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# Favoring sides, selectively calling it torture

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*Exploring the framing  
relation between news  
media and political  
stakeholders: An analysis  
of the discourse used in  
articles of the New York  
Times and the Wall Street  
Journal on the SSCI 'torture  
report'*

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## ***Introduction***

On the ninth of December of 2014 the Senate Select Committee of Intelligence (SSCI) put out a report on its detention and interrogation practices since 9/11. The report got publicly known as the 'CIA torture report', with a 525 of the 6000 page long document describing a multitude of cases that included detainees that were frozen to death, were rectally fed without any medical necessity, were waterboarded and cases of sleep deprivation that "involved keeping detainees awake for up to 180 hours, usually standing or in stress positions, at times with their hands shackled above their heads" (SSCI, 2014: 3). The SSCI concluded that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did not only use brutal methods as part of their interrogation procedures, the CIA also consistently lied or misled policymakers about the effectiveness of the use of so called 'Enhanced Interrogation Methods'. The report found EIT to be ineffective in "requiring intelligence or gaining cooperation from detainees" and highlights "the CIA itself determined from its own experience with coercive interrogations, that such techniques "do not produce intelligence," "will probably result in false answers," and had historically proven to be ineffective" but that this was ignored (SSCI, 2014: 9; 4). Chairman of the SSCI, Dianne Feinstein, stated in her concluding remarks: " it is my personal conclusion that, under any common meaning of the term, CIA detainees were tortured" (SSCI, 2014: 5).

The practices described in the report show similarities with a report of the Associated Press published in 2003 on the "inhumane treatment" of prisoners in the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq (Hanley, 2003). The Abu Ghraib report was based on detailed interviews with ex-prisoners who were released after months without any indictment. The report included "detailed allegations of psychological abuse, deprivation, beatings and deaths at U.S.-run prisons in Iraq" (Hanley, 2004). Despite the detailed descriptions of practices that clearly classify as "torture" under international law, the Bush administration consistently "labeled the events at Abu Ghraib isolated cases of "mistreatment" and "abuse" "at the hands of low-level soldiers", going against some voices that claimed that the practices that were brought to light "signified a new departure in U.S. foreign policy, the deliberate torture of terror suspects" (Bennett et al., 2006: 468). The study by Bennett et al. (2006) revealed that leading news media did not challenge the isolation and or the denial of the "torture" label of the events by the Bush administration. Although the press briefly portrayed the events as "torture", they quickly adopted the "mistreatment" and "abuse" reference used by the White House (Bennett et al., 2006). Bennett et al. (2006) argued that this could for a large part be ascribed to the lack of challenging frames by other political elites. However, this finding is dismissed by Rowling et al. (2011) who claim that high level political actors consistently challenged the "mistreatment" and "abuse" frame but that these voices were unheard by the news media. Rowling et al. (2011) state that the discrepancy between their findings and those by Bennett et al. (2006)

stem from a methodological error in Bennett et al.'s (2006) design. Bennett et al. (2006) focus on counter framing of Democratic Party Officials by looking at whether news coverage contained frames that challenged the viewpoints of the White House. Nonetheless Rowling et al. argue that a different approach is needed as "disagreement among official political sources *sometimes* manifests as frame contestation in news and other times it does not", depending on the political position of the communicator (Rowling et al., 2011: 1045).

However Porpora et al. (2010) reject that news media, the Washington Post in particular, were supporting of the Bush administration in their coverage. They argue that Bennett et al.'s findings (2006) illustrate a skewed image because of their methodological design. By taking single words as representatives of entire frames it gives way to misinterpretation of the communication at hand. Porpora et al. (2010) show that the larger sub-text wherein "abuse" frames were used, which Bennett et al. (2006) claimed to be supportive of the administration, often highlighted attribution of responsibility to the administration for the practices in Abu Ghraib. In turn they also found that articles that referred to the case of Abu Ghraib as torture had the least criticism towards the administration. These results reject the foundation of Bennett et al.'s (2006) and Rowling et al.'s (2011) argument, as the use of abuse and torture do not correlate with the underlying assumption of a pro- or anti-administration discourse.

