identify at the time but the presence of which compelled him to act from critical reflection, not from fear, anger, resignation or habit - and perhaps, a transformation in choosing to act not from a sense of duty or obligation to an institution, leader or narrative – but to himself and a higher principle. In this instance, rather than act within the local moral order being constructed around him, he countered it - and in so doing, constructed his own. He describes the series of events that occurred during this mission at a detention facility called Camp Cropper that culminated in this change:

You get people in there and there's nowhere to transfer them to. Half of the people that got picked up were just rounded up because they were in the same building that a bunch of guys who were bad guys happen to be in. So you do your best to separate them out... We ran the main detention facility at Camp Cropper and I'm proud of what we did. We kept it very clean. We kept it very straight.

... I think there was a lot of pressure from the top. I think that a lot of the senior officers that were involved in that got off scot-free and that's bullshit because I had a situation. We had a military intelligence unit that was there to interrogate the detainees. They are very professional and they know what they are doing. They did it the right way, but one of the methods of doing that is to keep them up, to do sleep deprivation. It's a standard thing. So this major said, "We need your help. We need you to keep this guy awake." One of my NCO's came to me and said, "Sir, are we gonna do this?" And I said, "No, absolutely not."

Our job was to do two things on that mission: one, keep them [detainees] there and two, keep them safe. That's all we, as military police are supposed to do. The major came over to me... and he outranked me. He said, "You're gonna give me people to come and do this." I said, "No, I'm not." He said, "Why are you being such an asshole? All I'm asking for you to do is stay with the guy and keep him awake." I said, "Ok, how is it we're gonna do that, major? Because I don't know; I haven't been trained in that." I'm like, "Do you want me to hit him? Do you want me to throw water on him? What do you want me to do? Because I don't know and I'm sure as shit that Joe Snuffy, 18 years old doesn't know how to do it." I said, "Are you gonna give us a block of training on how to do it?" He's like, "Oh, you're making this into something big." I said, "I tell you what. We're not doing it and that's the bottom line." He said, "I'll go to your battalion commander." I said, "Go, go ahead." I said, "If he tells me to do it, then we'll have that conversation then" (P12, 2007).

The major indeed went to his battalion commander who told him to "piss off" (P12, 2007). In this case, P12 took control of the narrative being pushed upon him by the major. He rejected the major's attempt to construct the storyline and position the actors. P12 positioned himself and by doing so, transformed, at least for himself and the soldiers under his command, the trajectory of a story begun by someone else. P12 concedes that "normal people after a certain period of time [can become] sadistic" if a situation allows it or if conditions create extreme pressure, fear or anger. He does not ascribe to the notion that some people are simply 'evil'. His experience has shown him

that anybody put in the right situation can lose their moral compass and if you don't have a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong before you go into it, you can lose your way very fast" (P12, 2007).

Ironically, P12 suggests that *knowing* what is right and wrong derives not from the certainty of what is or isn't, but from uncertainty. Once the certainty of habitual thinking as well as the positions, storyline and characterizations of the dominant narrative dissolved, questioning and ambiguity arose, inhabiting certainty's former space. Rather than default positions, habitual thinking – or a narrative created by someone else – uncertainty provides the space necessary for one to contextualize their own social experience and to make decisions and judgments both cognitively and emotionally – in other words, reflectively. Competing moral frameworks and perspectives are invited into this internal and/or external discursive space, making room for emotions such as empathy or shame to compete with anger or fear and to destabilize assumptions derived from myth, narratives, distance and/or habit. P12 was surprised by his initial encounters with the Iraqi people, which invited the first seeds of empathy and the fear of shame. He states that he still wants the mission to succeed – but his understanding and expectations - his vision - for that success have changed dramatically. And so has he:

Yeah, I mean it has definitely changed me... For me personally, there's good and bad about it. On the one hand, I've been through something that I didn't, at times, didn't know whether I was gonna be able to deal with and when you push yourself past limits that you think you thought you had, it does something for you. So that's a very positive thing. On the other hand, it's given me a lot less – it's

harder to look at things in black and white. It's much harder for me to say, "Well, this is the right course of action." I'm a lot more – and I guess that's a positive thing, too, but it makes life a little harder. It's easier to glide through life when you go, "Well, that's very clear." So, I don't know. I still feel very proud of this country and I still think we went into this with the very best intentions. At least, the people that were doing the job went in with the best intentions. I think we're still a great country and we'll continue to be great, but I think I definitely do look at things with a more jaundiced eye now. I do a lot more evaluation and analysis before I go through things, but on both sides. I look at everything with a little more scrutiny. But, I really do think that they thought that they [the Bush administration] were doing the right thing and that that was the right course of action. I think that if you could blame them, if you could say, "What was their one big sin?" It was pride.

P12 captures the essence of the difficulty in destabilizing habitual thought patterns and the assumptions in cultural myths and memories that shape attitudes, perspectives and ultimately a sense of categories of reality. Shifting from certainty to uncertainty is frightening and can open questions about not only an understanding of reality but of one's very identity. Even at the time of this interview P12 expresses doubt about this shift, unsure of whether it is positive or negative. Thus, he captures the challenge conflict practitioners face if they hope to broaden narrow, polarizing conflict narratives by adding voices and complexity; this may or may not reduce conflict and invite space for competing perspectives, but it will almost certainly destabilize cultural

assumptions and habitual thought patterns, leaving ambiguity and confusion – and often the difficult search for something new in which to anchor one’s very sense of self.

6.2.7 P10 Moderate Attachment/Moderate Transformation

A Marine, Participant 10 (P10) patrolled to provide security to the Iraqi people. His attachment to the dominant narrative before serving in Iraq was weaker than the previous participants, but although he resisted much of the first-order positioning and storyline constructed by the Bush administration, I suggest that his personal narrative still demonstrates attachments to some of the underlying assumptions in the narrative. He states that he believed the U.S. “was doing good foreign policy” and that he believed in the “humanitarian” aspect of the mission, which he later describes as an ‘occupation’ (P10, 2008). He narrates the aspect of his particular experience that began his questioning of those assumptions and eventually led to their abandonment:

Well, I heard by historical standards you need ten times as many occupying troops to civilians to maintain order during an occupation. Well, at first, it was like part of my first reaction was well, like of course, we can do it with the 10th of that force – we’re America. We’re the Marines. Then, it was like, I just learned while I was there how limited our real presence in Iraq was and the way we were patrolling and trying to police things that were not working, and was not, when people were getting killed, it was not worthwhile. That we – we’re – our patrols in Iraq were not making it any safer. All we were doing was pissing people off and making targets of ourselves... Now patrolling the country was bullshit. So

halfway through my tour I realized that about the fallacy of patrolling, trying to be a presence around Iraq. I fell back on the rationalization that at least we didn't fight on American soil, which as soon as I got home I knew *that* [emphasis his] was bullshit. We're making enemies faster than we can kill them (P10, 2008).

A seemingly innocuous slogan brought by the Marines to Iraq began representing something sinister about the American presence there. The words churned in his mind until they took on a new meaning, compelling him to look at his thought patterns and beliefs more critically. The questioning soon gave way to the 'shattering' of a long-held image, a piece of his American identity.

Well, yeah, well, there were, what I felt, well, yeah, but the weapons of mass destruction had nothing to do with why I was going... when I was going to help, like I was on the civil affairs team. ... So we were struggling to occupy our position. We came with a slogan: "We care so you don't have to." It's really funny in retrospect; it was funny then to the Marine with a sense of humor, but it's really fucked up to think about it. We have these big units in Iraq and these smaller units in Iraq are the ones that so most of the people in Iraq don't have to give a fuck. It goes all the way from the bottom to the top. It goes all the way from the entry commanders to congress to chiefs to Cheney to Bush. We were there to make everyone else look good. We care so they don't have to. That's when I switched my rational. That was the part of realizing that the idea of patrolling was bullshit. The presence that we were having was bullshit. ... Every time you go out it's just we were out making targets of ourselves. So I was really

in denial about that. I switched rationalizations. You're there and risking your life every day. ... You don't – you try to deal with that constantly; you'll make yourself go crazy. It wasn't until I came home that I was able to pull it apart a little bit, but I wasn't able to – I never consciously, I never talked about it. If I had that one conversation, man, to verbalize all this stuff, things might have been a lot different, but I didn't ever talk about it (P10, 2008).

P10 goes on to describe how this change in his thinking impacted his sense of national identity. He manages to leave Iraq with his love for America intact, but he argues that that is because he understood before serving in Iraq that “America does fucked up things.” His earlier grasp of history – he cites Vietnam, WWII and WWI – gave him, in his view, a more nuanced perspective of American history and actions, which shielded him from some of the stronger attachments to American cultural myths and memories that others may have had. For them, he states, their “view of America was shattered” (P10, 2008). He tells this story to illustrate:

You can't love something and have, I mean if you love a person, it doesn't mean you believe they are perfect. People try to do that with patriotism, though. Like America's perfect... My understanding, my deeper sense of patriotism... was a lot more realistic. I love America along with its faults. It's like, all right, we're making mistakes. Shit happens. We're still American. ...Like Thomas Young, like I don't want to speak too much on his behalf but he's the one who is in a wheelchair because during the invasion he got shot through his flack jacket and severed his spinal cord. He's a paraplegic now. He's paralyzed from the nipples

down. That was a huge disillusioning experience for him. I don't think he would say he still loves America the way he did before. He joined after 9.11. Because of that, [a more 'shallow' sense of patriotism in which America is seen as perfect] when he had his experience in Iraq it was real earth shattering for him. ... a lot of people perhaps are realizing this in Iraq... when they have these moments, they shatter their sense of America because they don't know that, hey, we were doing worse things in Vietnam. We were doing bad shit in World War II. We got into World War I because of the sinking of the Lusitania and they [Americans] put it there. They don't have that perspective, at least in those moments. They don't have that sort of precedence in their mind. For me, when I realized, hey, we're in the middle of something fucked up here, it didn't shatter my view of America as much as my sense of the immediate state of America. I mean, I wasn't ever a fan of Bush, but I at least believed him to be a decent guy. A fair leader. That eventually was shattered at some point. That was about the president, but my love for America isn't because it gives me a TV and a paycheck, but because it's America – historically from before 1776. The idea, the ideals, the philosophy. That's why I love America.

