

FOLLOWERSHIP: AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT
OF LEADERSHIP

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CORBIN E. COPELAND, MAJ, USA
MBA, University of Phoenix, Phoenix, Arizona, 2007

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: MAJ Corbin E. Copeland

Thesis Title: Followership: An Essential Ingredient of Leadership

Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Dennis S. Burket, MBA.

_____, Member
LTC Michelle M.E. Garcia, MSA, MMAS

_____, Member
Kenneth E. Long, D.M.

Accepted this 12th day of June 2015 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

FOLLOWERSHIP: AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT OF LEADERSHIP, by
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The U.S. Army continues to face toxic leadership despite an increase in the training on the subject in the last five years. Toxic Followership is an aspect that both the U.S. Army and the majority of civilian organizations overlook. In an attempt to determine what effect, if any, toxic followership has on leaders within the military, three case studies were analyzed. These case studies were the massacre at My Lai, prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, and the rape and murder of a family by soldiers of the Black Hearts Brigade. Common themes across the three case studies were then laid over a leadership model called the Toxic Triangle by Art Padilla. The research validates the Toxic Triangle model. The absence of the word followers within Army regulations, except to mention that every leader is a follower, severely undermines the impact that they can have on a leader. If this relationship is not clearly understood, and if steps are not taken to mitigate the negative effects toxic followership may have, it could lead to future atrocities similar to those of My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and within the Black Hearts Brigade.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Occasionally, negative leadership occurs in an organization. Negative leadership generally leaves people and organizations in a worse condition than when the leader- follower relationship started. One form of negative leadership is toxic leadership. Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance.¹

— Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership*

If we don't do something about toxic leadership, I mean in the end, not to be too dramatic, but it does have life or death consequences. And quite honestly, we owe it to the American public.²

— LT Gen David Perkins, *Army Takes On Its Own Toxic Leaders*

Overview of the Issues

From an Army perspective, negative leadership is something that leaves people and the organizations in a worse condition than it was when the leader-follower relationship started. A form of this negative leadership is toxic leadership. From an Army perspective, toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that adversely affect subordinates, the unit, and mission performance. This type of leader is generally concerned only for him or herself, does not care about the climate of the organization, operates with an inflated sense of self-worth, and consistently uses dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves. Toxic leadership actions typically produce short-term gains, and because of these gains, it can be difficult to identify. Over extended periods, toxic leadership can undermine a follower's will, initiative, and has the potential to destroy a unit's morale. Examples of toxic leadership are present throughout the history

of the United States military. Because of this presence, the Army began looking at toxic leadership specifically around 2005, and added it to regulations and professional training in 2012, with the introduction of ADP 6-22. There are numerous in depth studies attempting to define toxic leaders, what makes them, what to do with a toxic leader and the effects a toxic leader has on an organization. There is not extensive research defining what it means to be a toxic follower, or the effect followers have on leaders, and in this case US Army leaders.

Background: Leadership Models

Leadership models are everywhere; a quick Google search for “leadership model” produces over 430,000,000 results. Add in followership and the results go down to 370,000. One model that addresses toxicity from both a leadership and follower perspective is the *Toxic Triangle* by Arthur Padilla, see figure 1. Padilla’s model was the one chosen for this research because it accounts for the leader, followers, and the environment. It shows the relationship that exist among the three, and the effect that toxicity can have if it is present. A complete review of the model, along with various others, is in chapter 2 of this document.³

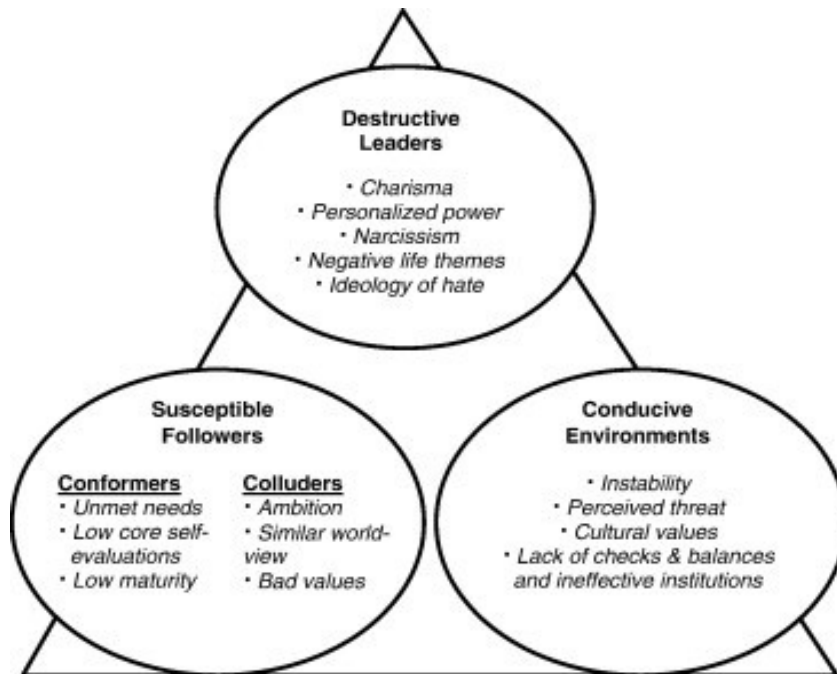


Figure 1. Toxic Triangle Source: Arthur Padilla (2013)

Source: Arthur Padilla, *Leadership: Leaders, Followers, and Environments* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), 195.

Statement of the Problem

There are numerous in-depth studies attempting to define what toxic leaders are, what makes them, what to do with a toxic leader, and the effects a toxic leader has on an organization. In contrast, this research will attempt to define toxic followership, determine how toxic followers affect leadership, and ultimately determine how followership can influence Army operations.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine how toxic followership influences leadership within US Army operations. Once that determination is made, proposed

solutions can be identified. These proposed solutions can then assist the Army in combating toxic leadership through changes in regulation or leadership development training.

Research Questions

The primary research question that this research will attempt to answer is how does toxic followership influence leadership in U. S. Army operations? The questions that will help guide the presentation of facts and analysis that follow in chapter 4 are:

1. What does it mean to be a toxic follower?
2. Are all toxic followers the same or are there different kinds of toxic followership?
3. What effect does being a toxic follower have on a leader, whether toxic or not?

Case Study Context

The exact methodology used to answer the above questions is in chapter 3 of this study, but in order to ascertain those answers, three historical cases from the military were chosen for analysis to draw cross conclusions or themes and implications to the Army, more specifically to Army doctrine. The three U.S. military historical cases of My Lai during the Vietnam War, Abu Ghraib during Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the Black Hearts Brigade during Operation Enduring Freedom with analysis of the actions taken, events leading up to, and decisions made by leaders during these incidents were chosen based upon a preponderance of research availability.

My Lai

The My Lai massacre occurred on March 16, 1968. Soldiers from Charlie Company of 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division conducted a mass killing of up to 500 unarmed civilians in South Vietnam. On November 17, 1970 14 officers were charged with suppressing information related to the incident. Of the 14, only the BDE commander, COL Henderson, was charged on trial and was later acquitted on December 17, 1971. LT Calley was the only person convicted of a crime. He was convicted to life in prison on March 29, 1971 after being found guilty of premeditated murder of not fewer than 20 people. LT Calley ultimately served three and a half years under house arrest before being paroled by the Secretary of the Army Howard Callaway.⁴

Abu Ghraib

Abu Ghraib is a case that surfaced on April 28, 2004 on CBS's *60 Minutes II*. With the airing of the show, it was the first glimpse that Americans had into the alleged detainee abuse carried out by Soldiers from the 372nd MP Company. Prior to the CBS story, on January 14, 2004 an anonymous person slipped a compact disc full of pictures of prisoner abuse under the door of the CID office in the Baghdad Central Confinement Facility (BDDF). After an initial investigation by CID, seven soldiers were brought up on charges ranging from conspiracy to maltreat, maltreatment of detainees, false official statement, and indecent acts.⁵

Black Hearts Brigade

On September 29, 2005, 1st Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division's 502nd Infantry Regiment deployed to an area of operations within Iraq commonly referred to as the "Triangle of Death." Throughout the deployment, the battalion sustained numerous casualties and almost constant enemy contact. This high casualty rate, coupled with declining morale and discipline culminated in four soldiers from 1st Platoon, Bravo company, committing multiple war crimes to include the rape of a 14-year-old girl, and the subsequent murder of her, her parents, and her 6-year-old sister.⁶

Significance of the Study

In order to successfully address toxic leadership, the Army must also understand the contributions that followers make toward that toxicity. This research seeks to identify what influence toxic followers have on military operations, so the Army can address followership in a way that is equal to leadership. Padilla's toxic triangle presents toxic leadership as a combination of all three elements: a destructive leader, toxic followers, and a conducive environment. If the Army continues to only address a portion of that, the destructive leader, then it will never be able to solve the problem of toxicity within the organization.

Limitations of the Study

The author had to work within key limitations while conducting research for this study. The first limitation was time. This research was conducted in a ten-month study in order to be completed within time requirements. In conjunction with time, another limiting factor was case study material. Case studies involving toxicity within the Army,

with enough readily available research material were limited. Such case studies are typically high profile or media attention grabbing cases, such as My Lai and Abu Ghraib. A third limitation was the depth of information related to individuals within each case study. This limitation has both time and research material availability aspects to it. Due to the limitation of time and research availability, the study centers on key individuals specifically involved within each case study. One could argue that toxicity exists outside the individuals portrayed here, specifically within the chain of command above each company depicted within each study, but due to the limitations outlined above the study focuses on soldiers at the company level and below. Another limitation of this research is that these case studies all occurred before the research on toxic followership became mainstream. This research is then taking a concept that did not exist prior to these incidents, applying that research, and determining if it can then shed light from a new perspective. This type of case study analysis can then suggest but not prove effects.

¹ Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, August 2012).

² Danile Zwerdling, "Army Takes On It's Own Toxic Leaders," NPR, January 6, 2014, accessed October 31, 2014, <http://www.npr.org/2014/01/06/259422776/army-takes-on-its-own-toxic-leaders>.

³ Arthur Padilla, *Leadership: Leaders, Followers, and Environments* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), 195.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 203-204.

⁵ Christopher Graveline and Michael Clemens, *The Secrets of Abu Ghraib Revealed American Soldiers on Trial* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2010), 21.

⁶ Jim Frederick, *Black Hearts: One Platoon's Plunge into Madness in the Triangle of Death and the American Struggle in Iraq* (New York: Harmony Books, 2010).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before analysis of the three case studies can begin, establishing some of the key concepts is required. Fully understanding what toxic leadership and toxic followership is requires an understanding or agreed upon understanding of leadership and followership in general. Defining the environment is also important, as it has a significant impact on leaders and followers actions throughout the military. Once each key term has an agreed upon definition, various leadership models can be analyzed in an attempt to identify the one used for this study.

Leadership

Leadership is a term that has been around for centuries. Philosophers such as Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato each incorporated aspects of leadership and what it means to be a leader within their various theories. In general terms, the idea of leadership has not evolved much over time. The definition of leadership within most dictionaries today centers on the words of guide or directs. Leadership is defined within the Army as the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.¹ Influencing is getting people to do what is required. Influencing is done through the passing along orders or direction from one level to the next; it is done through words and actions, where leaders communicate purpose, direction, and motivation.² Purpose provides reason, direction provides understanding, and motivation provides commitment. Padilla, in *Leadership*, describes leadership in a little different light. He defines leadership as “an organized

group process with associated goals resulting in a set of outcomes.”³ He goes on to identify three elements that make up leadership. Those three elements are a leader, follower, and an organizational setting or the environment.⁴ This definition of leadership varies from the Army definition, which delineates between the definition of a leader and the definition of leadership. The Army definition describes leadership in terms of what a leader does, where Padilla defines leadership as the combination of a leader, follower, and the environment elements joining together to form that leadership. The importance of this difference is discussed in detail later within this chapter.

Another perspective on leadership is that of Mary Parker Follett in *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett*, which stated that,

There is a conception of leadership gaining ground to-day very different from our old notion. . . . It is a conception very far removed from the leader-follower relation. With that conception you had to be either a leader or a leaner. To-day our thinking is tending less and less to be confined within the boundaries of those two alternatives. There is the idea of a reciprocal leadership. There is also the idea of a partnership of following, of following the invisible leader- the common purpose. The relation of the rest of the group to the leader is not a passive one.⁵

Follett states that leadership is a partnership in reciprocal following. She states there is an invisible leader, a common purpose, and the law of the situation. So because leadership is responding to a call it is a type of following, and following is leadership because it needs to hear the call. There are no leaders who are also not followers, and there are no followers who are also not leaders.

Toxic Leadership

Leadership is something that can be positive, negative, or some form of in between. From an Army perspective, negative leadership is something that leaves people

and the organizations in a worse condition than it was when the leader-follower relationship started.⁶ A form of this negative leadership is toxic leadership. From an Army perspective, toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that adversely affect subordinates, the unit, and mission performance.⁷ This type of leader is generally concerned only for him or herself, does not care about the climate of the organization, operates with an inflated sense of self-worth, and consistently uses dysfunctional behaviors to deceive, intimidate, coerce, or unfairly punish others to get what they want for themselves.⁸ Toxic leadership actions typically produce short-term gains, and because of these gains, it can be difficult to identify. Over extended periods, toxic leadership can undermine a follower's will, initiative, and has the potential to destroy a unit's morale.

Padilla offers a different perspective of toxic leadership in his book *Leadership*, where he presents the idea that toxic leadership applies to more than just the leader. He argues that a leader, as described by the Army as toxic leadership, is a destructive leader, and toxic leadership describes not only this type of destructive leader, but susceptible followers, and a conducive environment. Again, this difference in wording between the Army definition of toxic leadership and Padilla's is small, but is important to understand for this research. As was the case with the definition of leadership, the Army definition of toxic leadership lends itself to more of a specific person, where Padilla's definition describes an entire system. Padilla outlines four definitional elements of toxic leadership. He uses these elements to describe what toxic leadership is: (1) destructive leadership is about more than the leader; (2) destructive leadership is rarely entirely destructive; (3) destructive leadership involves control and coercion; (4) and the effects of

destructive leadership results in bad consequences for the group. He describes toxic leaders as possibly having charisma and narcissism, personalized use of power, negative life themes, and an ideology of hate.⁹

Another definition of toxic leadership, as presented by Jean Lipman-Blumen in *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, is leaders who engage in one or more of the following destructive behaviors:

1. Leaving their followers (and frequently on followers) worse off than they found them, sometimes eliminating by deliberately undermining, demeaning, seducing, marginalizing, intimidating, demoralizing, disenfranchising, incapacitating, imprisoning, torturing, terrorizing, or killing, of their own people, including members of their entourage, as well as their official opponents
2. Violating the basic standards of human rights of their own supporters, as well as those of other individuals and groups they do not count among their followers
3. Consciously feeding their followers illusions that enhance the leader's power and impair the followers' capacity to act independently
4. Playing to the basest fears and needs of the followers
5. Stifling constructive criticism and teaching supporters to comply with, rather than to question, the leader's judgment and actions
6. Misleading followers through deliberate untruths and misdiagnoses of issues and problems

7. Subverting those structures and processes of the system intended to generate taught, justice, and excellence, and engaging in unethical, illegal, and criminal acts
8. Building totalitarian or narrowly dynastic regimes, including subverting the legal processes for selecting and supporting new leaders
9. Failing to nurture other leaders, including their own successors, or otherwise improperly clinging to power
10. Maliciously setting constituents against one another
11. Treating their own followers well, but persuading them to hate and/or destroy others
12. Identifying scapegoats and inciting others to castigate them
13. Structuring the costs of overthrowing them as a trigger for the downfall of the system they lead, thus further endangering followers and nonfollowers alike
14. Ignoring or promoting incompetence, cronyism, and corruption.¹⁰

This definition, while more specific, incorporates both the Army definition of toxic leadership and Padilla's definition of destructive leaders.