While the Bush administration rejected that Abu Ghraib marked a policy change wherein torture took in a central position, the release of the Senate Intelligence Committee report indicates otherwise. In the Abu Ghraib case, the immediate depiction of the coercive practices as unique cases of "mistreatment" and "abuse" can be explained by the interests of the Bush administration at that time. The events occurred under Bush his leadership, leaving him responsible. If the "the claims of some commentators that the photos signified a new departure in U.S. foreign policy" became prominent this would negatively affect his position, thus leading to counter messages of 'abuse' and 'mistreatment' by Republican political elites (Bennett et al., 2006: 468). In the current event however, while Obama has publicly supported the release of the SSCI report, the position of the Obama administration is more unclear. Obama's acknowledgement of CIA practices equating torture is logical considering his political stance on this specific issue. Obama banned the use of 'Enhanced Interrogation Methods' (EIT) on his second day in office, acknowledging many of the techniques amounted to torture. He publicly said on one of the techniques included in EIT, "I believe that waterboarding was torture and, whatever legal rationales were used, it was a mistake" (Obama, 2009). However Obama seems to halfheartedly support the release of the report, "giving it rhetorical support but empowering the CIA to determine what portions of a critique of the agency ought to be public" (Ackerman, 2015). This could be explained by the fact that there is also a real chance the Obama administration is negatively affected by the report. Although the events described in the

report did not happen under his leadership, the widespread acknowledgement of 'torture' could still negatively affect his administration. Firstly because wide condemnation of the practices as 'torture' could harm America's international standing in the world. Secondly because it could harm the relationship between the Obama administration and the CIA, as the CIA has opposed the release of the report. This would explain why Fox and Folz (2014) claim that besides Obama's acknowledgement of torture practices during the press conference in August 2014, Obama has refrained from making any statements on the discussion.

The release of the report could seriously harm the perceived legitimacy of the CIA as an organization. Not only because the report indicates that the CIA engaged in torture practices, but also because they are accused of lying to policymakers which depicts them as an untrustworthy organization. However the CIA is not the only party who opposed the release of the report, there has been a partisan divide over the issue with the Senate Democrats supporting the study and the Senate Republicans boycotting the preparation of the report (Sledge & McAuliff, 2012). The partisan divide can be explained by the fact that these practices happened under Republican leadership, wide acknowledgement of torture practices under Republican leadership could lead to a loss of political support which would be a positive development for the Democrats, explaining their support of the SSCI study. All these mixed interests of political elites indicate conflicting discourses will be upheld. The media is often put forward to fulfill the role of a 'watchdog', critically reflecting on daily political operations (Cook, 2005). This would indicate that the media would widely cover the findings of the CIA study as it exposes wrongdoings by a government institution. However the study by Rowling et al. (2011) indicates that news media will largely cover the discourse of the Obama administration as they take on the highest position in the political hierarchy and standpoints of other political actors only sometimes come up. The mixed signs of support from Obama for the release of the report and the mixed interests of the Obama administration indicate that the media will be limitedly critical of the CIA practices. If the theory used by Rowling et al. (2011) is wrong however, then the media will reflect the discourse of all stakeholders which is in line with the expectation by Bennett et al. (2006).

This study will therefore explore the representation of these different discourses in the media through the theory of framing. The dynamic between news media and political elites are of vital importance as journalistic independence is central in democratic theory (Bennett & Serinn, 2005). This paper seeks to research the applicability of the theoretical framework by Bennett et al. (2006), Rowling et al. (2011) and Porpora et al. (2010) to the current case of the SSCI report by integrating the approaches of all studies thus addressing the methodological criticisms by Rowling et al. (2011) and Porpora et al. (2010) on the methodology of Bennett et al. (2006). The study will thus analyze the discourses of all stakeholders included. If the study finds that the media does only reflect the discourse of the Obama administration, the watchdog role of the media is questioned

which could have important implications on the perception of media-state relations in democratic theory. This study will examine the watchdog theory by looking at the discourse used in the articles of the New York Times (NYT) and the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). The research question is as follows: To what extent does the news coverage on the SSCI report correspond with the communication by the Obama administration, CIA, Congress and the discourse used in the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal?