[I am] ashamed of humanity. I mean, hell, they [the Bush administration] say it's good versus evil. Well, that's not a very good way of looking at things and it's a very gross simplification. But the evil we're up against is the evil that's in every man's soul. It's in me, it's in you, it's in Bush. There's good and there's bad. ... Greater than any enemy abroad, America's enemies are its own demons.

The evil of its own leadership... and apathy. What is the evil of not caring (P10, 2008)?

After coming home P10 joined the organization *Iraq Veterans Against the War* (IVAW) and began organizing and protesting what he had come to perceive as an unjust occupation of a sovereign nation. His attachment to American cultural myths and public memories remains intact enough for him to maintain his love for and pride in America. His narrative suggests that his attachment is anchored more strongly in the cultural myths – the ‘ideas and ideals’ of America, rather than public memories around earlier wars. He suggests that recognizing the underbelly of those public memories protects him from a ‘shallow’ sense of patriotism, but also contends that many Americans do not possess those historical insights. This lack of historical context and honesty about history sets people up to blindly believe in an image of America that is too narrow and too idealistic. P10 seems to suggest that this false sense of patriotism contributes to the perpetuation of the dangers to America – dangers, he argues, that are not outside, in the ‘other’, but right here in America – in each of us.

6.2.8 P3 Moderate Attachment/Moderate Transformation

While Participant 3 (P3) claimed to possess a deep sense of patriotism and love of his country before serving in Iraq and after, a strong attachment to assumptions underpinning American cultural myths and public memories is not suggested through his

narrative here⁶³. Although I hadn't met him before this interview, I sensed that a deep and perhaps even troubling change had occurred within him as a result of the war. My sense, from meeting with him personally and from a careful reading of his story, is that he has changed profoundly, but that, at the time of this interview, he was still struggling to express what the war meant to him. P3 exhibited anxiety, perhaps even repressed anger. His gentle, peaceful nature seemed in conflict with an anger that had yet to be articulated or understood. He clearly states that he does not feel betrayed by America: "Betrayed. I don't feel betrayed. I feel like things got fucked up. I think people in power abused their power, but I don't feel betrayed by America, by the American people. I feel they were led astray by a very few number of people in power that took advantage of their position, but I don't feel betrayed. I still love America. I would never say that America betrayed me" (P3, 2007). Yet parts of his narrative suggest a sense of betrayal – or perhaps disillusionment with earlier beliefs - not perhaps, regarding an ideal of America, but rather America's leadership and military institutions.

Before arriving in Iraq P3 felt that "it [the invasion] might have been justified" although he never agreed with the U.S. acting without the full support of the U.N. His opinion that the invasion itself might have been a legitimate action, however, did not last long. He describes what led to this change:

When I was over there, when I was over there was when they first discovered that there were no weapons of mass destruction. I was over there and Bush declared

⁶³ My sense is, however, that he possesses a strong attachment to the value commitments and beliefs underpinning the myths – perhaps more subconsciously. But, he did not refer to these explicitly and only occasionally made implicit references supporting those assumptions.

victory. We didn't come home. We still found no weapons of mass destruction. I was still getting shot at. I didn't know what the hell I was getting shot at for, really. I never shot anyone. We don't feel like a vet unless you shoot someone. In my situation, I never shot anyone. I think maybe if I shot someone I'd feel like a vet; I'd feel like I deserved being a vet; and I was really honored at first being a vet and it's still honoring to be a vet but you don't feel honored. I'm struggling to keep afloat. I'm on welfare, looking for jobs. I haven't got many skills; I've got a college degree. They say like you can get work just because you're in the military, like the stuff you learn in the military, like I'm going to be able to go out and be like, "I need a job." "Well, what do you know?" "Well, I can set landmines; I can explode landmines; I can detect landmines. I can set up razor wire – triple strand if you want. I'm really good at cleaning a weapon, shooting a weapon. That's about it" (P3, 2007).

My impression from the above narrative strand is that P3 does indeed feel betrayed and angry – but his feelings are directed at this point toward his immediate situation. P3 has a wife and child; he is unemployed. This must weigh heavily on him, impacting his sense of adequacy. His words and voice convey a sense that he feels used and betrayed by the military – or at least by his earlier beliefs regarding the military. He struggles to find the 'honor' promised by having served the country in uniform. 'Honor' promised to him by President Bush in the many public addresses in which he glorified military service and the 'uniform' itself (see Chapter 4). Yet, that honor seems to have

eluded P3. He may yet find it later in his life, but at this point, it does not exist for him. And that is another promise broken – another belief shattered.

Another narrative strip suggests latent anger and perhaps betrayal again. P3 is risking his life everyday – for his country, for some ideal he believes is worthy of sacrifice – yet he cannot identify the enemy he is meant to be fighting. According to the narrative, Saddam Hussein, his regime and ‘evil’ were the enemies. But Saddam Hussein had been captured, the regime had collapsed and P3 could not find the ‘evil’.

I don’t know who the enemy was. You go into these towns and I don’t know, you just never knew. You’d go and be there and they’d be really nice. I’d go up for civil affairs and would go into these towns and then try to bring medicine to these towns and bring water to these towns when they need it and make sure everything is going all right in these towns; so I go to these towns and do security for civil affairs and the citizens were really nice. They’d come up, I’d eat at the sheik’s house; I’d hang out with the sheik and his bodyguards and his family and eat at these long houses, these long huts. We’d sit down. Sheik said something funny once, he said something like, “I know you Americans; you don’t like smoking but one of these days you’ll find out smoking is good for you,” and he lit up a cigarette at the table.

They didn’t describe who the enemy was. I never got described who the enemy was. They never told me. They said I’d get these three things before we left on convoys. We’d go outside to these briefings and they’d say, “All right, so we’re going to go here; this is the way we’re going to go; if you get shot at here’s

what we're going to do." That's it. It's all a matter of how you get shot at. We don't have an enemy; it's how you get shot at because you don't know what the enemy is.

In another narrative strip P3 expresses how he thinks the situation in Iraq will end. Here, a distinct sense of shame is revealed through his words – shame felt for himself and for the nation. He does not use the familiar language from the Bush administration's narrative of victory and defeat. Instead, he suggests that the nation will simply tire of the war and walk away from it. There is no glory in his prediction; there is no pride in having defeated an enemy or defended freedom. He recalls President George W. Bush comparing 'us' to World War II and accuses him of "[getting] it all wrong." P3 rejects the efficacy of this public memory, drawing instead from one of the competing public memories of Vietnam, finding it more analogous to his experiences: "It's going to go down bad, if not worse than Vietnam. I remember GW was comparing us to Hitler; it was the wrong era" (P3, 2007). He states with an air of resignation, sadness and indeed shame:

We're going to eventually get so tired of it that we're going to let them, let the Iraqis handle it and we're going to try and wash our hands at the end of it. But there's no washing, you know what I mean? You can't wash your hands clean enough. Everyone knows. We know. What's worse than everyone is we know. You'll never wash your own heart and your own soul (P3, 2007).

It is my suggestion that at the time of this interview P3 remained in a place between identities – struggling to understand the destabilization of earlier value

commitments and belief systems. This is a very difficult and frightening place to be. As described earlier, P6 spent a year depressed, drinking and using Ambien to escape into the comfort of sleep that wouldn't come naturally. He had emerged with a new sense of self safely intact by the time we spoke, but P3 had not. His voice, facial expressions, visible anxiety and at times confused, rambling speech all suggest that he spoke from a place where uncertainty still overwhelmed him.

Later I discovered that I was the first person to whom he had shared his experiences. Speaking for the first time about what he witnessed and the impact it had on him must have been difficult, but I hope liberating as well. He brought boxes of photos to our meeting and shared many of them with me – each with a story of its own. After our interview P3 went on to speak publicly about Iraq, constructing a counter narrative – his own – in the process. I hope he has come through his period of transition and arrived in a place where uncertainty resides comfortably – a place in which he can trust his own voice.

6.2.9 P7 Moderate Attachment/Moderate Transformation

Before being deployed to Iraq, Participant 7 (P7) “agreed with the way the Global War on Terror was being prosecuted” (P7, 2007). He served in “Baghdad from December 2005 to December 2006 as part of an artillery unit that had been assigned to a military police brigade. [His] job was as a humvee gunner in a squad of three to four humvees that escorted a military captain and State Department police officers to train and

mentor the Iraqi Highway patrol and Iraqi Traffic Police” (P7, 2007). When P7 arrived in Iraq he describes being “astounded” by “how normal [Iraqis] seemed.”

Almost immediately his personal experiences in Iraq began destabilizing the presenting narrative patterns and his personal commitment to the values and beliefs within that narrative. He describes the early experiences that led to initial questions and dissonance:

The unit that we had replaced told us stories of murder, humiliation and intimidation that didn’t match the idea we had of liberation. The first time my team leader went ‘outside the wire’ with the old unit, they pulled over and interrogated two random Iraqi men for the fun of it. They had no interpreter and eventually the men were relegated to crawling on hands and feet to show that they were shepherders. They were zip cuffed and blindfolded and the guys took turns taking pictures with them (P7, 2007).

Other experiences also precipitated vague uncertainty. As time passed, he became uncomfortable with the reality of the duties of his own assignment. His personal environment defied earlier value commitments and beliefs, generating the necessary space for uncertainty to emerge. He illustrates his frustration with the conditions in which he found himself:

The police we were training were running death squads by night. The general at the police station was skimming \$40,000 a month from the coalition. The corruption went all the way to the Ministry of the Interior; we knew this for a fact. All the while, I read news accounts of the president talking about how well the

Iraq security forces were doing and how they were the new, brave generation that was almost ready to take over security responsibility. All the while I heard about progress on the news, I only saw things getting worse (P7, 2007).