Followership

The first mention of followers within the Army publication of ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership* is the explanation that every Army leader is also a follower. Learning to be a good leader is associated with learning to be a good follower, more specifically learning loyalty, subordination, respect for superiors, and when or how to lodge candid disagreements.¹¹ An important aspect of leadership within the Army is influence. According to the Army, influence falls into two categories. The first category is

commitment. Commitment is what the Army states every leader should strive for. Commitment is getting followers to willingly act for a higher purpose. The other form of influence is compliance. Compliance is when a follower merely fulfills requests and acts in response to a leader's positional power. Influence is important within the military, as it drives or affects initiative, motivation, and the degree of accepted responsibility. Both Army manuals covering leadership, ADP and ADRP 6-22, talk very little about followership. The manuals center on leadership and what a leader must do in regards to followers, but does not clearly articulate what role a follower plays within a unit or how a follower affects leaders. This omission becomes important, as the careers of young lieutenants within the military are many times enhanced or destroyed based on how their followers interact with their young and often times less experienced leaders.

Padilla takes a different approach to followers than Army doctrine, in his book *Leadership*. Followers are sorted in four categories. There are top managers, creative workers, virtual teams, and susceptible followers. All four categories represent a very different type of follower, and presents leaders with unique challenges and ways of interacting with each.

Top managers are identified as those who are "key players" within an organization. These are individuals that an organization depends on to win. These can be further separated into two sub categories of prima donnas or quiet professionals. Prima donnas are those who are difficult or high maintenance. Quiet professionals are highly effective role players who often make unacknowledged contributions. While there is much debate on the impact top managers have within an organization, there is significant

evidence suggesting that putting together an effective top management team makes a positive difference within an organization.¹²

Creative workers are creative, high-skill individuals who have “cosmopolitan orientation.”¹³ The term cosmopolitan, as outlined by Peter Drucker, describes workers who possess knowledge that is broad-based and extends beyond their own company. The skills these followers possess are in high demand, as their skills apply more to their craft than their individual company. A symphony orchestra musician, doctors, or highly skilled software engineers are some examples of this type of follower.¹⁴ Organizations of this type tend to have little to no control over what work is performed or how it is conducted. Leaders within this type of organizations simply direct, and leave the “doing” to the followers, who are highly skilled and tend to be self-directed, independent, and professional.¹⁵

A third category of followers, as outlined by Padilla, is virtual teams. Due to the need of organizations to operate within different geographical locations, virtual teams arose. Virtual teams may be in different physical locations, but they still have team members who work in specific jobs towards goals coordinated by a leader. Due to communication, motivation, and oversight challenges, these teams can be very complex from a leader standpoint. When dealing with virtual teams, Padilla list four important issues that must be addressed. The first issue is that of communication. Due to geography, there may be time zone, cultural, or language differences. The second issue is travel. Most would think that with virtual teams, the need to travel is diminished. This is far from the truth. Even with virtual teams, there is still a very real need for “face time.” Face time leads to trust, and trust is essential between leaders and followers. A third

difference is the possibility of cultural differences arising. The possibility of cultural differences existing increasing with virtual teams due to geography. The fourth and final issue is empathy and assertiveness. Effective virtual teams show more empathy and less assertiveness towards one another.¹⁶

The fourth category of followers carry the label of susceptible. Followers in this category are Padilla's definition of toxic followership. He list them as either conformers or colluders. Conformers are those followers who simply stand by and let something happened. Colluders are those who contribute to or assist toxic leaders. This category of followers is where Padilla specifies the importance of followers and how to eliminate toxic leadership. He suggest that to avoid toxic outcomes, leaders must give up some of their power and managerial discretion. There has to be someone who is looking over the shoulders of leaders. It is this oversight that ensures toxic outcomes do not occur.¹⁷ The sub heading of Toxic Followership further develops both types of susceptible followers.

Another view of followership is that of Robert E. Kelley, James Maroosis, Jon Howell, and Maria Mendez in the book *The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations* by Ronald Riggio. Each author describes followership in somewhat different terms, but very much the same way in terms of content.

Kelly breaks down followership into five basic styles. These styles are the sheep, the yes-people, the alienated, the pragmatics, and the star followers. The sheep are passive followers and they rely on the leader to do all of the thinking for them. The second style is the alienated. Alienated followers think for themselves but are often times negative. These type of followers dwell on the current plan of action and what is wrong

with it, instead of thinking about the next step. The pragmatics are the type of followers who sit on the fence and wait for others to make a decision before jumping on board. Pragmatics do what they must to survive. The final type of followers are the star followers. These followers think for themselves, are active, and have positive energy. They apply critical thinking and analysis in order to form their own opinions. If they agree with a leader then they are all in, if they disagree with a leader they will offer constructive alternatives to help the leader and organization.¹⁸

James Maroosis describes followership as a discipline of competencies and “response-abilities.”¹⁹ He describes reasonable as being something you can do and responsible as being something you should do. The relationship between leadership and followership is working in tandem as a shared discipline of reciprocal response-abilities. He also describes followership as needing leadership. There is something that a follower does not know or cannot see and leadership fills that void. Followership is a learning function. Leaders teach what followers need to learn and understand. It is a habit of responsive effectiveness. It tends to be a mentoring or mimetic situation where followers learn to think like the leader. The main difference between leaders and followers, he points out, is that followers need leaders to help them follow what the leaders themselves are already following. It is this, which moves the relationship from the form of shared response-ability to a shared calling. Followership requires discipline and discrimination, using the same thinking as leadership, guidance to develop a response-able attitude, and is an ongoing process of learning to do by first questioning leadership, giving leadership a sense of traction and tools for discovery, and continually training virtues to avoid devolving into toxicity.²⁰

Jon Howell and Maria Mendez describe followers as serving in one of three roles, interactive, independent, or shifting. An interactive role is one in which the follower serves to simply complement and support the leadership role. Followers within this role typically demonstrate job knowledge and competence at work tasks, build collaborative and supportive relationships with coworkers and the leader, defend and support the leader in front of others, exert influence on the leader in a confident and unemotional manner to help the leader avoid costly mistakes, demonstrates proper comportment for the organization, shows a concern for performance as well as a supportive friendly atmosphere, and shows a willingness to participate in necessary organizational changes.²¹ Followers serving in this role are susceptible to falling within the toxic followership, addressed below. The second role that Howell and Mendez categorize followers into is that of an independent role. This type of follower is typically one who acts more independently of their leaders due to an increase in education and training of the workforce, the employees' desire to be more self-determining in their work, and leaner organizations with fewer middle managers. This type of follower can provide their own self-direction and solve work problems on their own without reliance on their formal leader.²² The third role that Howell and Mendez categorize followers into is that of a shifting role. This type of follower is one that may move between being a leader and being a follower based on knowledge, professional experience, and team-based work structures. In this type of role, leadership tends to be distributed among the team members and is more flexible and dynamic. The expectation is that the followers will adjust to their role accordingly within the group. This type of follower is typically one who can monitor and interpret the environment to identify needed changes in the team,

actively participates in the group's decision making while taking responsibility for achieving its goals, challenges the team when necessary and maintains a critical perspective on the group's decisions, role-models the team member prototype by observing and adhering to the norms of the group, and maintains an empathic relationship with rich communication among teammates.²³

Toxic Followership

Toxic followership is a term that Army doctrine does not address within the two leadership manuals; Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 and Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22. While Army doctrine specifically addresses followers, as described above, toxic is used only in relation to leaders. The absence of toxic followership within Army leadership doctrine is discussed in detail in chapter 5 of this study.

Padilla describes toxic categories of toxic followers: colluders or conformers. Conformers are followers with unmet basic needs, negative core evaluations, and low psychological maturity. Conformers are drawn to toxic leaders through the offering of a sense of community and a group in which to belong.²⁴ Individuals with low self-esteem are drawn to charismatic leaders who are intent on controlling or manipulating them and they often times feel they deserve such treatment. Additionally, followers with low self-efficacy are drawn to destructive leaders as well.²⁵ Additionally, research on moral reasoning and self-concept indicates that psychologically immature individuals are more likely to conform, blindly obey, or even participate in destructive acts.²⁶ With this in mind, conformers can turn into colluders when those impressionable followers internalize a destructive leader's vision, and thus become committed to that vision.²⁷ Colluders are then, those followers who are ambitious people seeking social status and are willing to

support and encourage toxic strategies if they advance their personal agenda.²⁸ Followers in the colluding category have beliefs that are consistent with those of a toxic leader and will therefore commit to their cause. The closer the beliefs of the leader are to those of the follower, the stronger the bond and the greater the motivation to follow.²⁹

In the follower sub section of this thesis, Kelley's description of followers contained several types that would fall into the toxic followership section. The sheep or yes-people are those who rely on the leader to do their thinking, attach themselves to the leader, and thereby go along with anything the leader wishes. Their motivation is often calculative, and they are seeking to satisfy their need for safety or security within a threatening environment. These types of followers know their place and will yield to the leader in all instances. They typically say only what the leader wishes to hear and will often withhold information from the leader if they believe it will upset him or her.³⁰

Howell and Mendez describe another type of follower who would fall into the toxic followership category. This type of follower, they describe as a political gamesman. This person is one who spends time and effort interacting with leaders in order to adjust their behavior and communication to fit in with the dominant flow of events. These type of followers carry out orders exactly as they are written, even if they know there is a better way to do something. They do this to create a paper trail and to protect themselves in the event the order or decision was the wrong one. These type of followers are constantly trying to manipulate the system and individuals to benefit themselves.³¹

Boas Shamir introduces another type of follower, which is one who lacks a sense of personal identity and tries to establish one through a close relationship with another person. In a situation such as this, the leader and group give the follower order and

meaning. Where a follower such as this can venture into the toxic side of followership is when they overlook unethical behavior by the leader or the group in order to preserve their self-image. This can also lead to the followers becoming fanatics and completely suspending their own judgment.³²

Leadership-follower Model

There are numerous leadership models available for use today. A search on Google for “Leadership model” results in 320,000,000 results. What is less prevalent are models that include the role of followers as well as leaders, within the leadership process. This section will cover various leadership-follower models.

The leader-member exchange theory results from literature on transformational leadership developed by Dansereau, Graen, and Haga in 1975 in their article *A Vertical Dyad Linkage Approach to Leadership Within Formal Organizations: A longitudinal Investigation of the Role Making Process*. Within this article, the authors discuss how leaders form an exchange relationship with each follower. The theory centers around three stages of development. The first is the organizational stage, where a leader emerges from a group. There are various reasons why this person may rise out of the group and begin to emerge as a leader, such as having charisma, intelligence, or some other quality that the others in the group recognize as desirable or essential. The second stage is role development, where task further define the roles of all members, and an attempt is made to balance the leader’s direct involvement in decision-making and the delegation of work to others. The third stage is the establishment of the leader-led relationship. This is where the leader-member exchange develops. There are many factors that affect this leader-exchange establishment such as culture, economy, charisma, number and size of tasks,

and familiarity.³³ Some critiques of this model state that the theory does not account for exchange relations that change over time, and that it seems to be too simplistic to be of use to any real-world manager.³⁴ Another critique is that there is not a clear definition of the exchange relationships, to include divergence in the ratings depending on whether the supervisor or the subordinate is asked to provide the rating.³⁵

Kelley, as previously described, categorized followers according to thinking and acting. Followers were broken into five categories of the sheep, yes-people, pragmatics, alienated, and star followers. Kelley, in his later text of *The Power of Followership*, further expounds this follower theory.³⁶

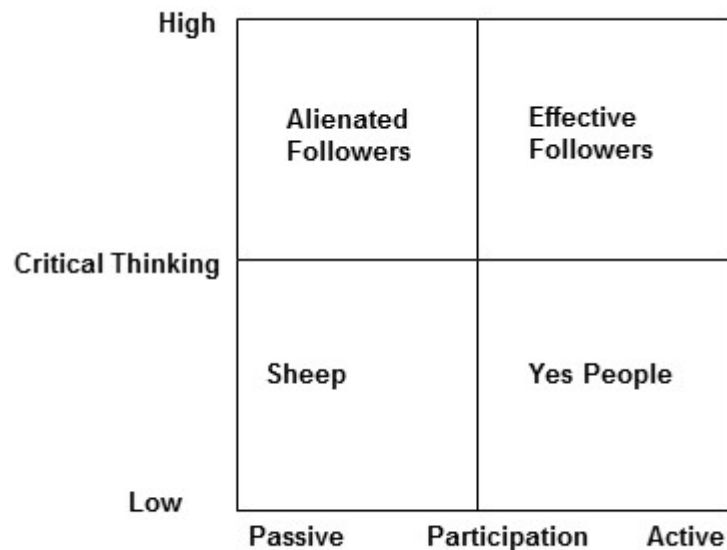


Figure 2. Kelley’s Different Types of Followers

Source: Robert Earl Kelley, *The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow, and Followers Who Lead Themselves* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1992), 137.

Kelley's theory attempts to demonstrate the levels at which each group of followers think for themselves as well as how dedicated they are to their work.

A third leader-follower theory is Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory. This theory attempts to establish the type of leadership based on the degree of relationship and task oriented behavior required by the situation.³⁷ The four leadership styles that Hersey and Blanchard describe are telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Telling is a style that a leader should use when followers lack the training, confidence, or desire to complete a task. The theory recommends a task-oriented leader in this case. Selling is the style to use with followers who are confident and willing, but are not capable of completing the task. High levels of both task and relationship oriented behaviors are recommended for leaders in this situation. Participating is the leadership style to use in order to boost the motivation of followers who have the ability to meet their goals but lack the confidence. Relationship oriented behaviors fit best in this situation. Delegating is the final style, which leaders should use when followers are able, confident, and motivated. Low levels of relationship and task-oriented behaviors are recommended for this type of situation.³⁸ Figure 3 sums up the theory.

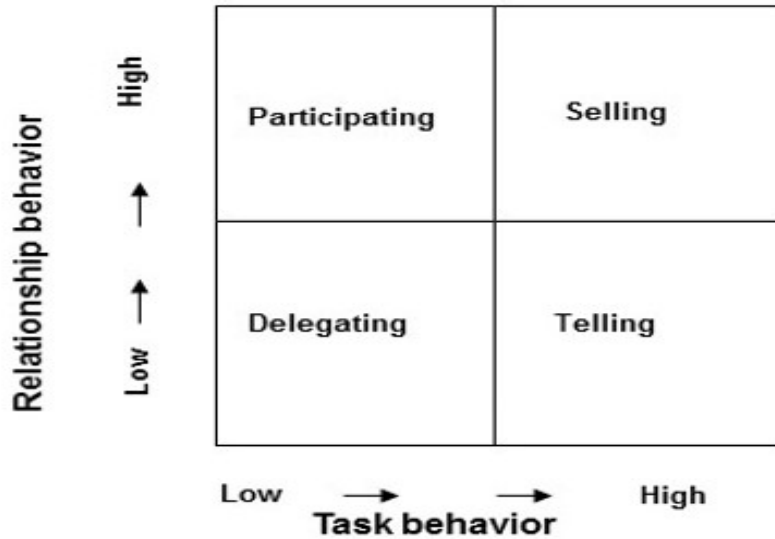


Figure 3. Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Quadrants

Source: Hersey and Blanchard (1982), quoted in Elizabeth Thach, Karen Thompson, and Alan Morris, "A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles," *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management* (April 1, 2006): 311-312.

A fourth theory introduced by Thach, Thompson, and Morris in *A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles* is a combination of the previous two. The theory is depicted in figure 4 and 5.

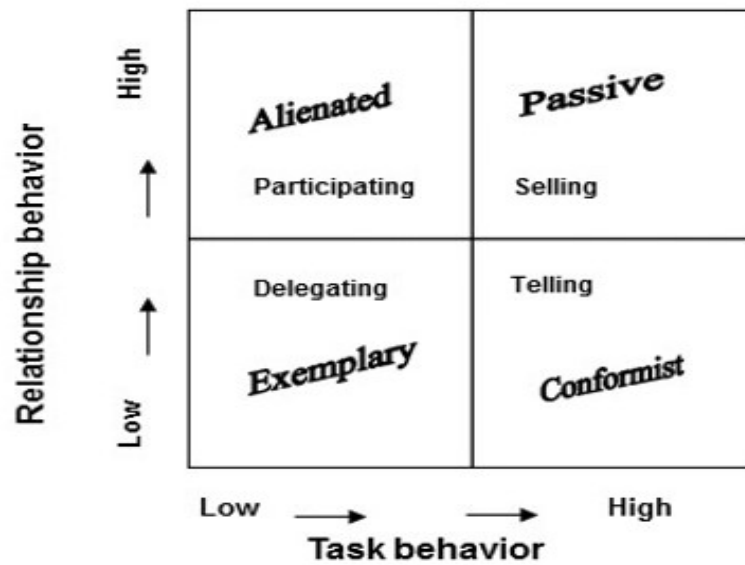


Figure 4. Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Quadrants

Source: Hersey and Blanchard (1982), quoted in Elizabeth Thach, Karen Thompson, and Alan Morris, "A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles," *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management* (April 1, 2006): 311-312.