### ***Framing***

The phrasing used in describing certain events is critical as all communication hold structures that govern day to day situations. Communication structures "are schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify and label events within their social boundaries and of the world at large" (Ritzer, 2011: 380). These organizing principles are called 'frames' and do thus not exist on their own. Frames are always part of larger patterns "involving issue interpretation, attribution, and evaluation" and should thus not be encountered as separate ideas (Matthes, 2011: 252). These frame packages consist of "a core centralizing idea" but the package "typically implies a range of positions, rather than any single one, allowing for a degree of controversy among those who share a common frame. Finally, a package offers a number of different condensing symbols that suggest the core frame and positions in shorthand, making it possible to display the package as a whole with a deft metaphor, catch-phrase, or other symbolic device" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989: 3). Political elites are characterized by their drive "to develop frames about an issue and try to establish these in the public discourse and in the news media" (Matthes, 2011: 249). They invent and employ frames "often with an eye on advancing their own interests or ideologies, and intended to make favorable interpretations prevail" (Kinder & Sanders, 1990: 74). Framing thus goes beyond simply labelling CIA practices as 'torture' or 'abuse', it tries to get the recipient to adopt the frame which then guides their interpretation of the issue. As Entman (1993) described the process, through framing one highlights an aspect of a perceived reality "and make them more salient in a communicating context, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" (Entman, 1993:52).

Whether the frames are effective or not depends partly on the characteristics of the frame. A strong frame is characterized by compelling and convincing facts, or its ability "to appeal to emotions, such as fears or anger" (Matthes 2011: 250). Political elites use these attributes to convey a constructed reality that benefits them. This strategic aspect of framing takes on a central position in political communication as "there is always a competition of frames among the elite or strategic communicators" (Matthes 2011: 252). As a result frames are continuously contested and redefined

in the public sphere. Leading to conflicts between different dominant actors to “define a dominant interpretation of an issue” (Matthes, 2011: 252). Therefore wording matters and is crucial in understanding the dynamics of the interaction between the communicator and the recipient. However frames are not fixed messages, they can “at some given point in time be diminished or reversed at a later point in time” (Matthes & Schemer, 2012: 319). Matthes and Schemer call this the ‘diachronic nature’ of framing.

When the framing theory is applied to the case at hand, it is understandable that the word ‘torture’ is not one wants to be affiliated with as torture practices are “strongly intentional” (Bennett et al., 2006: 473). In contrast to ‘torture’ ‘abuse’ does not imply intention but “neglectful behavior” (Bennett et al. 2006: 472).

### ***Prominence of Frames***

Bennett et al. claim that this “suggests that event-driven frames, particularly in matters of high consequence, are seriously constrained by mainstream news organizations’ deference to political power” (Bennett et al., 2006: 481). This is in line with the study of Althaus (2003), who argues that U.S. mainstream journalists do not often openly criticize U.S. foreign practices. Bennett et al. (2006) draw on the theory of ‘indexing’, that suggests that when journalists report on a certain issue the variety of opinions expressed within news coverage is limited to those expressed by official sources (Bennett, 1990). Therefore they focus on voices of official sources in the media and come to the conclusion that the reason for the absence of any critical reporting by U.S. media is the lack of “any consistent counter-framing by high-level officials” (Bennet et al. 2006: 481).

Rowling et al. (2011) claim this conclusion is wrong. According to them this stems from a difference in the sources that were analyzed. Bennett et al. (2006) only included news media in their analysis instead of using official statements of Congress. Rowling et al. (2006) argue that the absence of a reflection of the critical political voice in U.S. media is the result of “Entman’s ‘cascading activation model’ of press-state relations”, which predicts that the dominance of a frame depends on the power position of the communicator (Rowling et al., 2011: 1044). The higher the position within U.S. politics an individual has, the more chance there is their frame gets picked up by the mainstream media (Entman, 2004). This cascading effect caused the media to echo the ‘abuse’ frame of the Bush administration (Rowling et al., 2011). Rowling et al. conclude that the “U.S. press played an important role in not just transmitting, but also amplifying, a view of the world that protected the nation’s self-image *and* its Republican president” (Rowling et al., 2011: 1057).

Part of the focus of this study will thus lie on the correspondence between the discourse used by the political administration in power and its opposition in official statements as well as on the discourse used by the U.S. media. By focusing on both media articles and official statements of

political elites this study strives to explore the frames used in the discourse and the applicability of the cascading model and the indexing theory.

### ***Counter Frames***

Another key element to understanding how the U.S. press allegedly contributed to protecting the Bush administration is through what Gamson (1992) calls 'resonant' frames'. "Culturally resonant frames are messages that are especially attuned to the cultural schemas *habitually* used by large numbers of citizens to process information and events" (Rowling et al., 2011: 1045). The potency of these frames to lead public opinion lies in its ability to adhere to "shared cultural phenomena" and as a result habituate "a common response among citizenry" (van Gorp, 2007: 65; Rowling et al., 2011: 1045). One of the main functions of frames is their ability to construct or deconstruct "moral and political judgments" by portraying certain situations in a specific perspective (Bennett et al. 2006: 474). Cultural "resonances increase the appeal of a frame by making it appear natural and familiar. Those who respond to the larger cultural theme will find it easier to respond to a frame with the same sonorities" (Gamson, 1992: 135). These type of frames are thus more likely to become evident in news media, while frames that do not correspond with or are in conflict with cultural values are more likely to be contested by political elites (Rowling et al., 2011).