In time P7 suffered emotionally. He states that he began to feel physically ill and identifies his emotions at various times as “angry, sad, disappointed, betrayed, used, dishonored, frustrated, helpless and hopeless.” Several incidents he details marked shifting emotions and increasing uncertainty as he moved from the iterational aspect of agentic capacity into the practical-evaluative (Emirbayer, 1998). These incidents became critical mediating points, or turning points, as he contextualized his social experience through more reflective thought patterns. The distance between self and other narrowed while at the same time questions regarding habitual beliefs emerged. He recounts:

I used to think that the phrase ‘sick to my stomach’ was just a figure of speech, but I got to know that expression very well in my time there. When my little Iraqi friend was killed, when a torture chamber/prison was found at the Ministry of the Interior, when I heard a man die on the radio, when I realized the policemen were trying to kill us, and when I came to the realization that all I was doing in Iraq was wasting tax money, protecting corporate war-profiteering interests and helping to train the finest death squad in Iraq. I learned just how true that expression is (P7, 2007).

Although uncertainty was present, provoking questions and disturbing instability for P7, he did not reject the presenting narrative or previous thought-patterns until a defining moment occurred when he experienced intense anger. This turning point

reflects the critical shift in which he abandons any attachment to the narrative and moves into a projective dimension of agentic capacity (Cobb, 2005; Emirbayer, 1998).

Imagining an alternative narrative aligned with more ambiguous but complex value commitments and beliefs suddenly and unexpectedly, became possible. He relates this defining turning point:

The day that made me take all my realizations and finally direct them at the president and leadership will always be fresh in my mind. I was eating lunch at Camp Shield, Baghdad. We had stopped to eat there while we were out training at a police station in north Baghdad. As I sat in the chow hall, the president was on the television at a press conference. I'll never forget when he put a defiant finger in the air and proclaimed, "Every day of my presidency I think of this war!" That made me so angry. Of course he did. He started it and presided over it. Did he expect a pat on the back? I did my job well every day and I never looked at my comrades and defiantly said, "Hey, everyday of my deployment I show up for mission on time!" with an expectation of award or thanks. It's what you're *supposed* [emphasis his] to do. When I got back to my room, I wrote a scathing blog about the president and issued a public apology to John Kerry for not only voting against him in 2004, but for saying bad things about his service and his Winter Soldier testimony. I realized then that he had been heroic in his testimony and I could finally relate to that period of a feeling of betrayal in his life (P7, 2007).

Here P7 relates a moment of profound change. Empathy that had not been available to him before for another veteran who had testified against a different war suddenly emerged. Once again a critical mediating point occurs in a moment when the reflective double voice (Bahkin, as cited in Cobb, 2005) is present; P7 suddenly sees himself in John Kerry. The ‘other’ no longer represents alienating differences; the space between self and other narrowed and in that process new emotions emerged. Once again, as Scheff (2005) states, the process of transformation occurs when an actor experiences surprise and the surfacing of a hidden or unrecognized emotion. His previous anger toward John Kerry and lack of understanding toward his actions when he testified against the Vietnam War suddenly morph into shame and empathy. At this moment, P7 shifts his understanding of the presenting narrative patterns and the moral justification of the war.

The narrative grew more complex as more voices were added and as social experience contextualized the storyline. P7, at the time of this interview, has rejected the presenting storyline and created a counter narrative. He no longer believes that enemies should be characterized as “inherently evil.” He states, “I am almost ashamed to be a soldier. When I am thanked for my service I bite my lip. I trained death squads and provided a captive customer for war profiteers. I hate seeing the American flag. It doesn’t stand for what I thought it did anymore” (P7, 2007).

6.2.10 P1 Strong Attachment/Strong Transformation

Participant 1 (P1) describes his own transformation as “extreme,” but most of it occurred not while serving in Iraq, but in a college classroom and through books. He recalls the moment:

Then I went to junior college and I was majoring in business... and I needed a history class just to fill requirements and this – one of the wrestlers said, “You should take this African-American studies class.” He’s like, “There’s no test. It’s so easy.” So I took it and it blew my mind totally. It like totally changed everything for me. I started reading, like really reading (P1, 2007).

In Chapter 5 I detail this initial process of change for P1. Prior to his college experience he held very strong attachments to the value commitments and belief systems underpinning American cultural myths and public memories. After a class that broadened the historical narrative, adding more voices and complexity, his attitudes and perception shifted (Cobb, 2005). This process continued and deepened during the year leading up to the invasion of Iraq and throughout his service there.

By the time P1 returned to the U.S. he saw his own transformation from a young man in his early college years to a graduate and veteran of a war as “extreme.” This extreme change reflects the degree to which his value commitments and belief systems transformed, and it is embodied in his detachment from the myths and memories taught in public school classrooms and perpetuated throughout American culture in discourse, ritual, movies, etc. The war in Iraq affirmed the path he had embarked upon in a history class during junior college when narratives ‘that [had been] hidden from [him]’ offered a

new lens through which he could see history, America and himself. His initial surprise bore a new curiosity, which he tried to satiate through reading. As he reflects on this process of change he recognizes betrayal, anger and perhaps resentment – betrayal by and anger toward the public school system that kept the ‘stuff hidden’ from him.

I mean, because I guess I’d never looked at things that – through this lens before and there was stuff that was hidden from me. I felt like, like I was really mad that I didn’t hear about John Brown until I was in, you know, a sophomore in college, you know. I mean, we learned about Malcolm and we learned Dr. King and then we – they’d pit them against each other as if they were adversaries. And just – so I started to look at that and then I started to look at other things... and it led me into all these other things and that semester, though, was the semester 9/11 happened. And I was sitting in class when it happened (P1, 2007).

In spring 2004 P1’s National Guard unit was activated to go to Iraq. By this time P1 already believed the war was an illegal act of aggression by the U.S.; he was torn internally about what to do. After considering refusing his orders and going to Canada, in the end he honored his commitment to the Guard and reluctantly deployed. He recalls that after only a month in Tikrit the conversation between the other enlisted men and women and himself shifted from questions of right and wrong to “Okay, how does this end? How do we get outta here? Some people thought we should stay forever and be an imperial – imperial power. Some people thought, like myself, that we should leave immediately. Some people were in between” (P1, 2007).

When P1 thought back to a moment when his disillusionment with the war was affirmed he recalled an experience that clarified his thinking, erasing any doubts about his growing counter position. Until this point he had not articulated to himself a clear counter narrative and had not made the decision to act from one. Afterwards, he would actively counter the presenting narrative and indeed protest the war. This experience transformed his vision of himself and of his nation. Once home and released from the military, he became a dedicated peace activist, traveling around the country for protests and speaking engagements and writing for various news media. He relays this story and explains the root of dehumanization that occurs daily, which lends legitimacy to violence against the ‘other’:

I remember very specifically this one day, there was a – a traffic control point killing... a traffic control point (TCP) [where] they set these up to control traffic and search vehicles... and for the boots on the ground they – to them they’re searching vehicles so that they’re safer... they get to catch the bad guys with the bombs... But the reality of it, why we do TCP’s in a guerilla combat situation in an urban environment is to – it’s a show of force. ... you show them I can stop any vehicle when I want to. I’m in charge. I’m the big dog on the block. But the reality is that it is a show of force, and so you have some guys who – who have been driving in Iraq their whole lives and they’re older men and they’re speeding down the road.

Well, this one day, this is exactly what happened. This family was speeding down the road, they’ve gone down this road their entire lives, all of a

sudden there's a TCP there. Well, the private first class who was on the machine gun makes that split second decision that that vehicle's a threat and that it's a suicide bomber. And he puts more than 200 rounds in, in less than a minute. And then he watches as they drag out a mother, a father, a boy who was four and a girl who was three and no weapons, not even an AK-47. He just made that split second decision and he was wrong.

And that night it was briefed to the general I worked for and... this full-bird colonel turns in his chair to this entire division of level staff and says, 'If these fucking hajjis learned to drive, this shit wouldn't happen.' And right then and there I looked around and nobody – everybody just went, 'Mmmm hmmm, fucking hajjis.' And I was just like – you know, I expect it from the grunts, who to get through the day racially dehumanize but that's when I really started to look at the fact that it wasn't the lower ranking grunts on the ground that do this. It's a system that's put into place.

And I think back to the first night I was in Kuwait. ...It's your first briefing in the country and they say – they talk about going north and they about how you can't trust any of these fucking hajjis. All these fucking hajjis are out to kill you. All these fucking hajjis are gonna stab you in the back. All these fucking hajjis are waiting to throw a grenade in your truck. Don't buy food off these fucking hajjis... These fucking hajjis have no respect for life, blah, blah, blah. And it ends with this E-7 who tells a story. He says – or gives us a scenario. He says, 'So, your convoy's driving down the road. In the middle of

the road is this little fucking hajji kid. What do you do?’ And somebody yells, ‘Stop.’ And he says, ‘No, you just killed your whole fucking convoy. What do you do?’ Someone else says, ‘Turn down another road.’ He says, ‘No time. What the fuck do you do?’ And finally someone just says, ‘Run him over?’ And he says, ‘You’re damn right. You don’t let any of these little fucking hajjis get in the way of getting you home, even if it’s a little fucking hajji kid.’ That’s the first briefing you get when you’re in the country, in Kuwait. I mean, it’s just part of the culture there. Like, they’re just hajjis, they’re not people (P1, 2007).

For P1 the answer is education. He argues that the military industrial complex is being fed to support the systems that institutionalize dehumanization, training people to become killers. To stop it he believes ‘it starts with education, understanding’. Yet, his own education prior to college did not expose him to competing historical narratives or moral frameworks – it offered only narrow narratives, based largely on the assumptions of cultural myths and public memories. Later, he abandoned those narratives and their assumptions and was then able to imagine a different trajectory for himself and his nation. Through the contextualization of his social experience and through the opening of liminal space where cognition and emotion meet, he exercised his capacity for critical reflective thought and constituted his own narrative, countering the official. He has created his own path and hopes to create just enough uncertainty in others so that more Americans might begin to examine more critically the cultural assumptions inherent in American myths and memories that lend legitimacy to war narratives (Cobb, 2005; Emirbayer, 1998; P1, 2007; T. J. Scheff, 2005).