Leadership Quadrant	Leader Behaviors Recommended	Follower Behaviors Recommended	Followership Quadrant
Participating →	The inclusion of followers in decision making to cause alienated followers to take ownership	Becoming more involved through participation. Changing insider vs. outsider mindset.	← Alienated
Selling →	Explaining decisions and clarifying expectations to engage passive followers.	Doing as requested.	← Passive
Telling →	Detailing expectations and monitoring performance to direct conformist followers.	Showing that results are important.	← Conformist
Delegating →	Turning over decision making responsibility and implementation.	Demonstrating results with increased responsibility.	← Exemplary

Figure 5. Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership Quadrants

Source: Hersey and Blanchard (1982), quoted in Elizabeth Thach, Karen Thompson, and Alan Morris, “A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles,” *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management* (April 1, 2006): 311-312.

The Thach, Thompson, and Morris model attempts to show that followership lays a vital role at every level within an organization. To increase the effectiveness of followers, a leader must apply the correct leadership style based on the different level of critical thinking of the follower.³⁹ This model also has limitations, which are that leaders and followers often have a dominant style, but they do not tend to use this one style in all situations, and because of this, the environment can skew the results of the quadrant match-ups.⁴⁰

The previous four models show proposed leadership and follower categories, and how to best match those two in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency within an

organization. Each has varying degrees of leaders and followers who could be considered toxic. A fifth model proposed by Padilla in *Leadership: Leaders, Followers, Environments*, focuses primarily on the idea of toxic leadership. The model is comprised of destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and a conducive environment, depicted in figure 5.

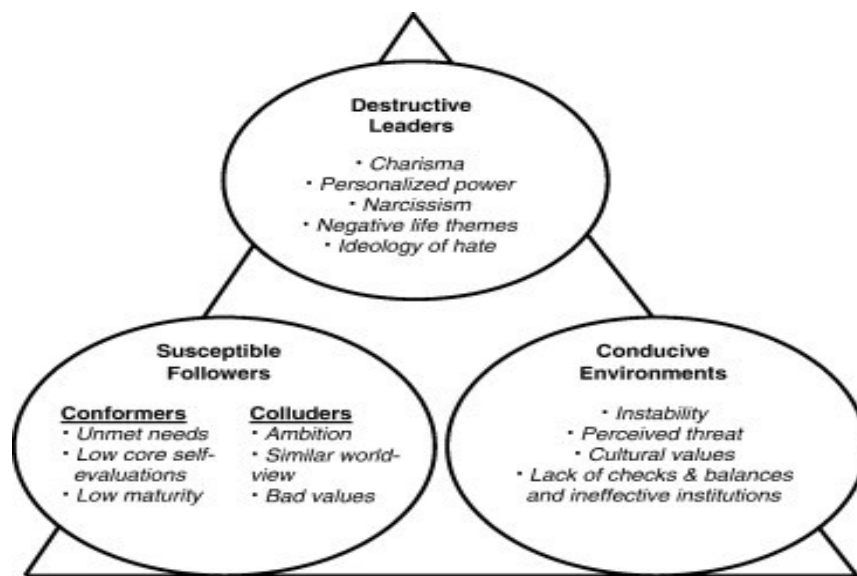


Figure 6. Toxic Triangle Source: Arthur Padilla (2013)

Source: Arthur Padilla, *Leadership: Leaders, Followers, and Environments* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2013), 195.

This theory states that there is a difference between toxicity and goodness, that the toxic triangle is more than just a destructive leader, distinguishes between leader behaviors and traits versus organizational outcomes, and that there is a range of outcomes in any leadership situation.⁴¹

Padilla's theory brings together all the components discussed previously of destructive leaders and susceptible followers, but in addition introduces the notion of conducive environments. This element of the theory is one that envelops leaders, followers, and their interactions. Padilla argues that the most important determinant of toxicity is the presence or absence of checks and balances. In addition, four environmental factors are important for destructive leadership to exist and persist, which are absence of checks and balances, organizational instability or turbulence, organizational complexity, and a perceived threat.⁴²

With key terms defined, and a review of various leadership models complete, the model that best suits this research, is the Toxic Triangle by Padilla. With the principles outlined in the Toxic Triangle and through the methodology of a qualitative multiple case study, as described in the following chapter, an answer to the primary research question of how toxic followership influences leadership in U. S. Army operations, and subsequent questions of what it means to be a toxic follower, whether all toxic followers are the same or if there are different kinds of toxic followers, and what effect a toxic follower has on a leader, whether toxic or not will be formed.

Case Study Reviews

My Lai

The My Lai massacre occurred on March 16, 1968. Soldiers from Charlie Company of 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division conducted a mass killing of up to 500 unarmed civilians in South Vietnam. The commander of the company was Ernest Medina, who soldiers describe as being fair, did not play favorites, and had a no-nonsense approach to the army.⁴³ William Calley was a

platoon leader within Charlie Company, and many soldiers within the company thought of Calley as being “a kid trying to play war.”⁴⁴ Soldiers described Calley as having a lack of respect for the local populace, and an attitude of not caring about soldiers doing anything wrong. Both leaders would go on to play critical roles throughout the My Lai massacre.

On March 14, 1968, the company sustained an incident with a booby trap, resulting in the death of a popular sergeant and wounding several other soldiers. The night of 15 March, CPT Medina, following a funeral service for the sergeant killed in action, talked with his soldiers about an upcoming mission in My Lai, which was a group of sub hamlets of Son My village. Intelligence suggested the 48th Battalion of the Viet Cong were in the area. There is much speculation as to what higher headquarters gave to CPT Medina and what he then passed to his soldiers, what is not speculation is that the company was tired of sustaining casualties from an enemy they could not see, and for the first time they were expecting to aggressively encounter the enemy. Another critical aspect of the mission was that the civilians within the area were thought to be Viet Cong supporters and the plan was to attack at a time when civilians would be at the market and not within the villages. The men were told to burn all the houses, slaughter all livestock, collapse all wells, and ruin all the crops.⁴⁵ The end state of the mission was to render the area incapable of further support for the Viet Cong, along with killing or capturing all Viet Cong present.

The mission began at 7:22 a.m. on March 16th, with the insertion of first platoon, led by LT Calley, and second platoon, led by LT Stephen Brooks. The mission of the first two platoons was to sweep the village and eliminate the opposition. Third platoon led by

LT Jeffrey La Crosse, with a mission of moving through the hamlet after the first two platoons and killing all the livestock and burning the hooches, and the company headquarters, along with CPT Medina, were in reserve. At 8 a.m., first platoon and LT Calley moved into the village. By 11 a.m. most of the killing was over. What remained were the bodies of nearly 500 innocent men, women, and children.

On November 17, 1970 14 officers were charged with suppressing information related to the incident. Only the BDE commander COL Henderson was charged on trial, but was acquitted on December 17, 1971.

LT Calley was convicted to life in prison on March 29, 1971 after being found guilty of premeditated murder of not fewer than 20 people. LT Calley ultimately served three and a half years under house arrest before being paroled by the Secretary of the Army Howard Callaway.⁴⁶

CPT Medina and CPT Kotouc, who was an intelligence officer for the 11th Brigade were both found not guilty at a court-martial. Of all the individuals who were charged during the aftermath of My Lai, only LT Calley was convicted.⁴⁷

Abu Ghraib

Abu Ghraib is a case that surfaced on April 28, 2004 on CBS's *60 Minutes II*. With the airing of the show, it was the first glimpse that Americans had into the alleged detainee abuse carried out by Soldiers from the 372nd MP Company. Prior to the CBS story, on January 14, 2004 an anonymous person slipped a compact disc full of pictures of prisoner abuse under the door of the CID office in the Baghdad Central Confinement Facility (BDDF). After an initial investigation by CID, seven soldiers were brought up on charges ranging from conspiracy to maltreat, maltreatment of detainees, false official

statement, and indecent acts.⁴⁸ Of the seven soldiers charged, six of them were still serving in Iraq. Those soldiers were SSG Ivan Fredrick, SGT Javal Davis, CPL Charles Graner, SPC Jeremy Sivits, SPC Megan Ambuhl, and SPC Sabrina Harman. The remaining soldier, not in Iraq was PFC Lynndie England, who was at Fort Bragg after being sent stateside when she became pregnant.

Abu Ghraib itself is a city located west of the Baghdad city center. Abu Ghraib prison was the main facility used by Saddam Hussein for the incarceration of political dissidents. Thousands of detainees there were tortured and executed. In 2003, the United States began to use Abu Ghraib prison as a U. S. Army detention facility. Under U.S. control, the prison held as many as 3,800 detainees. The facility was approximately 280 acres and consisted of both the prison facility and tents within the grounds where detainees were held. The actual prison was known as the hard-site by American soldiers, and was a two-story building. There was a central corridor, with tiers shooting off left and right.⁴⁹ Some of the tiers were damaged during the war and unusable, but tiers 2 through 4 each housed 16 detainees. Tiers 2 through 4 were used to house Iraqi on Iraqi criminals. Tier 1B was the place where juvenile or female prisoners and disciplinary problem detainees from the outside tent facility were placed.⁵⁰ Tier 1A was used by Military Intelligence (MI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) representatives to segregate certain detainees from the others.⁵¹ This tier was also the epicenter for the abuses that would change the face of the U.S. war in the Middle East.

There were multiple investigations and trials throughout several years. The first conviction was SPC Megan Abbuhl who plead guilty to dereliction of duty at a summary court martial on October 30, 2004. She received a reduction in rank to private and a loss

of a half-month's pay. The Army administratively discharged her and she testified in multiple cases against other soldiers.⁵²

SGT Santos Cardona was convicted of dereliction of duty and aggravated assault at a general court-martial on June 1, 2006. He was a military dog handler that was not initially charged with the original seven soldiers. He received a sentence of 90 days of hard labor, reduced to specialist, and lost 600 dollars of pay per month for twelve months. SGT Cardona remained in the military and was promoted to sergeant within a new unit. He was later killed in an IED attack in 2009, while working as a civilian contractor.⁵³

SP Armin Cruz pleaded guilty to conspiracy to maltreat and maltreatment of detainees at a special court-martial on September 11, 2004. He received eight months confinement, a reduction to private, and a bad-conduct discharge. He also testified in multiple cases against other soldiers.⁵⁴

SGT Javal Davis pleaded guilty to assault, dereliction of duty, and false official statement at a general court-martial February 1, 2005. He received six month's confinement, reduction to private, and a bad-conduct discharge.⁵⁵

PFC Lynndie England was convicted of conspiracy to maltreat, maltreatment of detainees, and committing an indecent act at a general court-martial on September 26, 2005. She received three years' confinement, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, a reduction to private, and a dishonorable discharge.⁵⁶

SSG Ivan Frederick pleaded guilty to conspiracy, dereliction of duty, maltreatment of detainees, assault, and committing an indecent act at a general court-martial on October 20, 2004. He received eight years' confinement, forfeiture of pay,

reduction in rank to private, and a dishonorable discharge. He testified at hearing for multiple soldiers.⁵⁷

CPL Charles Graner was convicted of conspiracy to maltreat detainees, dereliction of duty, assault, maltreatment of detainees, and committing an indecent act with detainees at a general court-martial on January 14, 2005. He received 10 years' confinement, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, a reduction to private, and a dishonorable discharge.⁵⁸

SPC Sabrina Harman was convicted of conspiracy to maltreat detainees, dereliction of duty, and maltreatment of detainees on May 17, 2005. She was acquitted of one count of maltreatment, but did receive six months' confinement, reduction to private, and a bad-conduct discharge.⁵⁹

SPC Roman Krol pleaded guilty to conspiracy and maltreatment of detainees at a special court-martial on February 1, 2005. His sentence included ten months' confinement, a reduction to private, and a bad-conduct discharge.⁶⁰

SPC Jeremy Sivits pleaded guilty to conspiracy to maltreat, maltreatment of detainees, and dereliction of duty at a special court-martial on May 19, 2004. He received one-year confinement, reduction to private, and a bad-conduct discharge. He testified in several other soldier cases.⁶¹

SGT Michael Smith was convicted of prisoner maltreatment, assault, conspiracy to maltreat, dereliction of duty, and committing an indecent act at a general court-martial on March 21, 2006. He received 179 days confinement, a fine of 2,250 dollars, a reduction to private, and a bad-conduct discharge.⁶²

Others associated with the events at Abu Ghraib, but not necessarily charged with offenses were:

BG Janis Karpinski, the commanding general of the 800th MP Brigade, of which the 372nd fell under, was relieved of her command on April 8, 2005 and demoted to colonel on May 5, 2005 based on allegations of dereliction of duty and shoplifting.⁶³

1SG Brian Liminsk was initially suspended of duties as the 1SG for the 372nd MP Company on January 17, 2004 but later returned to that position on April 30, 2004.⁶⁴

MG Geoffrey Miller who was the two-star commander of Guantanamo detention facility during 2003-2004 and toured the Abu Ghraib facility in September 2003, offering his recommendations on detention and intelligence operations, retired from the Army as a two-star general after testifying in the case of SGT Cardona.⁶⁵

COL Thomas Pappa was relieved of his command of the 205th MI brigade on May 13, 2005. He was in charge of the soldiers tasked with intelligence gathering through interrogations in tier 1. He received non-judicial punishment for dereliction of duty for his actions at Abu Ghraib and received an official letter of reprimand and a fine of 8,000 dollars.⁶⁶

LTC Jerry Phillabaum, the battalion commander of 320th MP battalion in charge of the 372nd MP Company, was relieved of his command and received a general officer memorandum of reprimand.⁶⁷

CPT Donald Reese was initially suspend from command of the 372nd MP Company on January 17, 2004. He returned to command on April 30, 2004. He was later promoted to major and remains in the Army Reserve.⁶⁸

Black Hearts Brigade

On September 29, 2005, 1st Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division's 502nd Infantry Regiment deployed to an area of operations within Iraq commonly referred to as the "Triangle of Death." The "Triangle of Death" is an area that lies between Baghdad and Al Hillah. An estimated one million civilians, mostly Sunni, live throughout the area. 1-502nd's area of operations included the towns of Mahmudiyah, Lutufiyah, Usufiyah, and Mullah Fayyad. Specifically, Bravo company's area of operations contained the towns of Yusufiyah and Mullah Fayyad along with smaller hamlets, the Jurf al-Sukr Bridge, and it also formed most of the 1-502nd's western boundary.⁶⁹ The entire company area was approximately fifty-square-miles, and had five major routes within; Route Malibu, Route Caveman, Mullah Fayyad Highway, Route Fat Boy, and Route Sportster. The relief in place, transition of authority that the 1-502nd conducted with Georgia's 48th Infantry Brigade was lacking in the minds of 1-502nd soldiers. The 48th Infantry Brigade was being reassigned to a less risky base away from direct combat missions, after sustaining twenty-one dead soldiers in combat within a five-month period. The living conditions that the 1-502nd, specifically Bravo company, were terrible. Bravo Company's tactical operations center was placed at Yusufiyah. When Bravo Company arrived at Yusufiyah, there were boxes of open food strewn about, feces and other waste clogged in the gutters, discarded food and meat that was welded by heat and sand to the floor of the chow hall, and provisions rotting in open freezers. The showers were covered in mold. Bravo company commander Captain John Goodwin, inherited.