However "the notion of what constitutes a culturally resonant message remains vague", 'culture' as a concept is hard to define and its meaning varies for different individuals (Rowling et al., 2011: 1046). To use 'cultural resonance' as an empirical tool of analysis it has to be more specified. 'Cultural resonance' in this case refers to the U.S. national identity as the CIA torture scandal threatens the national image of the U.S. as a whole. Therefore one has to focus on the theory of social identity formation. The social identity theory by Henri Tajfel (1982) argues that one's self-image is heavily reliant on the social group an individual affiliates with. As a result individuals gain self-esteem from and feel secure with the people they relate to (Mercer, 1995). This dynamic automatically creates a perspective of an in- and out-group in which the out-group is perceived as inferior to the in-group (Tajfel, 1974:66). When members of the in-group feel "threatened" by the out-group, psychological or physical, they try to "protect" and "enhance" these groups (Entman, 1991; Rowling et al., 2011: 1046). This leads to an 'us' versus 'them' perspective which creates a group-based social reality of the self.

One of the most prominent forms of identity in the modern era is the national identity. Anderson states that national identity is one of the strongest identities because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 1991: 7). The power of national identity lies in its ability to

convey it as a “natural cultural and political unit” which is embedded in “cultural myths, shared stories, and social narratives” that highlight the connection between group members (Brookes, 1999: 248; Rowling et al., 2011: 1046).

To bring this into perspective with the current focus on the CIA report, the expectation is thus that culturally resonant frames will refer to symbols of national identity that try to strengthen the ties between American citizens to undermine the ‘torture’ frame. Following this reasoning and the study by Rowling et al. (2011) the expectation is that members of the Obama administration, the CIA and Senate Republicans will use cultural resonant frames to counter the negative image of the CIA that is the result of the ‘torture’ frame portrayed in the SSCI report. Following this argument, the first hypothesis is:

*The Obama administration, the CIA and Senate Republicans will continuously highlight elements of national identity throughout the time period in which the issue is covered in the news.*

The counter frames will focus on U.S. citizens being united by shared democratic values such as “human rights, human freedom and dignity” and appeal to the shared national history (Azpiroz, 2014: 85). Newspapers play a vital role in transferring these counter-frames as newspapers “promote identification within the nation as a dominant form of cultural identity” (Thomlinson, 2001: 83). Therefore another key focus of this study will lie on counter frames that appear in the communication referring to American national identity. This coping mechanism of political elites with contesting cultural frames is illustrated by the Bush administration in the Abu Ghraib case. They claimed the alleged ‘torture’ practices were “isolated cases of ‘abuse’ and ‘mistreatment’ at the hands of low-level soldiers” (Bennett et al., 2006: 468). This coping mechanism is called ‘cognitive dissonance’ and has its roots in the field of psychology. The theory “suggests that individuals possess a psychological motivation to rationalize behavior that reflects negatively upon themselves” (Rowling et al., 2011: 1047). As a result political elites try to justify perceived torture practices by using the ‘abuse’ frame which is often used interchangeably with ‘mistreatment’.

Following the cognitive dissonance logic, there are four types of frames that are expected to be deployed by these actors, “*minimization* of transgressions, *disassociation* from transgressors, *reaffirmation* of the nation’s identity” and status quo framing (Rowling et al., 2011: 1047). The concept of minimization describes the process of actors who try to downsize the “seriousness” and magnitude of the situation (Rowling et al., 2011: 1047). Minimization serves as a coping mechanism to “avoid aversive emotional reaction” and the feeling of guilt as a result of the deviating behavior (Rowling et al., 2011: 1047). The concept consists of two parts. One form of minimization is focused on limiting the asperity of the situation or highlighting its limited impact (Bandura, 1990). The other manifests as an attempt to isolate the behavior by blaming it “on the actions of a few” (Rowling et