6.2.11 P9 Weak Attachment/Moderate Reverse Transformation

Pride, shame and humiliation played a significant role in the personal transformation of Participant 9 (P9), but his transformation moved in the opposite direction of the other participants in this study. P9 left Iraq feeling ‘much more patriotic than I was before I went to Iraq and before I joined the Army.’ He states, ‘It is really interesting though, I would say I probably really like fighting for America. I really like working for the U.S. government, very patriotic and I am more patriotic the more time I spend away from other Americans. But I don’t think the average American experiences, nowadays, the modern American experience is not really what America is all about” (P9, 2008).

Opposed to the war and President Bush from the beginning and a self-described liberal in a sea of conservatives when he first joined the Army, P8 repositioned himself in support of the war and he rejected narratives that previously shaped his reality. Surprise, shame and humiliation played significant roles in his transformation as they did for many of the others in this study, but P9 traveled a different path, which *increased* his attachment to the assumptions of the presenting narrative and his sense of purpose in Iraq. The narrative strip that I think reveals the role shame and humiliation played in affecting a significant change in P9’s attitudes toward the war and his position as a representative of the U.S. follows below. Although feelings of shame and/or humiliation are not stated directly, I suggest their presence is implicit.

My political inclinations shifted quite a bit over the course of time that I was in the military, particularly with the war going on... you know, all the rah, rah in the

army can be a little disconcerting when you first get there. People who openly talk about killing and how they want to go out and kill people... and it's a very, tends to be a very belligerent environment and certainly showing up and saying, 'you know, I consider myself a liberal or democrat' is not a way to make friends. People think you're an idiot or at least very arrogant.

I think that George Bush is a political genius because he speaks in seven and eight word sentences. ... Maybe he's just trying to fit in with the people or whatever, but then you have the consequence of it is that nothing that he does matter[s], the next day the *New York Times* is writing op/eds saying how the president is an idiot and he speaks in eight word sentences and he can't pronounce 'nuclear' and ha, ha, what a dumb ass. And then you have all these commentators, all these people on TV and the liberal establishment come out and say, 'Ha, ha, ha, this guy's an idiot. We think he's stupid. He's not fit to run anything. He's not fit to run a Quizno's.' Yada, Yada. And a lot of people who work at Quizno's and work at assembly lines and maybe don't have a college education or do, but still don't pronounce a few words correctly... are offended by it. And they say, it's not so much that I necessarily think that George Bush is the greatest guy ever, but this John Kerry guy just thinks I'm an idiot. Screw him.

It's, I think, the major stereotype of liberals inside the military, maybe even in general. It's generally true. And you, just, it's none stop. And George Bush says, I mean, it's an eight-year joke, it's old, George Bush talks funny, okay. It just seems like he, I started to feel I guess the more I paid attention to it, this

guy's my boss. When I go overseas, when I was in Korea, everybody associates me with him. I don't want this idea of him as an idiot and I'm going to accept that he is the President of the U.S and I am going to play him up. ...He's not a complete idiot, he can't be. And it just gets to the point you think this guy is representing me. He's representing a lot of Americans, why do we enjoy the fact that the person who represents us... we think is an idiot.

At first I didn't mind the backlash against the liberals. I didn't mind, oh, okay, fine so I'm arrogant. And then I started, they really are arrogant. In the military, um, I cared about and everybody in the military cared about the mission. We were living the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Even if we weren't there it became part of our daily lives. It was all anybody talked about. It was just constantly. We were a nation at war. And then you leave the military and you go back home and the way the media in particular and particularly the *New York Times*, the way that they handle the military is all, very often seems to be like kind of pitying. Like, I mean, some days, 4000 deaths in Iraq and it's really not that much compared to other conflicts. And there's this idea, 'Oh, the poor military; they're just getting screwed here and you know, they're kind of dumb. They are not from the upper echelons of society. They are not as well educated as everybody else.' But the great thing I always use is like the number of statistics of people who have GED's because I always see that and go, 'Oh, I'm part of that.' And it's always like the army really has low standards, they take these people with GED's – complete morons – and there's this, you know, 'oh, we really

support the troops, we really like them. It's too bad they're such a [inaudible] pack and they are just tools and they are getting sent over there and they can't do anything about it because they are powerless little poor people.' I mean, it ends up sounding a lot like Karl Marx and it just, I think, I and everybody I know in the military, we don't want to be pitied. We don't even really want anybody to think that we are in a bad deal. We just want to be respected for being good at our jobs. We have been given a mission. We are to do that mission as well as we can, as long as you let us do it. That's that. It's not a matter of 'oh, is the mission right or wrong.' ...I mean for us, the Iraq War is something very real and the war in Afghanistan. They are real things and you really want to win in them. We don't want to just stay there till somebody gets tired of it and leaves. So there's a sense of purpose (P9, 2008).

Against the war from the beginning and initially isolated somewhat from his military environment because of political ideological differences, P9's attitudes and value commitments shifted in support of the mission and against what he perceived as liberal arrogance. His experiences strengthened his sense of patriotism and his belief in the positive presence of the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although his social experience moved him in a direction opposite of most of the other participants in this study, surprise and the presence –recognized consciously or not – of shame and humiliation propelled turning points in his perspective, shaping attitudinal shifts that brought him to a new space, a new sense of identity and purpose. P9 hopes to return to Iraq after completing his studies at Georgetown University. He returned to school because he recognized an

underlying cultural perception of those who enlist and do not have a college education.

He states:

I could have stayed enlisted and I would have had a great job. I would have had a great enlisted career. But why? And now I'll be an officer anyway, but why would I stay, get deployed constantly.... Never get a college degree. Have an incredibly interesting career, lots of experience, learn a ton, but never, ever, ever be valued as much by your average employer, by our average member of society as somebody who smoked pot for four years at the University of Michigan (P9, 2008).

P9 described his reasons for wanting to return to Iraq. Again, although he states there are 'a lot of reasons', he chose to focus on one that reveals a strong sense of resentment toward what he perceives as a lack of respect and understanding from the American public and media.

Oh, there's a lot of reasons. For one thing, um, well, I mean I feel very connected to the mission. I don't like the way that it is talked about here. Sometimes it is almost a joke. I don't like the Daily Show and talking about 'Mesopotamia', you know. It's cute and everything, but this is very serious stuff. And I don't like that so many people who haven't served in the military speak about it like it's so kind of trite. I mean, I don't like, I mean, I just don't like the war in Iraq to be turned into this punch line to discredit the Bush administration. ... And it's not just him. It's not about one guy. It's a lot of people and a lot of them are Iraqi's. They are not even Americans. And we really, really messed up their lives and I think we

have a moral obligation. We can't just throw around our power thoughtlessly. And it's everyone's fault because the war in Iraq was immensely popular when it was launched. ... Now it's just I feel more like I have an open-ended commitment to Iraq. Having dealt with Iraqis I don't feel that it is impossible for us to deal with Iraqis. I don't think Iraqis necessarily inherently hate us. And I think that, I think that there's a, I think that we have an enormous responsibility to that country and have really wreaked havoc on it (P9, 2008).

P9 and P11 are the only participants in this study to have emerged from the war with a stronger commitment to it and to the value commitments and beliefs inherent in the presenting narrative. Their experiences differ in many ways, but there are some commonalities. Both of these participants focused on the positive achievements of the U.S. military presence – the good work done in building schools and infrastructure and in providing security to the Iraqi people. They also share a willingness to focus on the present rather than the past; in other words, although P9 opposed the war and the narrative initially, he has 'moved on' and accepts that the U.S. is there and should complete the mission. P11 is also forgiving on any potentially misleading information put forth by the Bush administration and remains focused on the present situation. Finally, their narratives share another interesting commonality. In their most emotional reflections, they both focus on 'self' rather than 'other'. P9 describes strong emotional reactions to being positioned by liberals as 'arrogant'. He reacts against what he perceives (according to my interpretation) as a humiliating dismissal of those in the military as being worthy of scorn, derision and pity. His own sense of worth is attacked,

compelling him to shift his attitudes to more closely align with those around him in the military. P11 also reacts to perceived scorn and humiliation – in his case, by the media. In both cases perceived humiliation increases their commitment to the war and to the value commitments and belief systems anchoring its legitimacy.

6.2.12 P8 Weak Attachment/Strong Transformation

The final participant I include in this study is Participant 8 (P8). P8 is a self-identified Hispanic Buddhist who attended high school at the Cairo American College in Egypt. His father was a senior U.S. diplomat so he spent much of his childhood immersed in other cultures. He joined the U.S. Army Reserve, coincidentally, on September 11, 2001. The attacks of 9.11 did not compel him toward military life, but rather a ‘dissatisfaction’ and ‘alienation with college life’ (P8, 2007).

P8 expressed very strong opposition to the presenting narrative, the way in which the U.S. responded to the 9.11 attacks and the Iraq War before his deployment to Iraq. He understood the motives behind the terrorist acts in New York and Washington, DC not as stemming from uncivilized, evil beings that simply hated the U.S. and its freedoms, but as existential. He believed the terrorists viewed their ‘way of life [as] threatened by U.S. policy and by the spread of Western cultural values’ (P8, 2007). Opposed to the killing of civilians in Afghanistan who he believed ‘had nothing whatsoever to do with the terrorist attack’ (P8, 2007), P8 thought that the U.S. should have responded instead with ‘intelligence and investigation services rather than military

force.’ He argues that it ‘should have been treated more like a manhunt than a bombing campaign’ (P8, 2007).

Although P8 understood the positioning and the storyline in the presenting narrative, he rejected both. He argues that ‘preemption is not self-defense, it is aggression’. Once in Iraq however, he still experienced shifts in his thinking – not about the justification for the war – he remained deeply opposed to it and his opposition only grew – but about his decision to join the military in the first place and to be part of something that wrought painful feelings of ‘shame and complicity’ (P8, 2007).