This high casualty rate, coupled with declining morale and discipline culminated in four soldiers from 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, committing multiple war crimes to

include the rape of a 14-year-old girl, and the subsequent murder of her, her parents, and her 6-year-old sister.⁷⁰

Specialist Paul Cortez is currently serving a one hundred year prison sentence at the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He will be eligible for parole in 2016.⁷¹

Specialist James Barker is currently serving a ninety year prison sentence at the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He will be eligible for parole in 2016.⁷²

Private Steven Green was serving five consecutive life sentences without the possibility of parole at the United States Penitentiary in Terre Haute, Indiana. In February 2014, he committed suicide while in his cell.⁷³

Private Jesse Spielman is serving a ninety-year prison sentence at the United States Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He is eligible for parole in 2016.⁷⁴

¹ Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 1.

² Ibid.

³ Padilla, 12.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Mary Parker Follett, *Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 303.

⁶ Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Padilla, 200-208.

¹⁰ Jean Blumen, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians--and How We Can Survive Them* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 19-20.

¹¹ Department of the Army, ADP 6-22, 2.

¹² Padilla, 120.

¹³ Peter Drucker, "The Coming of the New Organization," *Harvard Business Review* (January 1988): 45-53.

¹⁴ Padilla, 120-121.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 122-125.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 125-126.

¹⁸ Robert E. Kelley, "Rethinking Followership," in *The Art of Followership How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, ed. Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 7-15.

¹⁹ James Maroosis, "Rethinking Followership," in *The Art of Followership How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, ed. Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 18.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 17-24.

²¹ Robert Earl Kelley, *The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow, and Followers Who Lead Themselves* (New York: Doubleday/Currency, 1992).

²² Jon Howell and Maria Mendez, "Three Perspectives on Followership," in *The Art of Followership How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, ed. Ronald E. Riggio, Ira Chaleff, and Jean Lipman-Blumen (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 25-39.

²³ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

²⁴ Padilla, 210.

²⁵ Fred Luthans, Suzanne Peterson, and Elina Ibrayeva, "The Potential for the "Dark Side" of Leadership in Post Communist Countries," *Journal of World Business* (June 1998): 185-201.

²⁶ Jane Howell and Boas Shamir, "The Role of Followers in The Charismatic Leadership Process: Relationships and Their Consequences," *The Academy of Management Review* (January 2005): 96-112.

²⁷ Padilla, 210.

²⁸ Lynn Offerman, "When Followers Become Toxic," *Harvard Business Review* (January 2004): 55-60.

²⁹ Stuart Weierter, "Who Wants to Play "Follow the Leader?" A Theory of Charismatic Relationships Based on Routinized Charisma and Follower Characteristics," *Leadership Quarterly* (January 1997): 171-93.

³⁰ Kelley, 7-15.

³¹ Howell and Mendez, 28-29.

³² Boas Shamir, "Motivation of Followers," in *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, ed. George R. Goethals, Georgia J. Sorenson, and James MacGregor Burns (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Productions, 2004), 500-505.

³³ Fred Danserau, George Graen, and William Haga, "A Vertical Dyad Linkage Approach to Leadership Within Formal Organizations: A Longitudinal Investigation of the Role Making Process," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* (February 1975): 46-78.

³⁴ Padilla, 116.

³⁵ Chester Schriesheim, Stephanie Castro, and Claudia Cogliser, "Leader-member Exchange (LMX) Research: A Comprehensive Review of Theory, Measurement, and Data-analytic Practices," *Leadership Quarterly* (March 1997): 827-44.

³⁶ Kelley, 137.

³⁷ Elizabeth Thach, Karen Thompson, and Alan Morris, "A Fresh Look at Followership: A Model for Matching Followership and Leadership Styles," *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management* (April 2006): 311-312.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 311.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 314.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁴¹ Padilla, 196.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 212-213.

⁴³ James Stuart Olson, and Randy Roberts, *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1998), 1-10.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 203-204.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Graveline and Clemens, 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, 305.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Graveline and Clemens, 305.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 305-306.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 306.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 306-307.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 307.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 308.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Frederick, 52-53.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 367.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 368.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Followership, whether toxic or not, is not something that can be measured in a quantitative way. It does not come in a certain quantity, nor does it occur at a certain frequency. With the absence of numerical data, a quantitative approach is not possible. For this study, a qualitative case study methodology was chosen because, with followership, and more specifically toxic followership, having a small body of peer-reviewed research, the study lends itself to a qualitative approach focusing on identification of common issues that recur and main themes within multiple case studies to confirm or deny the research questions.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research aims at gaining understanding an aspect of social life. The goal is not to express an answer to questions through data, but words instead. There are some negatives associated with qualitative research. The primary negative is that it is difficult to discern how biased the results are from the researcher's opinion. Where qualitative research excels is in areas where little research exists. Qualitative research can help to set the stage with generating hypothesis for follow on quantitative research. The primary research question in this study looks at the influence toxic followership has on leadership in U.S. Army operations. With followership, and more specifically toxic followership, having a small body of peer-reviewed research, the study lends itself to a qualitative approach.

Within qualitative research, there are four major methods; phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. For this research, the method chosen for use will be case study research, and more specifically a multiple-case study approach. According to R. K. Yin in *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, a multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to see if there are similarities that can be generalized. Because comparisons are drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory.¹

Case Study Research Design and Methods

Research Design

The purpose of a case study is to conduct an in-depth study of a particular research problem, instead of a sweeping statistical survey or comprehensive comparative inquiry within a quantitative study. Case studies can assist in narrowing a broad field or research into a few manageable examples. The case study design is particularly useful when not much is documented about an issue.

After gathering the required sources of evidence, identification of common issues that recur and main themes will be crucial and completed using thematic analysis. As R. E. Boyatzis writes in *Transforming Qualitative Information*, thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information, and may be a list of themes, a complex model with themes, indicators, and qualification that are causally related; or something in between these two forms.² These patterns and themes will either confirm or deny the research questions.

Data Collection

According to R. K. Yin in *Case Study Research Design and Methods*, the six sources of evidence most commonly used in case study methodology are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation, and physical artifacts.³ This study uses documentation in the form of letters, memorandums, and other communiques, administrative reports, and formal studies or evaluations. The study includes archival records, in the form of organizational records, maps, charts, and personal records such as diaries. This list is not all-inclusive.

Data Analysis

Interpretation of data compiled during this research was completed through identification of themes. These themes were identified by individual accounts describing key individuals within each case study. These individuals were separated into two categories, leaders and followers. Another theme analyzed was that of a third category which contained information regarding the environment that both leaders and followers operated within. After the separation of data into the three categories, the researcher then identified patterns among the themes, specifically patterns that give meaning to the research study.

Ethical Considerations: Bias

This research, as is the case with virtually all qualitative studies, has potential ethical issues that the researcher may encounter throughout. Ethical issues within qualitative research can occur prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, data analysis, reporting the data, and in publishing the study.⁴

Some ethical considerations pertaining specifically to this research study during data analysis were avoidance of siding with participants and avoiding disclosing only positive results. To eliminate this potential ethical consideration, the researcher provided multiple perspectives, reported all findings regardless of being positive or negative examples of leadership and followership, and provided an unbiased portrayal of the environments the units operated within, as found within data sources.

Research Objective

The primary objective of this research was to determine how toxic followership influences leadership in U.S. Army operations. In an effort to combat toxic leadership, thorough analysis is required to determine what factors most enable or influence it. This research has implications outside the U.S. Army as well, as toxic leadership is in virtually every type of organization.

The questions that will help guide the presentation of facts and analysis that follow in chapter 4 are:

1. What does it mean to be a toxic follower?
2. Are all toxic followers the same or are there different kinds of toxic followership?
3. What effect does being a toxic follower have on a leader, whether toxic or not?

Case Study Selection

The cases of My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and the Black Heart's Brigade span military history from the 1960s to the 2000s. There is significant research available on each case, which enables a rich understanding of the leaders involved, the environment surrounding

the incidents, and the action or inaction of the followers. It is because of these reasons, that each is included within this study. To ensure the research is contained within a manageable scope, the limit of research will be set at only these three cases. The goal is to obtain quality, and not simply quantity (figure 2).

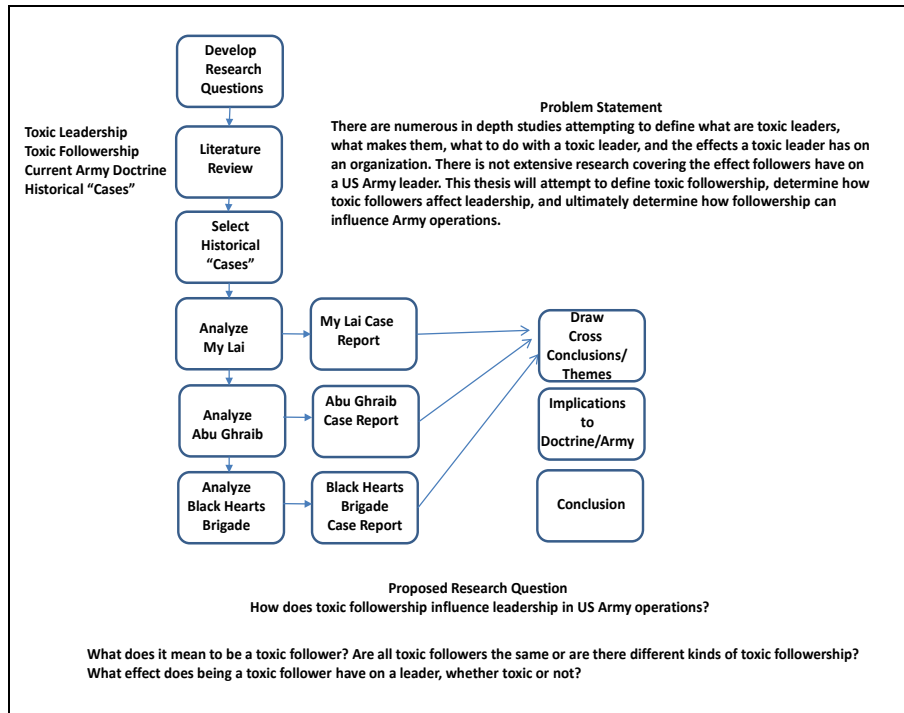


Figure 7. Proposed Research Methodology

Source: Created by author.

Summary

The aim of qualitative research is to understand an aspect of social life. In this research study, the aim is to understand the relationship between toxic leaders, toxic followers, and a conducive environment. With the lack of dedicated research focusing on

toxic followership, and specifically on toxic followership within the military, the research lent itself to this type of qualitative approach. A multiple case study was chosen based on limitations, the most limiting being time. For data collection, archival records, interviews, and observations were used in the form of books written by various authors who were either present during the incidents or who produced material after compiling information from individuals who were present. Again, due to the limitation of time, only data on individuals specifically involved within each incident was analyzed. There are numerous individuals involved within each case study that this research did not address or analyze in depth. Ethical considerations, specifically bias during data analysis, were eliminated by providing an accurate representation of the data analyzed and by providing multiple perspectives of the individuals involved.

¹ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003).

² Richard E. Boyatzis, *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

³ *Ibid.*, 85-96.

⁴ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2013), 56-57.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

This chapter begins with analysis of leaders directly involved with the incidents of each case study. For My Lai, the leaders are Captain Ernest Medina and Lieutenant William Calley. For Abu Ghraib, they are Staff Sergeant Ivan Fredrick and Corporal Charles Graner. For the Black Hearts Brigade, it is Specialist Paul Cortez. After analyzing the leaders within each case, the followers were analyzed in the same manner. For My Lai, it was the soldiers of Charlie Company of 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division, for Abu Ghraib it was the soldiers of the 372nd MP company that worked or were associated with Staff Sergeant Fredrick and his night shift, and for the Black Hearts Brigade it was the soldiers who were under the supervision of SPC Cortez. After analyzing both leaders and followers within each case study, analysis of the environment that each unit operated within was conducted. After analyzing each, common themes were then identified.

Leadership/Toxic Leadership

This section will take a deeper look at key leaders within each case study. Due to the scope of this study, it is not all-inclusive but rather focuses on key leaders within the organizations closely tied to each case study. It includes discussion from various individuals as to what type of leader or person they believe each subject is. Determining whether a person is a toxic leader or not is difficult, but through identifying commonalities across multiple case studies, using the toxic triangle model, it is not impossible.

My Lai

The My Lai massacre occurred on March 16, 1968. Soldiers from Charlie Company of 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 11th Brigade of the 23rd Infantry Division conducted a mass killing of up to 500 unarmed civilians in South Vietnam. The commander of the company was Ernest Medina, who soldiers describe as being fair, did not play favorites, and had a no-nonsense approach to the army.¹ William Calley was a platoon leader within Charlie Company, and many soldiers within the company thought of Calley as being “a kid trying to play war.”² Soldiers described Calley as having a lack of respect for the local populace, and an attitude of not caring about soldiers doing anything wrong. Both leaders would go on to play critical roles throughout the My Lai massacre.

There are numerous leaders at multiple levels of command involved in the My Lai incident. This research is scoped to cover two officers within Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry; specifically Captain Ernest L. Medina the company commander and Lieutenant William L. Calley the 1st Platoon leader. Testimony concerning the actual events during the My Lai massacre are conflicting. With this discrepancy in mind, the following focuses on accounts of both Captain Medina and Lieutenant Calley prior to and after the actual massacre took place.

Captain Ernest Medina

Captain Ernest Medina was a Mexican American who enlisted in the army to escape the poverty of his youth.³ Medina rose through the enlisted ranks quickly and anyone who made a mistake was apt to receive an earful of abuse, and would instantly understand where his nickname of “Mad Dog” came from.⁴ As described by Charles

West, a member of Charlie Company, “Medina was one of the best officers I’ve known, the soldiers of Charlie Company operated together or not at all! We cared about each and every individual and each and every individual’s problems. This is the way we were taught by Captain Medina to feel toward each other. We were like brothers.”⁵ Gregory Olsen, a member of 1st Platoon, recalled, “CPT Medina, was in my opinion an outstanding Commander. He was always concerned with the welfare of his men. Sometimes we did things the hard way, but in the end it was always the best for us.”⁶ Dennis Conti, another member of 1st Platoon, stated in his testimony to the Peers Commission when asked what kind of company commander Captain Medina was and if he took care of his men that he was “a good company commander and he watched out for his men. I believe he did the best for his men and the job we had to do.”⁷ In the book *The Vietnam War on Trial*, Michal Belknap describes Captain Medina as “being as competent as Calley was inept.”⁸ Belknap goes on to write that Lieutenant Colonel Edward Beers considered Captain Medina to be the most outstanding officer in his organization. In addition, he describes how Lieutenant Calley himself believed that the Army would have to commission close to half a million officers to find another who was Medina’s equal. Lieutenant Calley believed it was Medina who made their company the best one in Hawaii, that Medina was a “real leader”, and “I really respect him.”⁹ By all accounts, Captain Medina seems to have been a hardworking, no nonsense soldier that worked his way up from his initial enlistment. His soldiers believed he was a competent leader who took care of him. His superiors echoed that competency and consistently ranked him among their best leaders within their organizations.