al., 2011: 1047). Both are aimed at minimizing the impact of an event on the position of the communicator, in this case being the Obama administration, CIA or the Senate Republicans as these are all indicated to pose counter frames to torture allegations. The second concept disassociation, entrenches attempts to distance the perpetrators from the group. This can involve motivating the attempt by characterizing the individuals as "unworthy of group membership" by calling them 'un-American' for example (Eidelman et al., 2006; Rowling et al., 2011: 1050). In addition individuals can be sanctioned with material punishments (Eidelman et al., 2006). Material punishments function as a signal for other members that deviant behavior will have "material consequences" and that this behavior is not defining for the group (Rowling et al. 2011: 1047). Lastly reaffirmation is focused diverting public attention from the deviant behavior and highlighting positive aspects of the group (Tajfel, 1982). The emphasis in this process is on the positive group characteristics and values that can lead to "invoking resonant historical myths and cultural symbols" (Rowling et al. 2011: 1048). Reaffirmation can also be found in references to other groups stressing the negative aspects of other groups or individuals behavior in comparison to the communicator by relativizing the deviant behavior. This process is called 'advantageous comparisons' (Bandura, 1990).

In addition to the framework designed by Rowling et al. (2011) another frame is expected to appear, namely the 'status quo framing effect' (Crandall et al., 2008). The basic idea of the theory is that by identifying an event as "traditional, long established or part of the status quo", it is more likely to be accepted or perceived as desirable (Crandall et al., 2008: 1). Crandall et al. find that when torture practices are described as longstanding practices rather than new, these practices are "evaluated more positively" (Crandall et al. 2008: 5). Therefore it would be logical for the Obama administration, the CIA or the Senate Republicans to deploy these frames as it would optimize their support and increase "perceived justification" on the use of the 'torture' practices used by the CIA (Crandall et al., 2008: 1).

Following the interests of the stakeholders involved, both the Obama administration, the CIA and the Senate Republicans are expected to use these four frame types. However indicating the perceived mixed interests of the Obama administration the following hypotheses is constructed:

*The Obama administration will selectively use frames of minimization, disassociation and reaffirmation, and critical frames in its communication on the Senate Select Committee Report.*

Although there are shared interests between the CIA and the Obama administration, the CIA is expected to use frames of minimization, disassociation and reaffirmation more extensively than the administration considering they are directly affected by widespread acknowledgement of CIA practices equaling torture. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*Communication by CIA officials will be congruent with the administration insofar that it will use frames of minimization and disassociation and stress positive frames such as reaffirmation and status quo framing, but it will refrain from using the torture frame or any other frames that reflect negatively on the CIA.*

Taking into account that the Senate Republicans did not support the release of the report and oppose the Democratic administration, the discourse of the Senate Republicans is expected to be similar to that of the CIA , leading to following expectation:

*Republican members of Congress will counter the frames of torture through minimization, disassociation and reaffirmation frames and will not widely use the torture frame.*

To specify the first three types of frames, the framework of the study on the Abu Ghraib case by Rowling et al. is used, who identify two sub-frames within the minimization theme: "(a) Delimiting blame", labeling practices as "incidents" and isolating it to "the actions of a few"; and "(b) Delimiting extent", statements claiming that events "were isolated, unique, or anomalous" (Rowling et al., 2011: 1050). While this framework is useful for conducting the analysis, the expectation is that this particular type of counter-frame is less applicable to the case at hand as the report includes CIA operations over a time span of 13 years, which makes it harder to isolate the events claiming it were actions of a few individuals or unique situations. The other types of counter-frames are expected to have higher explanatory value in this case. The framing concept of disassociation is measured through two sub-frames: "(a) Appropriating justice", statements made that imply that those responsible "will be punished or brought to justice"; and "(b) Un-American behavior, references to the behavior" during those thirteen years "as "un-American" or inconsistent with U.S. values" (Rowling et al., 2011: 1050). The concept of reaffirmation is operationalized using three sub-frames: "(a) Positive American values"— references emphasizing "positive U.S. values, attributes and behaviors"; (b) "Humanitarianism"— communication that highlights U.S. "adherence to international law" and U.S. commitment to uphold international human rights standards in the "treatment of prisoners"; and "(c) Advantageous comparisons", references stressing perceived negative "attributes of other" actors involved" (Rowling et al., 2011: 1050). Finally, the status quo framing effect is identified by references to torture/abuse/mistreatment highlighting these operations being part of longstanding practices/tradition which can be embodied in references such as 'not new', 'status quo' and 'tradition'(see table 1).