P8 served one year in Iraq as a vehicle mechanic. He found the Iraqis to be “warm, welcoming, generous and humble – quite the opposite of the picture most soldiers had expressed before arriving.” His opposition to the war strengthened as dehumanizing and violent behavior towards Iraqis increased among the American soldiers with whom he served. He states:

What caused me to turn more against the war was witnessing the change in my unit’s attitude towards Iraqis – the growing racism and violence, as well as thinking about my role in destroying a society and contributing to the deaths of thousands of innocents. Witnessing other soldiers hitting, kicking and threatening Iraqis was an example of events that made me rethink my decision to be in the military. Mostly I felt shame and complicity. From nearly the initial moment in Iraq, I seldom felt that I was doing the right thing except when I filed for conscientious objector status. Mostly I felt a physical disconnect, in that I felt

‘out of my body’ and everything appeared very unreal when the feelings were at their most intense (P8, 2007).

Since returning from Iraq P8’s sense of personal and national identity has shifted dramatically. Although he opposed the war from its inception, he did not critically question the relationship between the government and the American people. He maintained a general belief in the veracity of his government leaders’ statements and motives. He no longer does, believing instead that the government is very capable and *willing* to lie to the American people. The narrative strip below that describes this shift suggests that while he indeed rejected the positioning and storyline in the presenting narrative, he remained attached to the underlying assumptions of the cultural myths and public memories inherent in the narrative. He was committed to the ‘ideal’ of America perpetuated through those myths and memories. His statement below suggests a move away from those attachments.

Since returning from the war my perspective on the entire conflict has changed dramatically. First, I have become completely disillusioned with the war narrative that was sold to us: first the threat of WMD and later the idea of bringing freedom to the Iraqis. My experiences in Iraq have proven to me that these are not the reasons we are in Iraq and never were. Consequently, my trust of the government and military has declined sharply. Previously, I had assumed that government officials would not knowingly mislead the American people and especially soldiers into a bloody conflict with no clear purpose. This realization made me feel betrayed, cynical and sometimes angry with the government

officials who I hold responsible for getting so many people killed in Iraq. In a similar vein I am beginning to view my American citizenship through a more cynical lens and beginning to see the many small ways that Americans are manipulated and conditioned by their leaders everyday. This has led me to strongly define myself more as a watchdog of what I believe to be American ideals. Thus, my sense of American-ness is now strongly linked to dissent and activism rather than acceptance of the government line (P8, 2007).

As P8 contextualized his social experience, questions regarding his place in the military and his previous perception of the relationship between the U.S. government and the people emerged, creating turning points in his thinking. Eventually he reached the critical mediating stage whereby he abandoned his earlier attachments and with cognitive and emotional judgment – or critical reflective thinking, he imagined a different narrative for himself and the war and acted upon it by successfully filing as a conscientious objector of the war. The shift in how P8 perceives his national identity demonstrates the opening of space for a new degree of uncertainty rather than an abandonment of attachments to particular American ideals. Uncertainty dramatically enlarges discursive space, which is critical for a democracy to thrive. This has become the space in which he now understands his role as an American citizen.

While P8's transformation differed from others in this study, the process followed the same dynamic: P8 first experienced intense surprise, mostly by the aggressive and dehumanizing behavior of the soldiers around him, then a hidden emotion that he had not felt before emerged – shame. This process, which is reflected in so many of the

participants' narratives represented here, opened space for the critical reflective thinking that broadens a once 'skinny' narrative and propels actors from habitual thinking to the projective aspect of agentic capacity. In this space uncertainty dominates, banishing the order and stability offered by default thinking. It is a difficult space of competing moral frameworks that destabilizes once certain value commitments and belief systems. It is a space in which one struggles with oneself as much as with external experience. But it is within this space that competing perspectives find room to co-exist, and more complex, critical understandings of self, nation and other can take root (Cobb, 2005; Emirbayer, 1998; T. J. Scheff, 2005).

6.3 Conclusion

The Iraq War veterans represented here do not claim to speak for all veterans. They, as well as I, fully understand that their experiences may be very different from others'. It is also not my intention to extrapolate the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of those interviewed to other veterans. In Chapter 5 I examined how those veterans interviewed understood and responded to the dominant 9.11/Iraq narratives presented by the Bush Administration. In the present chapter, I sought to discern the location of shifts in their perspectives and attitudes toward the narrative patterns and the cultural assumptions embedded within them. In effect, relying on the theoretical frameworks of transformation found in the literature of Harré (R. Harré, 2006; R. Harré, and Moghaddam, F., 2003) Scheff (T. J. Scheff, 2005; T. J. Scheff, and Retzinger, S.M., 2001) and Cobb (Cobb, 2005, 2007b) and on agency from Emirbayer and Mische

(Emirbayer, 1998), I explored the dynamic process that compels an individual's transformation from a tacit acceptance of a metanarrative to a reflective consciousness that can lead to its rejection.

One objective was to reveal the role of emotional engagement for transformation to occur. Therefore, it is hoped that this study will contribute to an enhanced understanding of emotions as significant but often over-looked variables concerning national and individual reactions to crises – reactions that far too often compel us to unwittingly continue cycles of destruction and death.

The dynamic, emotional process that individuals who lived the 9.11/Iraq narratives experienced led some to a rejection of both war and intellectual complacency while others experienced an increased commitment to the mission. But for all of the participants in this study the physical journey through the brutal terrain of war imposed a psychological and emotional journey as well – one that transformed each of them in small and significant ways. Hedges (Hedges, 2002) reminds us of the psychological and emotive forces that compel us to violence, but he also gives us reason to hope. He states that if war (and violence) can provide meaning and purpose, then alternatives to violence exist. Human beings are capable of finding meaning and purpose through love, connection and empathy. And if there is one commonality to be found in all of these veterans' stories, it is the need for and power of empathy.

The journey of these participants and of all the veterans who served in Iraq provides a powerful and imperative lesson in the importance of understanding the role and influence of cultural power and emotions, particularly humiliation and shame, in

shaping decisions and behavior and in the need to find ways to cultivate capacity for empathy. This chapter clearly demonstrates that, at least for one group of veterans, a key component of transformation is the interplay of cognition and emotion that increases an awareness of self and other – indeed, the recognition of self *in* other and the empathy that arises from that encounter. If we hope to prevent future cycles of humiliation and the violence such dynamics spawn, we must understand ourselves and the emotions we experience more fully, and we must learn to resist the dehumanization that reduces the dignity and humanity of the ‘other.’ This is imperative - not just for conflict practitioners – but for all of us.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Findings

7.1 Summary Discussion and Areas for Further Research

What does this study reveal and how does it contribute to the field of Conflict Analysis and Resolution and to society in general? The U.S. invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003. The basic storyline at the time, which served to legitimize the invasion, was the Bush administration's allegations that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and that he had 'links' to terrorists. The narrative stated repeatedly, for over a year, (see Chapter 4) that taken together this constituted a 'grave' threat to the security of the United States. Except Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, no ties to Osama bin Laden and posed no imminent threat to the U.S.

On the front page of the Washington Post on July 2, 2009 – six years later – an article exposes the content of an interview, declassified the day before, between FBI agent George L. Piro and Saddam Hussein in 2004, after he was captured. According to the article, Saddam Hussein substantiates a storyline that for a brief time challenged the Bush administration's argument. Saddam Hussein argued, right before being hanged, that "he allowed the world to believe he had weapons of mass destruction because he was worried about appearing weak to Iran." He also "denounced Osama bin Laden as a 'zealot' and said he had no dealings with al-Qaeda" (Klessler, 2009).

In 2003 the possible legitimacy of Saddam Hussein's storyline did not resonate with either the Bush administration or the American people; it was dismissed. Instead, the narrative constituted by the Bush administration gained hegemony, and its story became the foundation for American foreign policy in Iraq. On the eve of the invasion, March 17, 2003, 88% of Americans believed that Saddam was involved in supporting terrorist groups that plan to attack the U.S., while only 9% said he was not. 51% of Americans believed he was directly involved in the 9.11 attacks. Finally 78% of Americans favored invading Iraq with U.N. support and 54% favored military action unilaterally (see Chapter 4) (J. M. Jones, 2003). This support derived its strength, as argued in Chapter 4, from the rhetorical power of the Bush administration's narrative patterns, which resonated with familiar cultural myths and memories and privileged particular emotions experienced in the aftermath of 9.11.

In 2009, after six years of war and occupation and the now accepted knowledge that Saddam Hussein was in fact telling the truth – he had no weapons of mass destruction and no ties to al Qaeda – the Administration's dominant narrative for war has been proven wrong. The positioning in the narrative (see Chapter 4) is no longer considered legitimate or valid. It would seem then, that the local moral order constituted through the narrative's storyline would no longer be legitimate either, calling into question the legitimacy of the invasion itself. At first glance, the numbers would seem to support this. On March 18, 2009, the sixth anniversary of the invasion, "52% of Americans say the Iraq War was a mistake" (J. M. Jones, 2009) Interestingly – and I believe, of great concern – is that this number is *down* from the 56% in January 2009 and

the 60% in the summer of 2008 who thought the war was a mistake. These numbers suggest that although it is now accepted that the dominant narrative was based on false information and assumptions, the moral legitimacy of the war is less important than whether or not Americans perceive they are winning.

Although many of the soldiers in this study decreased earlier attachments to the assumptions inherent in American cultural myths, public memories and militarism, coming to recognize the presence of a pernicious underbelly in each assumption, it would seem that in general, America has not. As the war comes to an end, that would prove another interesting study as an area of further research. How important, after all, was the legitimacy of the invasion and the storyline upon which it rested? Does the outcome, if America perceives itself as having ‘won,’ justify the means? Does ‘winning’ absolve the Bush administration from using false information and misleading facts to build support for a war against a sovereign nation? Is the American moral order based on the ‘winner-loser syndrome’ – or hero myth (see Chapters 3 and 4) rather than the honesty of its leaders and the legitimacy of its policies? Is America ‘spreading freedom and democracy’ as the cultural myths purport, or is it squandering the beauty of its myths for disguised motives still hidden from the public?

This study demonstrates the importance and perhaps urgent need to explore these questions as America attempts to disengage from two wars begun in response to the crisis of 9.11. The real significance of this lies in the uncertainty of how America will respond to the next crisis. Most of the participants in this study transformed dramatically; their stories suggest they would be far more discerning in their judgments of whether the U.S.

should engage in future wars. The question remains regarding whether or not America as a whole would be equally sagacious when confronting the next crisis and the war narrative that will surely follow.