Lieutenant William L. Calley

Lieutenant Calley's subordinates and superiors describe him as incompetent as Captain Medina was competent.¹⁰ Calley joined the Army in the hopes that by enlisting rather than being brought in through the draft we would be able to secure a more interesting job. Calley did complete a few years of college, and because of this, they Army sent him to Officer Candidate School, where he turned out to be a poor excuse for an officer. He was never able to master reading maps and had difficulty in carrying out basic assignments, in addition to having zero leadership ability. Most of the men in the company remember him as a pint-sized joke, a Napoleon want-to-be who would demand a level of respect that he was never able to earn. He reminded one of his platoon members of "a little kid trying to play war," and even though he routinely tried to impress Captain Medina, he was never held in high regard.¹¹ Captain Medina often would refer to Lieutenant Calley as "Sweetheart" and would ridicule him in front of his platoon. A member of 1st Platoon recalled Lieutenant Calley as "always doing something wrong. . . . I wondered sometimes how he got through OCS; he couldn't read no darn map and a compass would confuse his ass."¹²

As Charlie Company entered combat, some soldiers made the necessary adjustments easier than others did. Lieutenant Calley was the one who was singled out the most as failing to make these adjustments. One soldier called him a "glory-hungry person. . . . the kind of person who would have sacrificed all of us for his own personal advancement." A second soldier noted that Calley's men hated him so much that they "put a bounty on his head." To make it worse, Captain Medina often referred to him as "Lieutenant Shithead." All this together did not instill confidence within his men, and to

add to it, his inability to read a map often got his platoon lost and his soldiers also believed he reacted badly when under fire.¹³ Allen Byce, a member of Calley's platoon, recalled how "Everybody used to joke about Calley. He reminded me of a kid, a kid trying to play war."¹⁴ Calley himself conceded at a later date that he "was a very inadequate leader," but during his time in Vietnam his soldiers remembered him as repeatedly stating to his soldiers that, "I'm the boss."¹⁵ His platoon sergeant described how nothing other than Lieutenant Calley's rank entitled him to authority. "He was my superior officer and I had to follow him whether I wanted to or not," this did not however keep the platoon sergeant from often arguing with Calley in front of the platoon. General William Westmoreland, the commander of United States forces in Vietnam from 1964 to 1968 stated that being an officer in the United States Army exceeded Lieutenant Calley's abilities. He believed that had it not been for the two years of college that Calley was able to complete, he would not have been an officer. He stated that Lieutenant Calley's obvious lack of supervision and failure to set a proper example himself were contrary to orders and policy, and the supervision he exercised fell far short.¹⁶

Abu Ghraib

Abu Ghraib is a case that surfaced on April 28, 2004 on CBS's *60 Minutes II*. With the airing of the show, it was the first glimpse that Americans had into the alleged detainee abuse carried out by Soldiers from the 372nd MP Company. Prior to the CBS story, on January 14, 2004 an anonymous person slipped a compact disc full of pictures of prisoner abuse under the door of the CID office in the Baghdad Central Confinement Facility (BDDF). After an initial investigation by CID, seven soldiers were brought up on charges ranging from conspiracy to maltreat, maltreatment of detainees, false official

statement, and indecent acts.¹⁷ Of the seven soldiers charged, six of them were still serving in Iraq. Those soldiers were SSG Ivan Fredrick, SGT Javal Davis, CPL Charles Graner, SPC Jeremy Sivits, SPC Megan Ambuhl, and SPC Sabrina Harman. The remaining soldier, not in Iraq was PFC Lynndie England, who was at Fort Bragg after being sent stateside when she became pregnant.

Much like My Lai, there are numerous leaders at multiple levels of command involved in the Abu Ghraib incident. Due to the scope of this study, the focus here will be on two key leaders within the 372nd MP Company; specifically SSG Ivan Fredrick, a leader by position, and CPL Charles Graner, a leader by personal power. Unlike My Lai, testimony concerning the actual events during the abuse at Abu Ghraib is consistent.

Staff Sergeant Ivan Fredrick

SSG Ivan Fredrick was the NCOIC of the entire hard-site prison facility during the night hours at Abu Ghraib. He was a small-town guy, who grew up in Maryland and West Virginia. He was continuously in the Army National Guard or Reserves since graduating high school. In his civilian career, he had a superb record of accomplishment at Buckingham Correctional Facility in Virginia.¹⁸ Chief prosecutor, Major Michael Holley described SSG Frederick as an average noncommissioned officer with no striking traits, a follower who was never on time.¹⁹ SGT Joseph Darby, a 372nd soldier who turned in cds with images of detainee abuse to CID that started the Abu Ghraib investigation, described Frederick as “not really mentally astute enough to think of some of the things that I saw in the CD.” By all accounts, SSG Fredrick was a competent but average non-commissioned officer who was a better follower than leader. He can best be summed up by fact that prior to this event, the worst thing Frederick had ever been

reprimanded for, either at work or in the military, was being five minutes late one day to a shift at the Virginia prison.²⁰

Corporal Charles Graner

CPL Charles Graner by contrast, according to prosecutor Captain Christopher Graveline, had a personality and work history that made him stand out as a leader. He had a reputation for being smart, charismatic, and outgoing and for possessing a dominant personality.²¹ Graner served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve during Operation Desert Storm, and had numerous years of experience as a prison guard in the United States. Graner did have a dark side, with allegations of physical abuse both in his professional and personal life. Inmates at Pennsylvania penitentiary where he worked complained of harassment, and his ex-wife filed for three restraining orders for alleged physical abuse during their divorce.²² Major Michael Holley, a prosecutor for the Abu Ghraib case, described Graner as a smart, charismatic, funny rogue who did his own thing.²³ Smart might have been an understatement, as out of a possible score of 130, Graner scored a 129 on the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery.²⁴ SSG Frederick would describe him, as “my first impression of Graner was that he was an arrogant, loud, and obnoxious-type person.”²⁵ When questioned by the prosecution, SGT Joseph Darby a member of the 372nd MP Company, described how SSG Frederick was not smart enough to organize the type of abuse that went on within the prison, and when asked by Captain Graveline who was, his reply was “Corporal Graner.”²⁶ SGT Joseph Darby best surmises CPL Graner as “having a charismatic hold over people, as a manipulative guy with an evil, dark, morbid side.”²⁷ He also described him as “Corporal Graner had a personality . . . it was kind of like an overpowering personality. Everybody wanted to be . . . most people wanted to be

around him and be associated with him.”²⁸ By all accounts, Charles Graner was smart, charismatic, personable, and while not the leader of the seven soldiers convicted of abuse by rank, he was the unofficial leader of the group.

Black Hearts Brigade

On September 29, 2005, 1st Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division’s 502nd Infantry Regiment deployed to an area of operations within Iraq commonly referred to as the “Triangle of Death.” The “Triangle of Death” is an area that lies between Baghdad and Al Hillah. An estimated one million civilians, mostly Sunni, live throughout the area. 1-502nd’s area of operations included the towns of Mahmudiyah, Lutufiyah, Usufiyah, and Mullah Fayyad. Specifically, Bravo Company’s area of operations contained the towns of Yusufiyah and Mullah Fayyad along with smaller hamlets, the Jurf al-Sukr Bridge, and it formed most of the 1-502nd’s western boundary.²⁹ The entire company area was approximately fifty-square-miles, and had five major routes within; Route Malibu, Route Caveman, Mullah Fayyad Highway, Route Fat Boy, and Route Sportster. The relief in place, transition of authority that the 1-502nd conducted with Georgia’s 48th Infantry Brigade was lacking in the minds of 1-502nd soldiers. The 48th Infantry Brigade was being reassigned to a less risky base away from direct combat missions, after sustaining twenty-one dead soldiers in combat within a five-month period. The living conditions that the 1-502nd, specifically Bravo company, were terrible. Bravo Company’s tactical operations center was placed at Yusufiyah. When Bravo Company arrived at Yusufiyah, there were boxes of open food strewn about, feces and other waste clogged in the gutters, discarded food and meat that was welded by heat and sand to the

floor of the chow hall, and provisions rotting in open freezers. The showers were covered in mold. Bravo company commander Captain John Goodwin, inherited.

This high casualty rate, coupled with declining morale and discipline culminated in four soldiers from 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, committing multiple war crimes to include the rape of a 14-year-old girl, and the subsequent murder of her, her parents, and her 6-year-old sister.³⁰

Like Abu Ghraib and My Lai, there are numerous leaders at multiple levels of command involved in the events leading up to the incident of murder and rape. A case can be made that toxicity or negligence existed from the squad leader up to the battalion chain of command. Much of these details are covered within the environment section of this study. However, due to the scope of this study, the focus here will be on the key leader within the Bravo Company, 1st platoon, 3rd squad that was in charge of the operations at TCP 2; specifically Specialist Paul Cortez.

Specialist Paul Cortez

Specialist Paul Cortez was acting squad leader of 3rd squad, 1st platoon, Bravo Company while Staff Sergeant Eric Lauzier was on leave for a month. This was a job that many within Bravo Company thought was beyond his capabilities.³¹ Although he had passed the promotion board, Cortez would not receive his promotion to sergeant for a few weeks, which was typically the prerequisite for leading a squad. Several Cortez's peers and superiors within the company thought he was a punk, who should not have been promoted at all. They thought he was immature, insecure, a loudmouth, and that he had a nasty streak.³² Cortez had been a Bradley Fighting Vehicle driver within the 4th Infantry Division during the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003, and he transferred afterwards to the

101st Airborne. Cortez came from a broken home. He spent much of his childhood with a drug-addict mother, living in motels around Barstow, California.³³ Around the age of fourteen, he was taken in by parents of a school friend. Once this occurred, his grades began to improve, and he finished high school. After graduating high school, the only viable option for him was joining the military.³⁴ Upon arrival at the 101st, Cortez was initially assigned to Staff Sergeant Payne in 2nd squad within Bravo company, but was quickly moved to 3rd. Staff Sergeant Payne, felt that Cortez was a classic field soldier but was someone who did not do well in a garrison environment.³⁵ Staff Sergeant Lauzier, the 3rd squad leader, concluded that Cortez was a pout and a borderline malingerer who routinely declared that he wanted out of the platoon when something did not go his way.³⁶ As the deployment wore on, it began to wear on Cortez. In one particular incident, soldiers of 3rd squad were ordered to fill in holes left by the explosion of improvised devices along a route Fat boy. This mission sent Cortez into a teary-eyed, blubbering, shouting, hysterical mess. He began shouting, “they don’t give a shit about us! They don’t fucking care if we die, they don’t fucking care. This is suicide, every day is another suicide mission, day after day after day! I’m not doing it!”³⁷ Staff Sergeant Lauzier tried to talk him down, but was unsuccessful. Cortez was left behind, while the rest of the squad conducted the mission that day. This example begins to show the grave state of mind that Cortez found himself in as the deployment progressed. Cortez began to cope with the deployment with alcohol and drugs. Private First Class Green stated, “The vast majority of Joes were drinking. Most of the NCOs. Cortez, Barker, and them, they’d get on whiskey and shit. They’d get rowdy. Cortez and Barker at one point went on a two-man drunken patrol. They were like, Fuck this shit, let’s go find some people and

fuck them up. They took off by themselves. We had to send another soldier, who was sober, over there to keep an eye on them so nothing happened.”³⁸ It was around this time in the deployment that Specialist Cortez, Specialist Barker, and Private First Class Green began to concoct the plan that would result in the raping of a 12 year old and the murders of four civilians.

Followership/Toxic Followership

This section takes a deeper look at followers within each case study. Due to the scope of this thesis, it is not all-inclusive but rather focuses on followers within the organizations closely tied to each case study. It includes discussion from various individuals as to what the attitudes of followers within the organizations were, and details what type or amount of influence these followers had on the key leaders described above.

My Lai

As with accounts of the key leaders, Captain Medina and Lieutenant Calley, there are conflicting reports of what the attitude or influences were across the soldiers of Charlie Company. It is however, more difficult to separate the actions of the followers before and after the massacre from those during it. Unlike the previous section which focused solely on accounts prior to and after My Lai, this section will also take into account those reports, whether conflicting or not, of follower actions during the massacre at My Lai.

Jay Roberts, an army journalist who was present during the My Lai operation, stated that “In every large group you find some hostile people and some don’t-care-type people, and I think the hostile people , the I-don’t-care people did what was don’t

there.”³⁹ Olsen and Roberts who authored *My Lai: A Brief History with Documents*, describe the differences among the soldiers of Charlie Company as some who obeyed the orders to kill civilians without question and some who refused to obey. However, among those who refused to obey the order to kill civilians, they did not actively engage in stopping the killings, they simply refused to participate. In addition, none of the soldiers of Charlie Company reported the alleged war crimes to higher authorities as the Geneva Convention required them to.⁴⁰ The testimony of Robert E. Maples, a machine gunner in 1st platoon, provides credibility to these statements as he describes being ordered to kill civilians within My Lai, refusing to obey the order, but when asked if there was anything he wanted to add to his statement, he simply stated that he expected something to happen about this incident and did not expect that it would take as long as it did.⁴¹ This statement shows a follower who acknowledged that an order he was given was unlawful, subsequently did not obey it, but when others did, he did nothing to report it. He simply waited for someone else to interdict. Testimony by Varnado Simpson, a rifleman with 3rd platoon, discussed the rape of a 17 or 18-year-old girl by five soldiers, the subsequent killing of this girl, and the killing of what he estimated to be over 400 people within My Lai, and yet he did not attempt to stop any of it. Over and over throughout the testimony of soldiers within Charlie company, each describes the actions that took place in My Lai, some acknowledge it was wrong such Varnado Simpson, while others like Paul Meadlo justify the actions as simply following orders, where he stated that you do not refuse any kind of order from a noncommissioned officer or an officer.⁴² Simpson would later admit to having personally killed about twenty-five people that day. He described, “I cut their

throats, cut off their hands, cut out their tongue, their hair, scalped them. I did it. A lot of people were doing it, and I just followed. I lost all sense of direction.”⁴³

Within the company, there were also followers who encouraged the actions that may have ultimately led to the massacre at My Lai. Michael Terry, a member of 3rd platoon, recalls that as the environment around the men of Charlie company began to take a toll on them, many of the men had a meeting together and talked to Captain Medina, asking when they would be able to fight, to let go with their feelings or things like that. It was during this meeting that the men began to get the idea that they were going to be allowed to funnel those feelings toward the individuals in My Lai. The men asked if they would be able to shoot anything they saw at My Lai. They asked him and he never said they that could, but the idea that these men got was that they could, that nobody in there was friendly.⁴⁴

Abu Ghraib

Due to the scope of this study, the followers described in this section are limited to only those soldiers closely related to the abuse at Abu Ghraib. Major Michael Holley, a prosecutor for the Abu Ghraib case, describes each as, “SGT Javal Davis is an aggressive, high-speed soldier or thug, depending on whom you asked, although everyone agreed that he saw most things from a racial perspective. SPC Sabrina Harman was a brand-new, somewhat hapless, and shy soldier who was friendly with children and had an odd obsession with dead things. PFC Lynndie England was reputed to be mentally slow and would follow CPL Graner anywhere. SPC Megan Ambuhl was quiet; somewhat a void of a soldier, and SPC Jeremy Sivits was a good worker who was extremely well liked.”⁴⁵ All five soldiers willingly participated in the abuse at Abu Ghraib, and none

reported it. When asked by Captain Graveline why he didn't report the abuse, SPC Jeremy Sivits stated, "Because I'm a man of my word, and I just tried to be friends with everybody in my company . . . and I didn't want anybody to think that I was a snitch or anything of that nature, sir."⁴⁶ Perhaps the 372nd Company, and by default its followers, was best described by Captain Troy Armstrong who was the commander of the 72nd MP company which the 372nd replaced in theater. Captain Armstrong was very frank about his assessment of the 372nd and its leadership. He stated that practically the entire unit was completely uninterested in the transition training his soldiers were to provide the 372nd as they prepared to take over the mission. Oftentimes, the 372nd soldiers simply failed to show up for the training. In his words, "They just didn't give a fuck."⁴⁷

Not all soldiers who were present during the abuse participated however. SPC Matthew Wisdom witnessed the extensive abuse on the night of November 7th and immediately reported it to his team leader, SGT Robert Jones. Wisdom summarized his experience on that night as "when you're brought up through the MP Corps, you're taught every day in basic training about values, and you're supposed to be in big situations . . . that you're supposed to be better than the average soldier, and there's a lot of pride that's supposed to go along with that. Basically, when I came onto that tier, I just saw what I saw, and it didn't look right. It didn't look normal. It didn't look like something an MP would do."⁴⁸ Another soldier who had knowledge of the abuse and decided to do something with it was SGT Joseph Darby, who was the soldier that turned two CDs over to CID, which started the investigation. When questioned about why Darby turned the CDs over to investigators and why it took him so long to do so, he stated, "Some of these people were friends, people who I had been in combat with and been in

Iraq with. It was hard for me to turn in people who I had such a camaraderie with . . . at the end of that month, in the beginning of January, Graner was returning to the hard-site, because they were on a one-month rotation, and I was concerned that the things would start over again.”⁴⁹

Black Hearts Brigade

Like both My Lai and Abu Ghraib, due to the scope of this study the focus of this section is solely on the followers within 3rd squad, 1st platoon, Bravo company that were part of the four person group who committed the crimes outlined above. Those soldiers are Specialist James Barker, Private First Class Green, and Private First Class Spielman.