These frame types build on the idea that challenges to the administrations messages in the Abu Ghraib case were absent and that news content only portrayed counter "torture" or "abuse" frames. However as stated in the introduction Porpora et al. (2010) reject the argument that the

Washington Post upheld a supportive discourse of the frames used by the Bush administration. particular, were supporting of the Bush administration in their coverage. Therefore Porpora et al. (2010) argue a different approach is needed, coding not just references to “abuse” or “torture” but looking at the larger context to identify larger frames. They identify four frames that are offensive in character towards those responsible for the actions in Abu Ghraib and stress the accountability of the administration. If these findings are applied to the latest CIA report, the expectation is that these four additional frames will appear in news media content highlighting the responsibility of the administration for the practices described in the CIA report. These four frames are characterized by: *rejection of the isolation* of abusive/torture practices; highlighting the “*systematic nature*” of the practices; stressing the orders for the actions came from a *high ranking official*, “including the administration”; *accusations of “lying or dissembling”* aimed at the administration or the CIA (Porpora et al., 2010: 261-262).

Bringing this in line with the case, it is expected that the Senate Democrats will use the four frames set out by Porpora et al. (2010) to counter the defensive discourse of the administration, CIA and Senate Democrats. This leads to the following hypothesis:

*Democratic members of Congress will challenge frames of minimization, disassociation, and reaffirmation communicated by the administration and the CIA through widespread use of the torture frame, rejection of isolation, stressing the systematic nature of torture practices, attributing the actions to high level command and accusing the administration of lying or dissembling.*

Lastly the U.S. media is involved as a stakeholder in the discussion on the SSCI report, however no clear theoretical expectation can be derived from the theory alone. Taking into account the conflicting theoretical models by Bennett et al. (2006), Rowling et al. (2011) and Porpora et al. (2010), the news coverage could support all the perspectives or just one. The indexing theory predicts the news coverage should be mixed considering the conflicting interests leading to the use of counter messages by both sides, portraying both the ‘torture’ frame as well as the counter frames. The cascading model stipulates media coverage will be largely dominated by the discourse of the Obama administration as this stakeholder takes in the highest ‘rank’ within the framing hierarchy of communicators according to Entman’s (1993) model. However the seemingly wide acceptance of the “CIA Torture Report” label and the study by Porpora et al. (2010) leads to the following final hypothesis:

*U.S. news media coverage on the CIA Report will challenge the minimization, disassociation, and reaffirmation frames offered by the Obama administration through rejection of isolation, stressing*

*the systematic nature, claiming high level command and accusing the administration of lying or dissembling.*

However to explore the role of the media as a watchdog, ideology is a determining factor considering the ideological character of the subject of torture. Although “Americans do not favor torture as a general tactic”, the subject of torture is ideologically driven (Crandall et al., 2008: 2). Research by PEW “has found that there are differences along party lines with Republicans more supportive than Democrats of torture with suspected terrorists” (PEW, 2014a). Their poll indicated that 71% of the Republicans, a vast majority, supported that torture “could be at least sometimes justified”, in comparison to 45% of the Democrat respondents (PEW, 2014a). Because of practical reasons the selection process on news sources will only focus on daily newspapers that have an online news archive. Following the study by PEW the content analysis will be conducted on news articles from The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal. The New York Times is selected because it enjoys a high level of trust amongst those with liberal values and The Wall Street Journal is chosen because it is prone to a conservative bias (PEW, 2014b; Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2010). By including these two sources of news coverage I strive to get give insight in the dynamics of the framing hierarchy as well as the types of frames used in political communications on national crises. Selecting both a liberal and conservative minded news medium gives the opportunity to check whether ideological differences on the subject also influence the media coverage. It can also give further insight in the relation between news media and political elites by looking at whether frames sent by actors with the same political preference as the news source appear more prominent in news coverage. However, I am aware that selecting the sources by ideology does not mean these sources are representative for all liberals and conservatives and therefore the selection process might create a bias

### **Method**

To examine the frames used by the Obama administration, CIA, Congress, NYT and the WSJ, this study will do a qualitative content analysis on four sources of information. First, to analyze the discourse used by White house officials, the research will focus on “speeches, interviews, press conferences, and press releases by members of the White House and U.S. military” between the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2014 (the date of the public release of the CIA report) and 28<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 to include possible diachronic framing effects (Rowling et al., 2011: 1050) The search terms used are “CIA” or “torture” and “report”. Statements, speeches are gathered from the White House government site. However because interviews were not accessible through an official government

site or the official government database (Congressional Record), interviews were gathered through google using the search terms "Administration" or "Obama" and "CIA report" or "torture report" and "interview". Using this approach three press briefings, one official statement and two interviews were gathered. The unit of analysis is an individual reference to the practices included in the CIA report that can be identified in communication by the Obama administration.