7.2 Findings

At its most general level this study demonstrates the importance of acknowledging the past and attempting to learn from it through reflective critical thought, at least for the few soldiers interviewed. As Chapter 4 suggests, we must examine the past without relying too heavily on cultural myths and public memories to inform us, but rather on objective historical analyses and conditions of relationship – as well as what social experience reveals to us. Through my analysis of the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns I demonstrate the danger of failing to adequately recognize the underbelly of cultural myths and the danger in anchoring interpretations of events and policy in the assumptions of myth, public memory and militarism.

This dissertation uses positioning theory and narrative analysis to examine the relationship of culture, emotion and agency in the dramatic construction, mobilization and acceptance of an official (macro) war narrative and later personal (micro) counter narratives. The study takes the events of 9.11 as a traumatic trigger, then attempts to follow the official construction of first the 9.11 and later the Iraq War narratives. Below I summarize each aspect of this relationship in turn, demonstrating the findings in each chapter regarding those aspects.

7.2.1 Myths, Public Memories and Militarism

Chapter 4 sets the stage for Chapters 5 and 6. I argue in Chapter 4 that the narrative for war repeated by the Bush Administration establishes a moral order located within the familiar contours of cultural myths and memories, which legitimizes the U.S. unilateral invasion of Iraq. Because this narrative presents the dilemma in terms familiar to most Americans, consciously or unconsciously, its cultural power masks legitimate questioning of the issues, facts, and alternative narratives. President Bush uses the authority of his office to manage the voice of the U.S. and the voice of the ‘other’.

In Chapter 5, I present the micro-narratives of members of different branches of the armed forces who eventually lived the reality of the narrative by serving in Iraq during the war. In this chapter, I analyze how they individually understood the narrative constructed by the Bush administration including the positioning of self (the U.S.), other (Osama bin Laden, terrorists, Saddam Hussein and evil) and the storyline. Here, I attempt to discern the strength of the cultural influence inherent in the narrative patterns on each participant’s acceptance of the narrative. I examine the extent to which the cultural myths, public memories and militarism used in the dominant narrative patterns influenced the participants’ understanding of the war.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I describe the impact of the personal experience of serving in Iraq – living the intended trajectory of the presenting narrative. In this chapter I explore the extent to which the experience of living the narrative, or closing the gap between ‘self’ and ‘other’ through personal encounter, shifts attitudes or perceptions, reveals unexpected emotional responses and leads to repositioning of self, other and

storyline – yielding the personal construction of a counter narrative. Albeit to varying degrees, the majority of participants in this study do indeed experience a surprising, internally painful transformation in attitudes toward the moral justification for the war, the rationale (storyline) for the war and in some cases most significantly, and the characterizations of self and other.

The participants who underwent the most dramatic shifts in perception began questioning the assumptions behind the dominant narrative. Once experiencing this shift, participants began to challenge long-standing value commitments and belief systems, which anchored their sense of personal and national identity. One participant experienced a radical transformation of his (or her) sense of self and national identity, giving up old habits of thought and beliefs completely and going so far as to move to another country. All of the participants here endured difficult struggles through psychological and emotional terrain. Their courage is reflected in the honesty of their stories.

7.2.3 The Role of Emotions

Chapter 4, and indeed the entire study, reveals the centrality of emotions in how we respond to crises and conflict in general. Emotions are so frequently overlooked, indeed ignored altogether, in analyses of conflict and behavior. For conflict analysts and practitioners increasing awareness of the centrality of emotions in decision-making is critical to gaining a fuller understanding of deep-rooted sources of conflict attitudes and behavior. This study exposes the ever-present and powerfully influential role of

emotions such as anger, intense-pride (honor), shame and humiliation that is too frequently buried beneath the rhetoric and actions of not only leaders, but of all of us.

In Chapter 4, I analyze the narrative patterns to argue that much of their impact stems from the power of the cultural myths, memories and militarism anchoring the narrative's plot and characterizations. The patterns, I argue, also rely heavily on continuous emotional reminders of the horror of 9.11 as particular emotions are privileged, especially pride (honor) and anger (anger-rage that can mask a fear of humiliation and that can also create new humiliations toward 'other' through rhetorical dehumanization).

Admittedly, in Chapter 5, I am interpreting my interview partners' emotions when they do not self-identify them. I draw from research on theories of emotions, present in Chapter 3, to do this, but acknowledge that my interpretation remains open to challenge – particularly by the participants themselves. Even so, using the available research outlined in the literature review (Chapter 3), I step through their stories carefully, detailing explicit and implicit allusions to the same myths, memories and militarism demonstrated to be anchoring the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns. I locate indicators of particular emotions – anger, anger-rage, shame, excessive pride and humiliation. Humiliation plays a significant role in all three analyses because its presence takes different forms and it can be both suffered and inflicted – consciously or unconsciously. Relying on theories of shame and humiliation, I argue that humiliation does indeed play a key part in the dehumanizing positioning of 'other' throughout the 9.11/Iraq War narrative patterns, that it is present in various forms, mostly unconsciously, in the acceptance of the narrative by

some of the participants in this study, and that shame is strongly indicated in the transformation processes described in Chapter 6.

Marc Gopin, Director of the Center for Religion, Diplomacy and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University's Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, states: "Ultimately, [though,] there is no real progress in human relationships without emotions at the center" (Gopin, 2004). And what emotions are so frequently at the center of conflict? According to Gopin (2004, p. xv), "The deepest causes of most conflicts, I've discovered, are feelings like dishonor and humiliation."

This study finds that humiliation and honor are key factors in violent behavior and in the perpetuation of cycles of dehumanization and violence. The study also finds, through the analyses of Chapters 4 and 5, that emotions such as anger-rage, wounded honor or pride and feelings of revenge can be positioned and even privileged as explanatory narratives are constructed and policy is created. These emotions, as well as the storyline and characterizations, are taken up in the public discursive space and used to build momentum and mobilization – if they 'feel right' based on familiar cultural constructs. Unfortunately, emotions can bind us to the certainty of our positions.

The significance of 'uncertainty' is another central theme of this study. Chapter 6 explores the transition from certainty to uncertainty and the cognitive/emotional processes present for that shift to occur. For conflict analysts and practitioners it is vital to remain open to listening to each party's perspectives and to recognizing the emotions at the core of the conflict. Professionals not only must keep the door of uncertainty open for themselves, but they must also learn to help facilitate the opening of that door in the

minds and hearts of those most directly involved in the conflict. Andrea Bartoli stated in a lecture recently that “coherence is so important for the masses; people need coherence. Conflict is about certainty [while] peacemaking is about ambiguity” (Bartoli, 2009). This study demonstrates the centrality not only of emotions in conflict, but also of the significance of the space between certainty and uncertainty.

In sum, using positioning theory and narrative analysis, the study here explores this space. Chapter 4 walks through the construction of a hegemonic narrative based on certainty. The certainty is framed through the linear, simplistic positioning of characters and storyline, which are anchored in familiar themes found in pervasive cultural myths, public memories and militarism. The narrative offers a stable and cohesive explanation of a crisis that triggered intense feelings, which were also positioned and privileged. Chapter 5 draws from the same theoretical frameworks but walks through micro – or individual - stories of Americans who eventually lived the full trajectory of the presenting narrative.

In Chapter 5, I examine the depth of attachment – and certainty – present in the narrative patterns of these individuals against the value commitments, belief systems and plot underpinning the hegemonic narrative. In this chapter I discover a strong attachment in many of the participants to the beliefs anchoring the narrative, but even where the attachments hold less sway, I suggest that they are present. I argue that such strong attachments, without critical reflection and an awareness of the dangerous underbelly inherent in these cultural myths and memories, close space for uncertainty and inhibit emotions from being examined and understood more deeply, thus inviting (and often

legitimizing) destructive conflict attitudes and behavior through humiliating dehumanization and violence. This process creates a new local moral order in which dehumanization and violence become acceptable. Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrate that dynamic process unfolding during the period after the events of 9.11 through the invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

Chapter 6 complements the earlier analyses by examining the participants' attachment to the narrative patterns over time. Each participant lived the trajectory of the narrative by serving one or more tours of duty in Iraq during the war. In this analysis, I attempt to enhance understanding of the dynamics at play as actors engage in social experience that may support or defy the categories of reality created by a narrative. I draw more heavily here on the theories of narrative transformation found in work by Cobb (Cobb, 2005) and Winslade and Monk (Winslade, 2001).

These theorists argue that narratives are too often linear and simplistic and rely on polarizing characterizations, leading to destructive conflict escalation. Such narratives lack complexity and fail to invite parties to examine deep-rooted emotions and underlying conflict causes. Conversations are limited to us/them dichotomies, narrowing possibilities for conflict strategies. At the heart of narrative transformation is increasing complexity in the storyline and characterizations, inviting more possibilities for the parties to engage in creative conflict approaches. As the story expands parties begin to be able to see other perspectives, which can create space for 'hearing the reflective double voice' (Bahktin, as cited by Cobb, 2005). Once space, referred to in this study as liminal space, (Cobb, 2005) attunement (T. J. Scheff, 2000) or the practical-evaluative dimension

in agentic capacity (Emirbayer, 1998) is opened, positions can shift. Shifts (also turning points and critical mediating points) amount to actual steps toward narrative – and conflict transformation.

For the purpose of contributing to the general understanding of the social psychological character of ‘shift’ and transformation, I examined in Chapter 6 those spaces closely to determine the contours of a dynamic process. I found that shifts tend to occur slowly, beginning as small questions in which emotions are not strong or are not given much attention. In this space, doubts arise but are frequently left unexamined as actors fall back on stable, cohesive storylines and belief systems. Based on my findings, social experience that challenges the categories of reality created by a narrative may not lead an actor to counter that narrative or its underlying assumptions unless judgments are made cognitively and emotionally. Participants who experienced significant change in their understanding of the narrative and its assumptions also experienced intense moments of cognitive and emotional attunement, during which the voice of the other is recognized, making earlier dehumanization suddenly questionable.