Specialist James Barker was renowned for being a smart aleck, mischief-maker, and master scrounge artist. He was also one of the platoon’s coldest, deadliest head in combat, with an uncanny memory and spatial awareness.⁵⁰ He was an even better field soldier than Specialist Cortez was. He was a natural outside the wire, and one of the best combat soldiers that his squad leader, Staff Sergeant Lauzier had ever seen. His childhood friends from Fresno, California described him as mischievous, lovable, and a dork.⁵¹ His father passed away when he was fifteen, and all that began to change however. He joined a gang, began to drink and do drugs, and dropped out of school. In 2001, he completed high school at a continuing education program, and he had a son with a woman he met while completing that program. In 2003, he married and soon joined the Army. His marriage began to suffer, and while moving to Fort Campbell, an NCO that was helping him pack reported him for being abusive to his wife and child.⁵² Due to this report, Barker was referred to anger management classes, which delayed his deployment of his first deployment to Iraq by several months. He spent five months in Mosul and

then returned home to a marriage that was continuing to unravel even though his wife was pregnant with their second child. Staff Sergeant Lauzier was the NCO who helped put Specialist Barker in anger management classes in 2003, and during his second deployment, he did not see anything in Barker that changed his opinion that he was a punk.⁵³ Many of the other guys in 1st platoon thought Barker was just a hoodlum who happened to be wearing a uniform.⁵⁴ Barker recalled his own mindset during the deployment as, “ I knew I was going to die, it was just a matter of time, so I just did not care. I would run straight at somebody shooting at me instead of taking cover. That was my mentality: I’m already dead so, fuck it, what can anybody do to me? I’d gotten shot at so many times and blown up so many times and hadn’t taken a scratch that it’s like, ‘Oh fuck, I’m untouchable. I am a bad ass and nobody can fuck with me.’”⁵⁵ Just like Specialist Cortez, Barker began to cope with the deployment through the use of alcohol and drugs. Private First Class Green stated, “The vast majority of Joes were drinking. Most of the NCOs. Cortez, Barker, and them, they’d get on whiskey and shit. They’d get rowdy. Cortez and Barker at one point went on a two-man drunken patrol. They were like, Fuck this shit, let’s go find some people and fuck them up. They took off by themselves. We had to send another soldier, who was sober, over there to keep an eye on them so nothing happened.”⁵⁶

Private First Class Jesse Spielman was a quiet, unassuming trooper who generally kept his head down and followed orders.⁵⁷ He was born in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania to a teenage mom. His grandmother was concerned that her daughter was unfit to raise a child, so she obtained legal custody of him at the age of seven. His grandmother remembers him as a sweet child who was eager to please. He joined the Army in March

2005 and was sent to the 101st in August. He was married prior to deploying. His superiors described him as a quiet kid, who was hard to draw out, but was a competent soldier that was easy to lead and eager to advance. He was the first to volunteer for cleaning up or doing some other random task, and would often simply complete the task alone instead of waking up another of his platoon mates.⁵⁸

Private First Class Steven Green was a twenty-one-year-old, and was one of the weirdest men in the company. He was an okay soldier when he decided to be, which turned out to not be very often. He also never stopped talking. The stuff that came out of his mouth was also some of the most outrageous and racist language many of the men had ever heard. Green would frequently talk about hate in some way, including how Hitler should be admired, how “white culture” was under threat in multiethnic America, and how much he wanted to kill every Iraqi on the planet.⁵⁹ Green grew up in Midland, Texas, and was always an odd outsider type child. He was highly intelligent, but was bowlegged and uncoordinated. He was an unwanted child, and his mother did not hesitate to tell him so. She would call him “demon spawn” and constantly compare him unfavorably with his brother. He was often left to fend for himself, and would often receive brutal beatings by his brother who was three years his senior. His parents divorced when he was eight and his mother kicked him out of his house at the age of fourteen. He had been diagnosed with ADHD and low-grade depression. In class, he was a class clown. He dropped out of high school in the tenth grade and he managed to get caught, arrested, and convicted for drugs and alcohol. He spend weeks in juvenile detention for one offense and a few days in jail for another. He joined the Army in 2005, as a way to participate in what he thought was the latest flare-up of a century’s long feud

between Western civilization and Eastern barbarism. He compared it to a race war, and that it was about religion. He spent months obtaining a high-school correspondence diploma and then received a “moral waiver” from the Army to enlist. As a soldier, Green was not terrible. He developed a reputation for not being right in the head, but he was smart, and an avid reader. He was still socially awkward and was still unable to control his emotions or impulses. He was also still launch into the most ridiculous and offensive tirades that were racist in nature. Much of the platoon viewed him as the village idiot and kept him at arm’s length.⁶⁰ The day that two soldiers from the platoon were killed during the deployment, Green seemed to snap. He gave up pretending to support any notion of peacekeeping, society building, or being nice to Iraqis. From that point on, it seemed all he cared about was killing them. This was well known, and was not something that he even attempted to hide from superiors. Green talked about killing Iraqis all the time, almost obsessively. He talked about wanting to capture them, flay them, and hang them from telephone wires. He even talked about burning them alive so they could smell their own flesh burning.⁶¹ Green seemed not to understand why the United States Rules Of Engagement did not allow us to simply kill them all. When told by the Brigade Commander Colonel Todd Ebel, that American soldiers did not do that, he quietly stated that he understood. Later, he stated that he had simply agreed to what a superior officer was asserting about treating Iraqis humanely because “they outranked me by so many levels, it is not like I am going to get into a big argument with them.”⁶² Green often had run-ins with superiors. In one such incident during the deployment,⁶³ he got into a shouting match with his platoon sergeant, Sergeant Frist Class Rob Gallagher. This particular shouting match resulted in the two almost coming to blows. Multiple times,

Private First Class Green saw the Army combat Stress teams. Ultimately, after the four soldiers committed rape and murder, Green went to Combat Stress and was diagnosed with personality disorder. This disorder carries an immediate expulsion from the Army, and by April he head back from Iraq. He was discharged form the Army and sent back into society on May 16th, until later being found guilty of the rape and homicides he committed while in Iraq.

Environment

This section describes the external factors surrounding each case study. An understanding of what was occurring around both the leaders and followers of each case study was used to determine to what extent the environment may have on the followers as well as the leaders. Again, due to the scope of this study, it is not all-inclusive.

My Lai

To say the environment within Vietnam where Charlie Company found themselves was chaotic would be an understatement. Charlie Company deployed to Vietnam in December 1967. The company was comprised of three platoons instead of the doctrinal four. The company was very average, being comprised of mostly high school graduates between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two. By all accounts the company was simply average. The company performed well on its training prior to arriving in Vietnam, but like most companies arrived undermanned and with issued equipment that was unfamiliar to them. Charlie Company found its first combat action on January 26th, when it was detached from its parent battalion and assigned to a newly formed Task Force Barker.⁶⁴ This task force was a 500-man strike force that was made out of bits and pieces

of other units. The area of operations assigned to the task force as a portion of northern Quan Ngai, an area long controlled by the Vietcong's 48th Local Force Battalion. It was also during this time that an operation known as the Tet Offensive occurred, where the Vietcong and North Vietnamese launched deadly attacks across all South Vietnam. It was after this offensive that Task Force Baker, and by default Charlie company, was given the task of attempting to locate and destroy what was left of a once crack enemy unit, the 48th Local Force.⁶⁵ What this meant for Charlie Company was long stretches away from their base camp. Days would begin at dawn and end only after they had dug in for the night. K ration meals became the primary source of subsistence. As operations began to increase, so did casualties. Snipers became prevalent throughout the area. An enlisted man, William Weber, was killed by sniper fire along with others who were routinely wounded. More members of Charlie Company were killed by minefields.⁶⁶ Many soldiers who entered Vietnam had grand illusions of what war would be. Those illusions were of images of John Wayne fighting in World War II in movies. Those images were quickly replaced with ground troops spending days trudging through rice paddies, where mud sucked to their feet, or jungles where heat and a fog of flies and mosquitoes made every second uncomfortable. The enemy was scarcely seen.⁶⁷ A soldier would later state, "The same village you had gone in to give them medical treatment . . . you could go through that village later and get shot at on your way out by a sniper. Go back in, you wouldn't find anybody. Nobody knew nothing. . . We were trying to work with these people; they were basically doing a number on us. . . You didn't trust them anymore. You didn't trust anybody."⁶⁸ In addition to not being able to identify the enemy, racial prejudices began to develop as well. Soldiers began to refer to Vietnamese as "gooks,"

“slopes,” “slant-eyes,” or “dinks.” Many soldiers simply gave up trying to separate friendly from unfriendly Vietnamese and considered them all enemies.⁶⁹

The environment, that an undermanned average company such as Charlie operated in, can best be surmised as one in which they were given unfamiliar equipment, operating in an area with an unidentifiable enemy, on conflicting orders from higher headquarters. Chaos became the norm instead of the unordinary. As Charlie Company’s mission continued, the chaos increased.

Abu Ghraib

The environment in which the 372nd MP Company found themselves operating within was one of complete chaos. SSG Frederick described his first impressions of Abu Ghraib as one that seemed out of control, with naked detainees handcuffed to cell doors at the request of military intelligence, other government agents dropping off detainees without documentation, and even a wild shoot-out between the guards and a detainee in Tier 1A. To sum it up Frederick stated, “I didn’t think anybody cared what happened. I knew it was wrong to do, but I just didn’t think anybody cared what happened to the detainees, as long as they didn’t die.”⁷⁰ In several reports, specifically reports by Jones and Taguba, each describes an environment where leadership was lacking, one of no oversight, no accountability, no training, and inadequate resources.⁷¹ Major Michael Holley, a prosecutor for the Abu Ghraib case, describes the Abu Ghraib environment as one with logistical problems, leadership problems, and training problems. “It was a very chaotic environment, much like you’d expect in a combat area.”⁷² Brigade General Taguba in his report to General David McKiernan painted a picture of a dysfunctional military unit from top to bottom. He found the unit lacked quality leadership, was not

proficient in its mission, and was not getting the training for the mission it was actually handling. The 327nd fell under the command of the 320th MP battalion, whom Taguba characterized the battalion commander as an “extremely ineffective commander and leader.”⁷³ In addition, the 320th battalion was experienced in handling enemy prisoners of war, but had little to no previous training in running a prison facility. Sergeant Andrew Duffy, a medic with the 134th Medical Company, described Abu Ghraib as extremely chaotic. He stated that the decibel level inside Abu Ghraib as deafening. There were thousands of detainees yelling back and forth to one another, guards screaming, diesel engines roaring, and the constant hum of the giant generator. Then there were mortar attacks, and the electricity kept shorting out.⁷⁴

From the previous accounts, it is easy to classify the environment that the 327nd MP Company operated within as that of a chaotic and conducive one. The company operated with limited training and even less experience in the missions, it was tasked to perform. Leadership from the company up to the brigade command was lacking and unsupportive. Living conditions were undesirable, and the company was stretched thin. In addition, the abuse occurred during the prison’s night shift, a time when there is less supervision and exposure.

Black Hearts Brigade

Much like Abu Ghraib, and My Lai before that, the soldiers of 3rd squad, 1st Platoon, Bravo Company, 1-502 Infantry Battalion found themselves operating within a chaotic and often times secluded environment. Sergeant Tony Yribe begins describing the environment by “the rate at which Iraqis were killing each other was astonishing. Every day, soldiers were fishing dead bodies out of canals, finding them in shallow graves, or

dumped by the side of the road. Of all the reasons to hate this country and its people, this was just another one: their utter disregard for each other.”⁷⁵ He also recalled that there were not enough men to mount a proper patrol. A typical military patrol would consist of nine to ten men, but in the “Triangle of Death”, Bravo Company did not have that option. Three, four, or five man patrols were common to the point of being standard. Being undermanned seems to have been the way Bravo Company operated.

The area that the 1-502 Infantry Battalion operated within was known as the “Triangle of Death” due to its relentless insurgent and sectarian violence. This violence was not just against the Americans, but was also Iraqi-on-Iraqi as well. For three years prior to the Battalions arrival, American forces, with no force staying longer than six months, had lightly occupied the area. The area was home to insurgent groups, criminal gangs, and violent religious partisans. Groups such as Al Qaeda in Iraq, had virtually unfettered transit from the Syrian border to the Euphrates River corridor, and this included from Fallujah through Yusufiyah or Mahmudiyah to Baghdad.⁷⁶ The Battalion’s mission was to deny insurgents access to Baghdad throughout its area of operation, and to train the 4th Brigade, 6th Division of the Iraqi Army so that they could eventually take over the area when the Americans left and to conduct operations on their own.

The Relief in Place and Transition of Authority with Georgia’s 48th Infantry Brigade that occurred when the 1-502nd arrived in theater was lacking in many ways. The purpose of a Relief In Place is for the outgoing unit to demonstrate how they had been doing business, whatever lessons they had learned along the way, personalities throughout the area, contacts, and any other inside knowledge that would set up the incoming unit for success. The 48th Infantry Battalion had an extremely tough

deployment. They did not have enough troops to actively and routinely patrol the roads. The 48th almost never left their Forward Operating Bases, did not patrol much, and if they did, the patrol would simply speed around the area in their vehicles and return as soon as possible. They would not engage any locals, and if they were moving to a more remote area, they would conduct a “recon by fire” where they would preemptively shoot around the area to announce their arrival and scare off any potential enemy in the area. They lost four soldiers to a single Improvised Explosive Device attack in July and four more from the same platoon in a similar attack a week later. In five months, the unit lost twenty-one soldiers. The unit was essentially being assigned to a less risky base away from direct combat because of this.⁷⁷

The 48th’s living conditions were also terrible. The men would routinely urinate into empty water bottles instead of using the latrine. These bottles were thrown around indiscriminantly on the combat outposts. There was open food from care packages strewn about, and rat droppings covering virtually everything. There was discarded food, welded by heat and sand to the floor in the chow hall, and other provisions rotting in open freezers. The shower trailers were covered in thick green mold as well.⁷⁸

Bravo Company occupied a fifty-square-mile swath of the Battalion’s western flank. The eastern portion of the company’s territory was the town of Yusufiyah and Forward Operating Base Yusufiyah, which the company headquarters occupied. FOB Yusufiyah was about five hundred yards by two hundred and fifty yards. It was also the home of soldiers from 4th Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Division of the Iraqi Army. The southern portion of Bravo Company’s area of operation was the Jurf al-Sukr Bridge and a smaller patrol base on the banks of the Euphrates. The area also contained the towns of

Mullah Fayyad, Rushdi Mullah, Al-Toraq, Quarguli Village, and an area of largely desolate land to the west. The area was set up perfect for guerrilla warfare. In this area of operations towns were densely packed with houses. Outside of the towns there were few paved roads and many acres of empty farmlands. The area had elephant grass and reeds that grew in excess of ten feet high. In addition, an abandoned Russian Thermal Power Plant construction site was located in the area of operations but was off limits to American forces due to political reasons. By default, the power plant was a safe haven for insurgents.⁷⁹

As First Platoon settled in to their new area of operations, they began fortifying their positions. A typical day would begin around 0600 or 0630, and soldiers filled sand bags or fortified positions until sundown. Intermixed among those duties were patrols, guard rotations, and other tasks. This meant that the soldiers rarely slept more than four hours a night. The platoon had no success in getting even bare minimum equipment needed to accomplish these tasks. Struggling to do their job with minimum equipment, leaders began to let standards slip. Soldiers conducted many of their requirements in T-shirts and soldiers were not required to shave for a day or two. As they saw it, being “away from the flagpole” had its benefits.⁸⁰ The first arrival of the Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Tom Kunk, did not go well. According to Bravo Executive Officer Justin Habash, LTC Kunk “came to the base and just destroyed Captain Goodwin over the conditions of the base.” He stated, “Working their asses off to fortify the place, and to have the battalion commander come down and destroy you over not doing enough was frustrating.”⁸¹ This was the beginning of Bravo Company, and more importantly First Platoon’s, dissention into isolation. LTC Kunk had a different perspective. He believed

that the soldiers of 1st Platoon were extremely quick to decide that the rules didn't apply to them, the men looked like slobs, and were not only walking around in T-shirts, but in T-shirts with the sleeves cut off. The platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant Phil Miller did not understand what the Battalion Commander was angry about. He stated, "I wasn't concerned about the small shit. Your boot's unbloused? Who the fuck cares? Last time I checked, that fucker ain't gonna stop you from getting shot in the face. But me putting up nine hundred fucking strands of wire is. The guys had their sleeves rolled up. Whoopie. It's a hundred and twenty fucking degrees out here. Maybe they saw that as a lack of leadership because I didn't make them keep their sleeves rolled down."⁸² This separation continued to become wider day-by-day. LTC Kunk felt that the platoon was not taking him seriously, but to SSG Miller, the reason they could not do things was that the Battalion was not providing the tools they needed to do the job right.