Next to communication of the Obama administration, it makes methodological sense to make a distinction between statements by the White House and CIA officials. Considering the difference in perceived interests of the CIA and the Obama administration and the statement made by O'Donnell who claims that the White House is sending mixed signals, especially through CIA officials (O'Donnell, 2014). Therefore statements by these parties will be analyzed separately in a second source of the content analysis. The same selection procedure was used for the CIA, gathering statements and speeches from the official CIA site and interviews through google using the search terms "CIA official" or "Brennan" and "CIA report" or "torture report" and interview. However this only resulted in 3 statements. To expand the analysis on CIA discourse two interviews of ex-CIA officials which were installed during the time EIT were used are included. Although it must be noted that being a former CIA employee is of significant influence on the ability to speak freely, the inclusion of these interviews gives an opportunity to check for the possible constraining effects of political consequences.

The third source of the content analysis will come from statements made by Congress. This part of the content analysis will be conducted, similar to the first source, on speeches, interviews, press conferences, and press releases. To gather speeches, statements, press conferences and press releases the Congressional Record was used. To find speeches google was used with the search terms "Congress" or "Senate Democrat" or "Senate Republican" or "Feinstein" and "CIA report" or "torture report" and "interview". Twenty items communicated by Congress were gathered.

Finally the coverage on the CIA report by the New York Times and The Wall Street Journal is analyzed by using the same search terms as in the other sources of the content analysis. Both news articles and editorials are included in the analysis. Due to the large number of texts that resulted from the search terms (350 news articles and editorials in NY Times and 91 in the Wall Street Journal), only news articles and editorials that focused directly on the practices described in the CIA report "and/or U.S. policies on the treatment" of terrorist suspects are included as many articles only made "passing references" to the report (Bennett et al., 2006: 473). This resulted in 103 related articles and editorials from the New York Times and 28 from The Wall Street Journal.

Similar to the other sources of the content analysis, it is assessed which label is used in referencing to the report and the specific types of frames are identified all using the same coding as for the other sources. Although I am aware that the unbalanced distribution between the two

newspapers might limit their comparability, it can also contribute to the study as a lack of news coverage also gives information. Furthermore because there is only one person involved in the framing procedure there is no hundred percent certainty that some frames have been unnoticed.

To analyze the framing processes in all four sources of the content analysis the first area of attention is focused on the label that is attributed to the CIA practices, being either abuse, mistreatment, torture, scandal or a combination of these frames. All the references will be coded separately to see if certain patterns arise. If 'abuse' is used it will be coded a '1', if the content refers to the case as 'mistreatment' it is coded a '2', if it is referred to as a 'torture' this will be attributed a '3' and lastly if the word 'scandal' is used to refer to the CIA report this will be coded a '4'. These individual references can later be aggregated to two categories, abuse/mistreatment and torture/scandal. This gives a general impression of the dominance of a certain perspective on the CIA practices within the type of communication and/or the source of information. However as Porpora et al. (2010) point out, these single words are not accurate representatives of whole frames. Therefore the context wherein these single words appear have to be considered which will be addressed in the next section. In addition the date of the article/speech/statement will also be included to look at possible diachronic framing effects which were also present in the Abu Ghraib case, where early on journalists used the "torture" label but quickly refrained from using it calling it "abuse" instead.

Next the four types of defensive frames identified by Rowling et al. (2011) and Crandall et al. (2008) being minimization disassociation reaffirmation and status quo framing and the four types of offensive frames outlined by Porpora et al. (2010) form an analytical tool to extract the different discourses used by the different actors. However, a preliminary coding test, wherein a sub-set of all the different types of communication (speech, statement, news article etc.) by each actor (Obama administration, news media etc.) was taken and was exposed to the coding scheme, revealed that the frame types were insufficient. Other framing trends came to light which did not fit the frame types of Rowling et al. (2011) and Porpora et al. (2010). Therefore new frame types were constructed based on the trends found in the preliminary test. The new frame types can be broadly categorized into the following general frame trends: Defensive of CIA, Attacking CIA, Context and Undermining Strength of the Report. The more specific frames can be found in table 2, these will not be discussed as part of the method section as they are highly intertwined with the results. In addition to the labels identified by Bennett et al. (2006) the non-value laden technical label EIT is added as this also part of the framing process and indicates a specific discourse. An example of how the frame types are identified can be found in table 1, where a sample of the frames in headings can be found.