During this period participants in this study describe feelings of confusion, surprise and anger, often resulting in periods of sleeplessness and even depression. This is a difficult, destabilizing space as not only perceptions shift, but often identities as well. Conflict practitioners who engage in mediation work through narrative facilitation or transformation should be aware of the complexity and difficulty of this space. Parties to a conflict may indeed begin to question the ‘truth’ of a particular narrative, but may also choose not to open that space further, preferring instead to defer back to familiar, more

comfortable assumptions. This is a natural response and one hard to avoid. Inviting parties to a conflict to enter that space fully may afford a wonderful opportunity (perhaps the only opportunity) to transform a conflict situation and relationships, but it also brings instability, fear and confusion. When people are invited, through social experience or through mediators, to challenge their own assumptions – their own truth – the challenge may go to the heart of their value commitments and belief systems, calling into question their very sense of self.

7.2.3 Agency

The final theoretical aspect of the relationship explored in this study is agency. Ultimately, my original goal was to contribute to our understanding of the dynamic process of moving a country toward accepting and supporting war. I begin by examining the construction of an official narrative in response to a national traumatizing event – a crisis. Secondly, the narrative must be ‘taken up’ – or accepted as legitimate both morally and in terms of the policy it generates. This involves a dynamic process of individuals locating the categories of reality presented in the narrative within preexisting categories of self – or national identity. The positions and storyline must be coherent to be accepted; it must ‘feel right’. The cultural power of myth and public memory, rather than reflective critical thinking – or questioning - is critical to this process.

Finally, the categories of reality created by the dominant narrative are either accepted or eventually deconstructed, falling apart as personal experience reveals the limits of the narrative’s legitimacy. To explore the aspect of agency in this dynamic

process I draw upon the work of Emirbayer and Mische (Emirbayer, 1998), who present a framework of agency in which emotion and type of thinking play a critical role. In a 1998 study, they argue that actors utilize three aspects of a capacity for agency: the iterational dimension, which relies on habitual or default thinking patterns; the practical-evaluative dimension, which is a critical mediating point in which questions begin chipping away at past patterns of thought; and finally the projective dimension, in which agents reflectively and critically contextualize social experience and make independent judgments both cognitively and emotionally. This is not necessarily a linear process and often two or all of the aspects are present at once; they argue, however, that at any given moment one aspect dominates and will determine attitudes and hence, behavior.

The iterational aspect probably dominates the vast majority of the time for all of us. This space offers actors stability and coherence, which provides boundaries for a sense of reality and identity. We need this space and rely on it to give order to our lives. At certain times, however, especially in moments of crisis, a coherent pattern of categories of reality begin to conflict with personal experiences. In these moments actors have a choice: they can reject the doubts that their experiences reveal and remain attached to the coherence of existing beliefs, or they can begin to reflectively examine the ‘fit’ between experience and beliefs. Once in this space repositioning and transformation can occur.

7.3 Conclusion

This study enhances our understanding of the dynamic process of narrative construction, its take-up and its lived consequences as individuals mediate its categories of reality with their social experiences. In the process positions attached to a narrative may harden or may fall apart, but understanding the dynamic is crucial for conflict practitioners and analysts. Chapter 4 reveals the ease with which an elite can use familiar mythological constructs and public memories to construct a narrative out of a crisis with enormous persuasive power. Policy decisions derive from the narratives that constitute categories of reality at any point in time; it is imperative that we understand the stories from which we choose to live.

Chapter 5 exposes the ease with which pernicious, conflict-generating narratives can be taken up when the positions and storylines rest upon familiar cultural constructs and beliefs. Indeed, this chapter reveals the reflectivity of the Administration's constructions through the ways in which the 9.11/Iraq War narratives were about 'us' – the American people and the underlying cultural constructs to which so many of us ascribe to consciously or unconsciously, than it was about the terrorists who actually attacked us. Myths and public memories of moral supremacy, innocence, victim-hood, and super-hero and the glorification of militarism permeate American culture still and inform frames of mind. Given these mental frames feelings toward revenge and retaliation rather than thoughtful reflection and deliberation dominate when a crisis occurs that wounds a deep-rooted sense of American pride and honor. This is a recipe for continuous cycles of humiliation, dehumanization and violence. The United States will

continue to fight rather than reflect, deliberate and locate alternative possible strategies unless these cultural assumptions are examined more critically and their dangerous underbellies acknowledged.

And finally, Chapter 6 demonstrates the dynamic process of narrative expansion in which more voices are added to the storyline, opening space for conflict strategies other than retaliation. This chapter offers an opportunity to witness the dynamic process of transformation through education, social experience and critical reflective thinking that only occurs when both cognitive and emotional judgments are made. It renders the further study of emotions and the role they play in decision-making critical for all of us, but perhaps most significantly for social scientists, leaders and educators. The entire study explores the importance of emotions, particularly anger, shame, intense pride or honor in the escalation of conflict and in the process of transforming attitudes, relationships, and even self.

The relationship I examine then, is the interplay of socially-sanctioned pre-existing value commitments and belief systems that inform identity, emotions and agency with the dynamic process of a narrative constructed in response to a national crisis, the uptake of the storyline and the emotions it positions on both a macro and micro level and finally, the impact of the narrative once its trajectory is realized to those who lived it fully. This relationship is critical, I believe, not only to conflict analysts and practitioners, but to all those interested in pursuing peaceful relations in their personal lives and beyond. The story I attempt to trace and understand here is not dependent on Iraq. Iraq offers a context, unfortunately, for a story that could be told over and over in

many contexts. While the myths and memories will differ, the basic story, leading so often to unnecessary wars, remains the same. Understanding the process of the story's evolution and the dangers embedded within is essential to recognizing and altering such stories in the future. We must learn to identify the early construction of such narratives and work to expand their complexity early. This may indeed be the most effective step toward conflict prevention.

Robert McNamara, the man most often 'credited' with "leading the United States into defeat and shame in Vietnam," (Hoagland, 2009) died yesterday. One aspect of his legacy from which we might all draw is his shift during the Vietnam War from certainty to uncertainty. As David Ignatius of the Washington Post points out: "Nobody gets to do over his mistakes... But perhaps the memory of this brilliant and tragic man will keep us from being too certain of our own judgment – and encourage us to consider, even when we feel most confident, the possibility that we could be wrong" (Ignatius, 2009).

The United States engaged in what many now call a 'war of choice' against a sovereign nation. At the time of this writing, 4,323 Americans have lost their lives while an estimated 92,485 – 100,964 Iraqis have lost theirs (Antiwar.com, 2009). During the course of my research I also volunteered through the Red Cross at Walter Reed Medical Center, working in the physical therapy department with the amputees from the wars. This made personal for me the indescribable sacrifice that those wounded have made as well. After the war in Vietnam, Noam Chomsky, a leading antiwar intellectual at the time (and today), examined how the history of that war was being constructed through major media outlets. He wrote that they "were destroying the historical record and

supplanting it with a more comfortable story... reducing ‘lessons’ of the war to the socially neutral categories of error, ignorance and cost” (Zinn, 2003). I believe that were that to happen again, with this war, we would all commit a tragic dishonor to those lives lost and altered so completely. There are lessons far beyond ‘error, ignorance and cost’ to be learned from the Iraq War. As many of the participants did here, all of us need to reflectively examine our complicity in this war and deepen our understanding of how it happened. To hold error and ignorance responsible is the height of irresponsibility – and denial. We must hold ourselves accountable, but we must understand why.

Therefore, this dissertation is not about a right or a wrong way of thinking regarding the war in Iraq. It is fundamentally focused on the dynamism of the soldiers’ thinking, the changing character of their commitment to the war effort, and in turn the transformation of their personal identity.⁶⁴ I find parallels to Robert McNamara’s personal struggles regarding his contribution to the U.S. participation in the Viet Nam War. It took McNamara years and thousands of deaths in Vietnam before self (and social) examination allowed uncertainty to replace a formidable but dangerous certitude (Will, 2009). Ambiguity invites infinity of possibilities for approaching conflict; certitude closes that space, often resulting in destructive escalation rather than resolution or transformation (Bartoli, 2009). The Iraq War, the legitimacy of which was formulated on certainty and assumptions anchoring that certitude, continues six years and thousands of deaths later. Over thirty years after Vietnam we are reminded that McNamara, who finally learned to question his own beliefs and invite the possibility of being wrong, “has

⁶⁴ Marc Gopin writes, “I have come to realize that the only path toward a lasting solution for destructive conflict lies in a process of self-examination and spiritual growth” (Gopin, 2004, p. xv).

much to teach us [and that] we should listen” (Smith, 2009). So too, do these new veterans of another war constructed from unexamined emotions, assumptions and deadly certainty. We shouldn’t wait another 30 years to finally begin listening.

Appendix A: Informed Consent Form for Personal Interview

Myth, Memory and Militarism: The Evolution of an American War Narrative

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to enhance our understanding of the emotional power of a national war narrative, particularly the narrative constructed by the Bush administration after 9/11/01 through 3/03 and the invasion of Iraq. The research attempts to identify emotions experienced in the months leading up to the March invasion. It further explores the connective strength of the narrative to the soldiers who would serve. Finally, it attempts to trace any changes in attitude or feelings in individual soldiers relevant to the original Bush administration narrative. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to interview questions about your feelings regarding the Bush narrative for legitimizing the invasion of Iraq, and if and how your feelings changed from your actual experiences in Iraq. The interview may take up to three hours. With your permission I will tape the interview. You do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable or that you feel imposes some risk to you.

RISKS

The foreseeable risks or discomforts include sensitive questions regarding the emotions experienced before, during and after combat duty. Any question that makes you uncomfortable you may decline to answer.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Only I will have access to the taped interview or to the interview notes. I will use a coded identification key to protect your identity. Only I will be able to link your interview with your name. If you would like to give me permission to use your name, you can add a note to that effect and sign it at the bottom of this form. If we conduct communication via email, I will use a separate email account set up strictly for the purposes of this research and will keep all correspondence confidential. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no

penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Pamela M. Creed, Ph.D. Candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University under the direction of Professor Dan Rothbart. Pamela may be reached at 703-400-8360 for questions or to report a research-related problem. Professor Rothbart may be reached at 703-993-1293. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Name

Date of Signature

_____ I agree to be audiotaped.

_____ I don't agree to be audiotaped.

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form for an Email Interview

Dear _____,

I found your name and contact information via the internet on the _____ website. (or _____ gave me your name and contact information.) I am a graduate student in conflict studies in VA, and am doing a dissertation on the connection between the macro narrative that led to the invasion and the micro narratives of the soldiers who lived it.