As this separation between the Platoon and Battalion continued to widen, the soldiers of 1st Platoon soon found out that the biggest concern of their deployment was Improvised Explosive Devices. They would describe how they would be moving down a patrol, handing out water or toys to locals and then all of a sudden there would be a boom, violent jolt of heat, light, and without warning, someone could die. This would happen repeatedly, and because of this uncertainty, the soldiers were terrified. One soldier stated, "It's like someone has a gun to your head and you don't know whether they're going to kill you or let you live. In a firefight, as scary as those can be, at least you feel like you have some control over your destiny. You can fight back. With Improvised Explosive Devices, they are inescapable, frightening in almost unimaginable ways and they begin to weigh on you."⁸³ He went on to describe that, "After an

explosion, if you are not injured but the vehicle is undrivable, you have to cordon off the area and wait for a wrecker to show up to recover the vehicle. While sitting there, the anger builds as you think about the fact that someone just tried to kill you. If you are lucky, you can conduct a search and find someone with incriminating evidence, but often times there is nothing. There is no release for the anger and the adrenaline.”⁸⁴

Bravo Company also had to deal with operating Tactical Checkpoints throughout their area of operation. There were various numbers of checkpoints that Bravo Company operated throughout the deployment, but the main checkpoints were checkpoints 2, 3, and 4. These checkpoints were static positions, and were not well defended. There was no patrol base at each checkpoint, and there was usually a squad or less operating each one twenty four hours a day. Some of the checkpoints had a building where soldiers could eat and have some downtime, but not all of them. At some of the checkpoints, the soldiers lived out of their vehicles. The checkpoints also limited Bravo Company’s combat power. Manning the checkpoints consumed an entire platoon. Initially the company decided to move platoons on a rotational basis, with one platoon manning the checkpoints, one at the bridge, and one at base Yusufiyah to guard and run maneuver operations. This manning cycle worried Captain John Goodwin, and caused him to ask Battalion for more soldiers, a request that was never granted.⁸⁵ Second Platoon’s platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Jeremy Gebhardt stated, “on paper you are like, ‘Okay, this can work.’ But even when guys are just sitting at the checkpoints, there’s several hours per day just doing patrols around your area that aren’t factored into what’s on paper. Then, at that point, you start seeing guys getting strung out, and you start getting concerned for how they are holding up. That was a yearlong struggle trying to convince the battalion level of this.

But it all came back to, ‘ Hey, you’ve got this many guys. It takes this many to do this.’ And that was it.”⁸⁶ Second Platoon Leader Lieutenant Jerry Eidson stated, “It was ridiculous, we were a company spread out trying to operate like we were a battalion. Nobody in my platoon had any confidence in our command structure at all after that.”⁸⁷ Another issue that began to further divide Bravo Company and the Battalion was the importance of occupying the checkpoints along Route Sportster. LTC Kunk stated, “It had become a superhighway for the insurgents to get into Baghdad, so we had to take it back. The risk was, if we gave that up, we would have released an avenue where the enemy would skirt around.”⁸⁸ Many of the soldiers saw it differently, as Alpha Company Commander Captain Jared Bordwell stated, “I don’t think we needed to own Sportster. It didn’t do anything except give the insurgents a static target and allow soldiers to get complacent and do stupid things.”⁸⁹

Another issue with the checkpoints was that they were undermanned. There was never any consensus among the Battalion as to how many men there should be at each checkpoint. Prior to late June, 2006, LTC Kunk never issued written guidance to CPT Goodwin on staffing requirements, and CPT Goodwin subsequently never issued any guidance to his platoons. It therefore was not uncommon to have just three or four soldiers for an extended period of time occupying each checkpoint.⁹⁰ The checkpoints were also extremely under fortified. Interactions at the checkpoints with the locals were tense and unnerving. At times, it would seem to the soldiers that the Iraqis were testing them to see how fast a soldier would react. Iraqi men would also loiter around the checkpoints. Many of the soldiers believed they were conducting recons of how the checkpoint operated. Often times cars would approach and then turn around to speed off.

With minimally manned checkpoints, soldiers were unable to chase down these vehicles. An additional duty to manning the checkpoints was the task of conducting “dismounted Improvised Explosive Device sweeps.” This was essentially the task of walking from one checkpoint to the next while looking for makeshift bombs. Staff Sergeant Eric Lauzier recalled this as almost an unbearably stressful situation for most soldiers. “every morning before conducting a sweep, you truly felt that this was the day that you were going to die.” The fear and the mental stress were cumulative. It was not the fact that the soldiers were asked to do something dangerous, but the fact that they had to do it over again day after day.⁹¹ Private Justin Watt explains it as,

Take something you do every day, like go to the mailbox. Every day, you go to the mailbox. Now say that every time you go to the mailbox, there was, say, a twenty five percent chance that the mailbox was going to blow up in your face. The explosion might not be big enough to kill you. But it could be. You just don't know. Either Way, you do know that there was a one-in-four chance that it was going to blow right the fuck up in your face. But you have to go to the mailbox. There is not way you cannot go to the mailbox. So, I ask you: How many times do you think you could go to the mailbox before you started going crazy?⁹²

This requirement began to increase the divide between the Battalion and Companies further. Many soldiers began to be convinced that the Battalion cared more about their Humvees than their men.

A change in the feelings of the soldiers toward Iraqis occurred on December 10th, when a man wearing tracksuit bottoms and a white button-down shirt walked up to checkpoint 2. The man had given the soldiers some information in the past and he was friendly. As the man approached checkpoint 2, Sergeant Kenneth Casica and Staff Sergeant Travis Nelson were not suspicious. Sergeant Casica approached the man, and when he did, the man pulled out a 9mm pistol and shot him in the neck. He then pointed the pistol at the back of Staff Sergeant Nelson's head and shot him as well. A shoot out

occurred with the two remaining soldiers manning checkpoint. The result was one Iraqi and two U.S. soldiers dead. It was this moment that the feelings of the soldiers of First Platoon changed for the worse. “That was the point where I just didn’t care about Hadjis anymore. As far as I was concerned, any military-aged male in Iraq, they could all die. I just wanted to kill as many of those motherfuckers as I possibly could,” recalled one soldier.⁹³ This incident also pushed First Platoon into further isolation. Brigade Commander Colonel Todd Ebel stated on the 15-6 investigation report, “I determined that SSG Nelson and SGT Casica were killed because each failed to maintain discipline at the TCP. . . . While hard to accept, I believe these soldiers deaths were preventable. . . . Each failed to follow instructions and it cost them their lives.”⁹⁴ This discipline that Colonel Ebel spoke of was the direction that all soldiers were to keep all their personal protective gear, to include their helmet, on at all times when operating outside their base. This was a task that the soldiers stated as unattainable, as they were expected to wear their equipment twenty-four hours a day while manning the checkpoints, sometimes for up to seventy-two hours at a time. Battalion Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Kunk agreed whole heartedly with Colonel Ebel’s assessment. He also did not hesitate to tell the men of every rank, on numerous occasions, that both Nelson and Casica were responsible for their own deaths. This blame incensed the men of First Platoon. “The real fault, the real blame, belongs to the chain of command for not securing that house and giving soldiers proper cover,” stated Private First Class Justin Watt. He then went on to state “The real blame belongs to them for not putting up HESCO baskets around that checkpoint, for not providing someplace where you can take off your helmet for five minutes in seventy-two hours. Kunk and the chain of command cannot face the fact that

they failed us, so they pushed 100 percent of the blame onto the soldier.”⁹⁵ If anyone argued against the Battalion Commander’s reasoning, he would meet them with a fusillade of abuse about making excuses, being a whiner, and not coming to terms with the reality of the situation. He would also lecture the men of First Platoon directly, stating, “When are you going to face up to why Staff Sergeant Nelson and Sergeant Casica are dead? Because they were not doing the right things, the harder right. Leaders were not enforcing standards and discipline.”⁹⁶ The incidents kept hitting Bravo Company, one after another. On December 19th, the company lost another leader to an Improvised Explosive Device attack, leaving the company with a single Platoon Leader.

As casualties began to mount within the company and with little support from superiors, soldiers within Bravo Company began to cope in various ways. First Platoon began to unravel more quickly than the others did. With the psychological separation from the both the Company and Battalion setting in, the Platoon began to fall in on itself. The Platoon began to redraw moral and social codes that they believed only applied to them.⁹⁷ They started to convince themselves that nobody else had experienced what they had and therefore could not understand it. Sergeant John Diem explains, “We didn’t want to hear anything from anybody, because nobody knew what we were going through.”⁹⁸ Isolation began to set in further, and after being told by leaders repeatedly that they were screw-ups, they began to accept and ultimately live up to it. The hatred of Iraqis was becoming commonplace among the Platoon. Specialist Paul Cortez stated that his hatred of Iraqis was a five on a scale of ten when he first deployed, but by this point, it was now a twenty. The platoon also became more aggressive with suspects. Often suspects were beaten before being brought back to base. Many of the soldiers began to show signs of

extended combat exposure, including fatigue, anxiety, panic attacks, increasing irritability, and obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Drinking, although against regulations, became wide spread and did not just include the soldiers but leaders as well.⁹⁹ Perhaps the final straw for the platoon was a fire that spread across the base at Yusufiyah. The Company repeatedly sent reports to the Battalion stating the base was a firetrap. Battalion worked to get a full complement of fire extinguishers at the bases in Lutufiyah and Yusufiyah, but the defense contractor KBR stated they were only obligated to provide such support on Camp Striker. This fire was devastating to morale, as soldiers watched what little comforts and reminders of home go up in flames. The loss included not only comfort items, but also things such as clothes, equipment, weapons, pictures, letters, journals, photos, movies, DVDs, music, and laptops. As soon as the fire started, it was coupled with a mortar attack, as the smoke presented insurgents with a target of opportunity. The fire also engulfed the Company's ammo holding area, sending up small arms, white phosphorus rounds, grenades, and AT-4 rockets into a thunderous boom of showers and sparks.¹⁰⁰ It was also around this time that the soldiers of First Platoon received a new platoon sergeant, Sergeant First Class Jeff Fenlason, with whom they almost instantly clashed. He found the Platoon to be undisciplined, disrespectful, and defiant. They found him to be an outsider that like everyone else did not understand what they had been through.

On March 1st, the Platoon rotated back to manning the checkpoints, and Sergeant John Diem believed it was at this point that First Platoon was at its lowest.

First Platoon had become insane. What does an infantry rifle platoon do? It destroys. That's what it's trained to do. Now turn that ninety degrees to the left,

and let slip the leash, and it becomes something monstrous. First Platoon became monstrous. It was not even aware of what it was doing.¹⁰¹

It was around this time that some of the soldiers began to talk about how the social breakdown and the extreme Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence around them would be a perfect cover for murder. Private First Class Justin Cross stated

I was on guard one day and they radioed in to be extra alert because people were rioting. At that point in time, in that state of mind, I had this bright idea, I said, You know what's funny, man? Go behind the TCP, kill anybody. Kill Anybody. And fucking blame it on the riots. And we'd get away with it.¹⁰²

Staff Sergeant Eric Lauzier went on leave in early March, and it was around this time that Platoon Sergeant, Sergeant First Class Fenlason, gave Specialist Cortez the responsibility of overseeing checkpoint two. Specialist Cortez described the checkpoint as a static position with inferior defensive measures. The soldiers were allowed to occupy a building by this time, but the building had windows unsecured where anyone could walk up and drop in a grenade, making the it almost impossible to sleep within. In addition, Specialist Cortez was not able to get anyone to fill the HESCO barriers or get more concertina ware, sandbags, or other materials to fortify the positions. Another item that changed was the time the soldiers were to occupy the checkpoint. This was extended to three weeks because Sergeant First Class Fenlason convinced Captain Goodwin to keep his platoon in place for a longer rotation because he was making progress with establishing relationships with the Iraqi locals within the area. In addition to the extended stay, the under fortified checkpoint two, and the fact that it was in the hands of Specialist Cortez, Sergeant First Class Fenlason never made the three-quarters of a mile movement from his checkpoint to inspect conditions at checkpoint two. Specialist James Barker recalled, "We knew he would never, ever come check on us, so we could do whatever we

wanted.”¹⁰³ It was in this conducive environment that four soldiers, including Specialist Cortez, concocted and executed the plan that would result in the raping of a twelve-year-old Iraq girl and the subsequent murders of her and the three members of her family.

As the cases of My Lai and Abu Ghraib, it is easy to classify the environment that the soldiers from Bravo Company operated within as that of a chaotic and conducive one. The company operated with limited support from its parent Battalion, in a highly contested portion of Iraq, on under fortified and supplied checkpoints and bases. Living conditions were undesirable, and the company was stretched thin. Casualties mounted and the platoon began to slip into isolation. This isolation bred a feeling of hopelessness and resentment toward both Iraqis and U.S. soldiers outside the platoon.

Themes

This section will take a deeper look at the common themes that exist across the three case studies. It is broken down into three sections; leadership/toxic leadership, followership/toxic followership, and the environment. By identifying common themes across the three cases, a link may be made that could possibly prevent an event similar in nature from occurring.

Leadership/Toxic Leadership

When taking a deeper look at the key leaders across the three cases of My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and the Black Hearts Brigade, the first theme that emerges is that each case study represents a different level of leadership at the company or tactical level. The key leaders from My Lai were their company commander and the platoon leader. The key leaders from Abu Ghraib were the noncommissioned officer in charge and a corporal. In

the Black Hearts Brigade case, the key leader was a specialist. Due to these distinct differences in both recognized rank and in levels of responsibility, it is difficult to identify any major themes across the three cases.

One commonality across all three cases is the perceived incompetence of the officer in charge when each incident occurred. In My Lai, that incompetence was found in LT Calley, who most of the men within his platoon remember as being a pint-sized joke, a Napoleon want-to-be who would demand a level of respect that he was never able to earn. He also reminded one of his platoon members of “a little kid trying to play war.”¹⁰⁴ Captain Medina would also often ridicule him in front of his platoon, something that further discredited him in front of his soldiers.¹⁰⁵ Calley himself even conceded later that he “was a very inadequate leader.”¹⁰⁶ Staff Sergeant Fredrick from the Abu Ghraib case was also described as being an average noncommissioned officer.¹⁰⁷ Sergeant Joseph Darby described him as “not being really mentally astute enough to think of some of the things that I saw in the pictures on the CD,” when referring to the images of detainee abuse within the prison.¹⁰⁸ Soldiers within Bravo Company of the 1-502nd Black Hearts Brigade described Specialist Paul Cortez as being a punk who should not have been promoted at all. They thought he was immature, insecure, a loudmouth, and that he had a nasty streak.¹⁰⁹ The commonality of these leaders is that they seemed to be in over their head. Each leader was in a position of responsibility that they were either not ready or not capable of handling.

Followership/Toxic Followership

Padilla describes toxic followers as susceptible followers. Within susceptible followers, he describes two types; conformers and colluders. Conformaers have unmet

basic needs, negative core evaluations, and low psychological maturity. Colluders are ambitious, have congruent beliefs, and unsocialized values.¹¹⁰ It is these types of susceptible followers that were common across all three case studies. Roberts, an army journalist who was present during the My Lai operations stated, “In every large group you find some hostile people and some don’t-care-type people, and I think the hostile people, the I-don’t-care people did what was done there.”¹¹¹ Captain Troy Armstrong of the 72nd MP Company stated that the soldiers within the 372nd MP Company at Abu Ghraib, “just didn’t give a fuck.”¹¹² While on trial, none of the soldiers involved in the Abu Ghraib incidents could explain why they participated in the actions. They all simply described it as something that began as a joke and just got out of hand. The same feelings were present amongst the soldiers within Bravo Company of the Black Hearts Brigade. Specialist Barker recalled his mindset, as “I just did not care.”¹¹³ Private First Class Jesse Speilman was described as a trooper who generally kept his head down and followed orders. And was eager to please.¹¹⁴ All three case studies show the followers within each as either being colluders or conformers; with the exception of Sergeant Joseph Darby who was the soldier that anonymously turned over a compact disc with images of the detainee abuse at Abu Ghraib.

When looking across the three case studies, another commonality that emerges reference followers is the effect that fighting an insurgency had on the followers in each unit. Michael Terry, a member of 3rd platoon in My Lai recalled that as the environment around the men of Charlie company began to take a toll on them, many of the men had met with Captain Medina, and asked when they would be able to fight, to let go with their feelings. It was during this meeting that the men began to get the idea that they were

going to be allowed to funnel those feelings toward the individuals in My Lai. The men asked if they would be able to shoot anything they saw at My Lai.¹¹⁵ Private First Class Green of the Black Hearts Brigade seemed to snap the day two soldiers from his platoon were killed. From that point on, it seemed all he cared about was killing Iraqis.¹¹⁶ This effect is described in more detail within the following section on the environment.

While not identified within the Abu Ghraib case study, alcohol and drugs is also a theme that emerged from both My Lai and the Black Hearts Brigade cases. It was unclear due to limitations of this study what effect the presence of alcohol had on the actions that took place at My Lai, but alcohol was a contributing factor for the soldiers of the Black Hearts Brigade.¹¹⁷

Environment

The environment is where this study identified the most commonality across the three case studies. Again, Padilla describes the environment within the Toxic Triangle as a conducive environment. An environment that is absent of checks and balances and institutionalization, instability or turbulence, complexity, and a perceived threat.¹¹⁸ My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and the Black Hearts Brigade each showed clear signs of all four ingredients.

The first commonality that emerged across all three case studies was that each unit began its deployment by being described as an average or above average units. Each unit had average or above average leaders and soldiers within its ranks, and by all accounts began each deployment in a successful manner. What changed over time is also a commonality that emerged during this study. Each unit deployed to a chaotic environment. Each unit found themselves facing a type of enemy that they perhaps were

not prepared to face, and that enemy is that of an insurgent. An insurgency as described by Army *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency* is:

Insurgency and its tactics are as old as warfare itself. Joint doctrine defines an insurgency as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict (JP 1-02). Stated another way, an insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control. Counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency (JP 1-02). These definitions are a good starting point, but they do not properly highlight a key paradox: though insurgency and COIN are two sides of a phenomenon that has been called revolutionary war or internal war, they are distinctly different types of operations. In addition, insurgency and COIN are included within a broad category of conflict known as irregular warfare.¹¹⁹

The manual then goes on to describe the difficulties in fighting an insurgency.

Designing operations that achieve the desired end state requires counterinsurgents to understand the culture and the problems they face. Both insurgents and counterinsurgents are fighting for the support of the populace. However, insurgents are constrained by neither the law of war nor the bounds of human decency as Western nations understand them. In fact, some insurgents are willing to commit suicide and kill innocent civilians in carrying out their operations—and deem this a legitimate option. They also will do anything to preserve their greatest advantage, the ability to hide among the people. These amoral and often barbaric enemies survive by their wits, constantly adapting to the situation. Defeating them requires counterinsurgents to develop the ability to learn and adapt rapidly and continuously. This manual emphasizes this “Learn and Adapt” imperative as it discusses ways to gain and maintain the support of the people.¹²⁰

In My Lai, snipers became prevalent and soldiers were killed by minefields.¹²¹ A soldier described, “The same village you had gone in to give them medical treatment . . . you could go through that village later and get shot at on your way out by a sniper. Go back in, you wouldn’t find anybody. Nobody knew nothing. . . . We were trying to work with these people; they were basically doing a number on us. . . . You didn’t trust them anymore. You didn’t trust anybody.”¹²² With not being able to identify an enemy, racial

prejudices began to develop. Soldiers began to refer to Vietnamese as “gooks, slopes, slant-eyes, or dinks.” Many soldiers simply gave up trying to separate friendly from unfriendly and considered them all enemy.¹²³ In Abu Ghraib, the environment was chaotic and like My Lai, soldiers began to lose the connection between the prisoners and human beings as the insurgency drug on. Staff Sergeant Frederick stated, “I didn’t think anybody cared what happened. I knew it was wrong to do, but I just didn’t think anybody cared what happened to the detainees, as long as they didn’t die.”¹²⁴ This disconnect between human beings and enemy soldiers or civilians was also present in the Black Hearts Brigade case study. A soldier recalled, “That was the point where I just didn’t care about Hadjis anymore. As far as I was concerned, any military-aged male in Iraq, they could all die. I just wanted to kill as many of those motherfuckers as I possibly could.”¹²⁵ Specialist Paul Cortez stated that his hatred of Iraqis was a five on a scale of ten when he first deployed, at the time around the rape and killings, he described his hatred at a twenty.¹²⁶

A final commonality amongst the three case studies was that the environment was a conducive one, an environment free of checks and balances. The soldiers of Charlie Company in the My Lai case study long stretches away from their base camps.¹²⁷ The incidents at Abu Ghraib occurred during the night shift, a time when manning within military units is less than that of the day shift. Specialist James Baker of the Black Hearts Brigade case study stated, “We knew that he, referring to his platoon sergeant, would never, ever come check on us, so we could do whatever we wanted.”¹²⁸

Average units, deploying to fight an insurgency type fight, in an environment with little to no supervision, and the presence of alcohol are what emerged as the environment soldiers found themselves operating within across all three case studies.

Conclusion

Each case study was unique in its own way. Each however, showed multiple signs of every portion of Padilla's Toxic Triangle. Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and arguably the most important, a conducive environment were present within each unit during the events leading up to each crime. Due to limitations of this study, it was impossible to determine the exact effect each portion of the Toxic Triangle had on the outcomes of the incidents. A proposed way ahead is in the following chapter.

¹ Olson and Roberts, 1-10.

² Ibid., 11.

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 64

⁷ Ibid., 73.

⁸ Michal R. Belknap, *The Vietnam War on Trial: The My Lai Massacre and the Court-martial of Lieutenant Calley* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 37.

⁹ Ibid., 38.

¹⁰ Olson and Roberts, 12.

¹¹ Ibid., 13.

¹² Ibid.

- ¹³ Ibid., 16.
- ¹⁴ Belknap, 38-39.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 39.
- ¹⁶ Olson and Roberts, 196-197.
- ¹⁷ Graveline and Clemens, 21.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 36.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 82.
- ²⁰ Ibid., 174.
- ²¹ Ibid., 33.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid., 82.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 125-126.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 184.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 228.
- ²⁷ Justine Sharrock, *Tortured: When Good Soldiers Do Bad Things* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010), 84.
- ²⁸ Graveline and Clemens, 226.
- ²⁹ Frederick, 52-53.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid., 5-6.
- ³² Ibid., 6.
- ³³ Ibid., 74.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 75.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 229.

- ³⁷ Ibid., 237.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 255.
- ³⁹ Belknap, 55.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 75.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., 84-85
- ⁴² Ibid., 186-188.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 65.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 72.
- ⁴⁵ Graveline and Clemens, 82-83.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 218.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 147.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 216.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 227.
- ⁵⁰ Frederick, 5.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 75.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 229.
- ⁵⁴ Ibid., 236.
- ⁵⁵ Ibid., 243.
- ⁵⁶ Ibid., 255.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 6.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 69.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid., 6.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 70-71.

- ⁶¹ Ibid., 156-157.
- ⁶² Frederick, 170-171.
- ⁶³ Ibid., 194.
- ⁶⁴ Belknap, 51.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 54.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 55.
- ⁶⁷ Olson and Roberts, 7-8.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 8.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid., 9.
- ⁷⁰ Graveline and Clemens, 174.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 178.
- ⁷² Ibid., 213.
- ⁷³ Ibid., 56-58.
- ⁷⁴ Sharrock, 106.
- ⁷⁵ Frederick, 5.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 24.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 54-55.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 56.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 59-63.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., 77-78.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., 79.
- ⁸² Ibid.
- ⁸³ Ibid., 84.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., 85.

- ⁸⁵ Frederick, 94-95.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 95-96.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., 96.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 112.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., 114.
- ⁹² Ibid., 114-115.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 140-143.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 144-145.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 145.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., 145.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 172.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., 173-174.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 225-226.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., 241.
- ¹⁰² Ibid., 242.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., 247-248.
- ¹⁰⁴ Olson and Roberts, 13.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 13.
- ¹⁰⁶ Belknap, 39.
- ¹⁰⁷ Graveline and Clemens, 82.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 174.

- ¹⁰⁹ Frederick, 5-6.
- ¹¹⁰ Padilla, 195.
- ¹¹¹ Belknap, 54.
- ¹¹² Graveline and Clemens, 147.
- ¹¹³ Frederick, 243.
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.
- ¹¹⁵ Belknap, 72.
- ¹¹⁶ Frederick, 156-157.
- ¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 173-174.
- ¹¹⁸ Padilla, 195.
- ¹¹⁹ Department of the Army, Army Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, December 2006), 1-1.
- ¹²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹²¹ Belknap, 55.
- ¹²² Olson and Roberts, 7-8.
- ¹²³ *Ibid.*, 9.
- ¹²⁴ Graveline and Clemens, 174.
- ¹²⁵ Frederick, 140-143.
- ¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 173-174.
- ¹²⁷ Belknap, 55.
- ¹²⁸ Frederick, 247-248.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study began with one primary and three secondary research questions. The primary research question was:

How does toxic followership influence leadership in U. S. Army operations?

The secondary questions were:

1. What does it mean to be a toxic follower?
2. Are all toxic followers the same or are there different kinds of toxic followership?
3. What effect does being a toxic follower have on a leader, whether toxic or not?

The answers that this research generated are detailed below. In order to answer the primary research question, it became apparent that there must first be answers to the secondary questions, specifically what it meant to be a toxic follower and what effect these followers have on leaders. For this reason, the secondary question is presented first.

Secondary Research Question

Within the Toxic Triangle model, Padilla described a toxic follower as a susceptible follower. The answer to question one; what it means to be a toxic follower and question two; are all toxic followers the same or are there different kinds of toxic followership, is in Padilla's categorization of the two types of susceptible followers. The susceptible followers are either conformers who had unmet basic needs, negative core evaluation, or low psychological maturity, or colluders who had ambition, congruent

beliefs, and unsocialized values.¹ This research, while narrow in scope due to previously discussed limitations, provides validity to this statement. To elaborate further, a conformer type follower will allow toxic leaders to assume and retain power because of these unmet needs or psychological immaturity. This was the case with the soldiers at Abu Ghraib, who allowed toxic leaders such as Corporal Graner convinced them that not only was prisoner abuse acceptable, it was expected. The followers under Corporal Graner described him as being someone they were drawn to, someone that you did not want to disappoint. This conforming type mentality shifted to a colluding one. Colluders support toxic leaders because of their personal ambitions, selfishness, and because they share the same view as the leader. Over time, as the followers under Corporal Graner stood idly by as abuse occurred, their mindset began to slowly change and they began to see the prisoners as less than human. As Staff Sergeant Fredrick stated, "I didn't think anybody cared what happened. I knew it was wrong to do, but I just didn't think anybody cared what happened to the detainees, as long as they didn't die."² The soldiers who participated in the massacre at My Lai can also be separated into those who either stood idly by and watched the massacre occur, and those who actively participated in the massacre. Both the massacre and the prisoner abuse show a situation where a toxic leader was enabled by followers that either stood by and let the toxicity continue or openly encouraged it.

The answer to question three: what effect does being a toxic follower have on a leader, toxic or not? The Black Hearts Brigade case study best answered this question. In this case study, the idea for the raping and killing of innocent civilians originated with the followers. It was Specialist Barker who initially came up with the idea of raping an

innocent civilian. Not only did he come up with the idea, he had the family and more specifically the woman already identified. As a toxic follower, he planted the seed of the idea and with help from the other followers present; the leader eventually accepted the proposal. This incident by itself clearly shows the level of influence toxic followers can have on a leader.

Primary Research Question

Analysis of the answers to the secondary questions made it possible to answer the primary research question: how does toxic followership influence leadership in U. S. Army operations? After analysis of the incidents within each case study, the answer to this question was found within the Toxic Triangle model. A leader within the U. S. Army will usually operate within a conducive environment. Padilla describes this environment as either one that is absent of checks and balances, has instability or turbulence, is complex, or has a perceived threat.³ A conducive environment and military operations appeared to have a relationship that was common within the researched case studies. Complexity, instability or turbulence, and a perceived threat is the environment that the US Army operates within. While the majority of operations are not absent of checks and balances, in each of the researched case studies, they were. In My Lai, the company was operating away from the Battalion Headquarters and was allowed to send up erroneous reports. In Abu Ghraib, the abuse occurred at night, when the majority of the leadership within the company was not present. In Iraq, the soldiers of Bravo Company within the Black Hearts Brigade, operated checkpoints that were rarely inspected by senior leadership, and specifically in the case of the four soldiers who committed rape and murder, the soldiers' platoon sergeant never visited the site. As Specialist Barker put it,

“We knew that he [referring to his platoon sergeant], would never, ever come check on us, so we could do whatever we wanted.”⁴ This conducive environment, coupled with toxic followers appeared to create a relationship that not only allowed the existence of toxic leaders but created the conditions that allowed an average leader to transition into a toxic one. This was specifically observed in the Abu Ghraib and Black Hearts Brigade case studies. In both case studies, an average leader, Staff Sergeant Fredrick in Abu Ghraib and Specialist Cortez in the Black Hearts Brigade, were both persuaded into toxic leadership by the followers beneath them.

Recommendations

This qualitative research was significantly limited, primarily due to time. Research was bounded within a ten-month period and due to the time limitation, the topic of toxic followership was not studied as in depth as desired. Because of this limitation, additional research is required to further understand the true effect toxic followership can have on leaders within the U. S. Army. In addition, the study points to the need for further research on what effect the environment has on both leaders and followers alike. The research does validate Padilla’s Toxic Triangle model, and when applied to the case studies used in this research, indicated that two components of the triangle effected the third component. That is, if there is a conducive environment and toxic followers, there is a great possibility that the leader within that organization will become toxic as well. This was the case in Abu Ghraib, and one could argue in the Black Hearts Brigade study as well.

As research of the relationship between followers and the environment evolves, it is recommended that the U. S. Army begin to acknowledge within training and

publications the affect followers and the environment can have on a military leader. The absence of a discussion on the role of followers within military publications, except to mention that every leader is a follower, ignores the influence they can have on leader's actions. It is this impact, which if not clearly understood and mitigated, that could lead to future atrocities such as those that occurred in My Lai, Abu Ghraib, and within the Black Hearts Brigade.

Based on this research, it is my recommendation that the U.S. Army takes the following actions:

1. Further in depth research into the relationship between leaders, followers, and the environment.
2. Further research on what individuals can do to overcome a situation where two of the three elements of Padilla's Toxic Triangle model are toxic and or present.
3. Upon completing this research, the Army should adopt Padilla's Toxic Triangle model or a similar one and incorporate that into current leadership training and regulations.
4. Toxic triangle model training, which includes portions dedicated to what it means to be a successful follower and the consequences that may occur if followers become toxic should be taught at the lowest levels within the Army. It should not be something that is only introduced at the senior levels. The earlier a soldier becomes familiar with what the Army requires out of both leaders and followers, the better chance they have at being successful at it.

¹ Padilla, 195.

² Graveline and Clemens, 174.

³ Padilla, 195.

⁴ Frederick, 247-248.

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