Below you will find a brief abstract of the project. During the past several months I have interviewed several veterans of the Iraq War; their personal narratives have been compelling for my study. I would like to know if you would be interested in responding to some questions via email.

Below is an explanation of the study. If you are interested in participating, please read the informed consent form below. The George Mason University Human Subjects Review Board has waived the requirement for a signature on this consent form. However, if you wish to sign a consent, please contact Pamela M Creed at pmcreed@gmail.com. If not, opening the attachment above called interview questions will serve as your consent to participate in this study. Thank you.

Myth, Memory and Militarism: The Evolution of an American War Narrative

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to enhance our understanding of the emotional power of a national war narrative, particularly the narrative constructed by the Bush administration after 9/11/01 through 3/03 and the invasion of Iraq. The research attempts to identify emotions experienced in the months leading up the March invasion. It further explores the connective strength of the narrative to the soldiers who would serve. Finally, it attempts to trace any changes in attitude or feelings in individual soldiers relevant to the original Bush administration narrative. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to respond to interview questions about your feelings regarding the Bush narrative for legitimizing the invasion of Iraq, and if and how your feelings changed from your actual experiences in Iraq. You do not have to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable or that you feel imposes some risk to you.

RISKS

The foreseeable risks or discomforts include sensitive questions regarding the emotions experienced before, during and after combat duty. Any question that makes you uncomfortable you may decline to answer.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Only I will have access to the taped interview or to the interview notes. I will use a coded identification key to protect your identity. Only I will be able to link your interview with your name. If you would like to give me permission to use your name, you can add a note to that effect and sign it at the bottom of this form. If we conduct communication via email, I will use a separate email account set up strictly for the purposes of this research and will keep all correspondence confidential.

While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Pamela M. Creed, Ph.D. Candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University under the direction of Professor Dan Rothbart. Pamela may be reached at 703-400-8360 for questions or to report a research-related problem. Professor Rothbart may be reached at 703-993-1293. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Personal or Email Interview

Questions for dissertation research on the soldiers' responses to the Bush narrative after 9/11 that led to war in Iraq.

Pamela M Creed, Ph.D. Candidate

pcreed@gmu.edu

The Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, George Mason University

Please feel comfortable answering the questions in paragraph/essay form. In other words, many can easily be put together in one detailed response. Read through all the questions first and respond in a way that is comfortable for you. I have bolded questions that are more essential. Every question does not have to be addressed one-by-one. Thank you for your help, and I wish you the best.

Basic Information: *No names will be revealed unless you give me explicit permission.*

1. What is your name, ethnicity, religion, place of birth and educational background?
2. Where did you attend high school?
3. What was the socio-economic status of your family?
4. When did you join the military?
5. In which branch did you serve?
6. What were your main motivations for joining the service?

Personal Reactions to 9/11:

1. Can you describe your reaction/feelings/attitudes to the events of 9/11/01 and during the immediate months afterward? Please be as specific as possible. What were you feeling and thinking during that time? Did you feel that you wanted to DO something? If so, what? How did you feel toward the US and toward the suspected perpetrators? Please try to describe your feelings/attitude using 'emotion words' as much as possible.

Personal Response to Bush 9/11 Narrative:

In several national addresses after 9/11, President Bush provided an explanatory account for the 9/11 attacks and a description of the enemy.

1. How did you understand the explanation Bush provided for the attacks?
2. How did you understand the description or identification of the enemy?
3. Did you feel Bush gave morally and politically justified rationales for invading Afghanistan? If so, how?

4. Did you feel that the honor of the US had been insulted? Did we need restore that honor?
5. Did you feel that opposition to the invasion was unpatriotic or cowardly?
6. Was retaliation necessary? Why?
7. Can you think of another way that America could have responded?
8. Why, in your opinion, did the terrorists attack us?

Later that year, the possibility of invading Iraq began to emerge. In national speeches and in addresses to military organizations, the administration began to construct a war narrative against Iraq.

Personal Response to Iraq War Narrative:

1. Who was the enemy? How was the enemy characterized?
2. What was the threat to America?
3. Did Bush provide moral justification for the invasion? How?
4. Did you agree with this justification?
5. Why did we invade Iraq?
6. Did you find our invasion justified?

Experiences while in Iraq:

1. How did you feel when you learned you were going to Iraq?
2. How long have you served/did you serve in Iraq and what was your job?
3. What are/were your perceptions of Iraq and the people? How did this differ – or not- from your expectations before arriving in Iraq?
4. What experiences while in Iraq led you to resist or embrace the Iraq war narrative/mission? In other words, since serving, do you continue to support the mission in Iraq or have you lost support? Why?
5. Can you identify the emotions you experienced during the moments when you questioned the war's legitimacy? Or the moments you felt confident you were doing the right thing? In other words, were there any defining moments that led you to question the presenting narrative and your own participation in the war or that led you to feel more secure in America's mission and your place in it? Can you describe those moments, including emotions experienced?
6. How would you describe your current understanding of the war and your own feelings about it?
7. How do you feel today about the original war narrative?

8. Has your understanding about the 'enemy' changed? How? Why? What 'enemy' or threat is the US facing today?
9. How would you describe America's role in the world? Has that remained the same for you or changed since the war? Has it affected your idea of patriotism?
10. Has the US mission been successful or not? How does its success or lack of success impact your attitude toward the mission? And your sense of national identity/pride?
11. How do you feel about the Bush Doctrine of preemptive action? The Doctrine of spreading democracy?
12. After not finding any WMD and reporting this to Bush, David Kay, the head of the postwar survey group, said the WMD had been a delusion. He was amazed not to see any disappointment in Bush: "I don't think he lost ten minutes of sleep over the failure to find WMD," he said. What is your reaction to this?
13. Bush was focused after the initial invasion on why the Iraqis weren't showing gratitude to their American liberators. Why do you think they didn't?
14. How has your experience in Iraq changed you/your life?

Exploration on the role of honor/humiliation/shame/pride/guilt as possible underlying emotional factors in the response to 9/11.

With a definition of humiliation as: *"an emotion, triggered by public events, which evokes a sense of inferiority resulting from the realization that one is being, or has been, treated in a way that departs from the normal expectations for fair and equal human treatment. The experience of humiliation has the potential to serve as a formative, guiding force in a person's life, such that depending on the context in which it occurred, it can significantly impact one's individual and/or collective or group identity. Finally, humiliation is a moral emotion. As such, the experience of humiliation motivates behavioral responses that may serve to extend or redefine previously existing moral boundaries, thus in some cases leading individuals to perceive otherwise socially impermissible behavior to be permissible"* (Goldman & Coleman).

1. Do you think the events of 9/11, triggered feelings of national shame or humiliation, which could have provided motivation and moral justification for retaliation?
2. Do you think the terrorists might have acted because of perceived humiliation from the US/West? Did they seek to humiliate us?

3. If collective feelings of anger or a desire for revenge existed after 9/11, do you think the administration cultivated those feeling in order to build support for the mission?
4. Based on your experiences in Iraq, do you think a desire for revenge existed?
5. Did you experience this feeling at any point? If so, when or how did that feeling change, if it did change? If you still feel a desire for revenge why do you think you feel that way?
6. Do you think that America(ns) could/should have shown more humility in their response to 9/11?
7. Would humility, rather than retaliation, have appeared weak and cowardly?
8. What, in your mind, would humility from the US look like?
9. Since 9/11, do you see the US as a victim, as a perpetrator, occupier, or as a liberator? Or something else?
10. How would you describe today who or what the enemy is?
11. Could underlying emotions or historical relationships be a significant cause of the war? If so, can you explain what those emotions and/or relationships might be? Is it possible that underlying emotions between GW Bush and his father could have contributed to the decision to invade Iraq?

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- P2 (2007). October 12, Personal interview. Participant is a veteran of the Iraq War who served in the Navy from 1996 until March 30, 2005. Fairfax, VA: Transcripts available upon request of this author.

- P3 (2007). November 8. Personal interview. P3 is a veteran of the Iraq War who served one tour. Interview conducted in Bellingham, WA: Transcripts available upon request of this author.
- P4 (2007). November 9. Personal interview. P4 is a veteran of the Iraq War who served 15 months during 2006-2007. Interview conducted in Bellingham, WA. Interview conducted in Bellingham, WA: Transcripts available upon request of this author.
- P5 (2007). November 9. Personal interview. The participant is a veteran of the Iraq War who enlisted in March 2003 and was deployed to Iraq in 2005. Interview conducted in Bellingham, WA: Transcripts available upon request of this author.
- P6 (2007). November 16. Personal interview. Participant is a veteran of the Iraq War who served one year during 2005-2006. Interview conducted in Silver Spring, MD: Transcripts available upon request of this author.
- P7 (2007). December 3. Email interview. The participant is a veteran of the Iraq War who enlisted in the National Guard in April, 2001. He served in Baghdad from December 2005 to December 2006 as part of an artillery unit that had been assigned to a military brigade: Transcripts available upon request of this author.
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Curriculum Vitae

Pamela M Creed graduated from the American University in Washington, DC with a B.A. in History in 1992. She received her M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Maryland in 1996. Ms. Creed has taught history and English to nonnative speakers in Singapore, Costa Rica and in public schools and institutes throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area. She was also a recipient of a 2007 Fulbright-Hays Summer Abroad scholarship to South Africa where she studied student achievement and workforce development in disadvantaged populations. Ms. Creed has participated in several international conferences where she presented papers on competing American cultural and religious narratives as well as the evolution of the Iraq War narrative. Currently, Ms. Creed has been selected as an English Language Fellow with the State Department and Georgetown University. In 2009-2010, she will reside in Belgrade, Serbia and teach English and American history and culture at the University of Belgrade, Serbia.