Each individual reference will be coded as '0' when not present, and a '1' when present, using the different types of references explained in the theory section. By coding each specific frame the prominence of a certain discourse in the communication by the different actors can be extracted.

A specific focus on the presence of labels in headings of news articles and editorials in the NYT and WSJ will be included as this strongly indicates the prominence of a certain frame in the discourse. The coding of these references can be used to examine whether certain types of frames correspond highly with the use of the ‘abuse’, ‘torture’ or ‘EIT’ label or if different actors use certain frames more frequently.

Table 1. Table 4. Sample of Primary frame used in the Header, by Type, New York Times, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

<b>Heading</b>	<b>Frame Type</b>
<i>Accused of Rights Abuses, North Korea Urges U.N. Meeting on CIA Torture</i>	<i>Advantageous comparisons</i>
<i>Bush Officials Gave CIA Wide Latitude</i>	<i>High Level Command</i>
<i>CIA Lied about Torture, Senate Report Suggests</i>	<i>Lying or Dissembling CIA</i>
<i>Obama: Some of CIA's Harsh Methods Were 'Brutal'</i>	<i>Brutality</i>
<i>Interrogation Program Mismanaged, Senate, CIA Agree</i>	<i>Mismanagement</i>
<i>Ex-CIA Officials Say Torture Report Is One-Sided, Flawed</i>	<i>Partisan</i>
<i>Republicans Insist CIA Methods in Report Helped Capture Terrorists</i>	<i>Partisan</i>
<i>Ex-CIA Interrogation Chief Warns of Betrayal</i>	<i>Negative Consequences</i>
<i>More US Embassies Warn of Post-CIA Report Violence</i>	<i>Negative Consequences</i>
<i>Senate Report: Harsh CIA Tactics Didn't Work</i>	<i>Ineffectiveness</i>

Table 2. Summary Table of Frames

<b>Types of Frames</b>	<b>Description of References</b>
<b>Torture/Scandal</b>	<b>The content highlights the extremity of the practices by using ‘torture’ or ‘scandal’ in referral to EIT</b>

<b>Abuse/Mistreatment</b>	<b>The content highlights the relative mildness of the practices by using 'abuse' or 'mistreatment' in referral to EIT</b>
<b>Minimization</b>	<b>Downplay the seriousness and scope of deviant behavior</b>
<i>Delimiting Blame</i>	<i>Actions of a few</i>
<i>Delimiting Extent</i>	<i>Events were isolated</i>
<b>Disassociation</b>	<b>Remove the deviant actors from the in-group</b>
<i>Appropriating Justice</i>	<i>Perpetrators brought to justice</i>
<i>Un-American Behavior</i>	<i>Behavior inconsistent with American values</i>
<b>Reaffirmation</b>	<b>Shifting attention away from the deviant behavior</b>
<i>Positive American Values</i>	<i>Positive American behavior/values</i>
<i>Humanitarianism</i>	<i>Adherence to humane treatment and int. law</i>
<i>Advantageous Comparisons</i>	<i>Classifying other actors as inferior</i>
<b>Status Quo</b>	<b>Practices are part of tradition/status quo</b>
<b>Rejection of Isolation</b>	<b>Rejection of the isolation of abusive/torture practices</b>
<b>Systematic Nature</b>	<b>Highlighting the systematic nature of the practices</b>
<b>High level Command</b>	<b>Orders for the actions came from a high ranking official</b>
<b>Accountability</b>	<b>The criminal accountability of those responsible for the use of EIT</b>
<b>Defensive of CIA</b>	<b>Defending CIA practices by highlighting positive aspects</b>
<i>Denial of Lying or Dissembling by CIA or Obama administration</i>	<i>Accusations of lying or dissembling by the CIA or the Obama administration are refuted</i>
<i>Effectiveness</i>	<i>The effectiveness of the practices described in the Senate report</i>
<i>Legality</i>	<i>Legality of the practices described in the Senate Report</i>



<i>Limited Conceding</i>	<i>The conceding of wrongdoings by the CIA, followed by highlighting a positive aspect of the CIA in this regard</i>
<b>Context</b>	<b>The context the CIA faced at the time EIT were used</b>
<i>Time Span</i>	<i>The short time-span wherein the CIA had to react to possible threats</i>
<i>Pressure</i>	<i>The pressure the CIA was under to react to 9/11</i>
<b>Undermining strength of the report</b>	<b>Undermining the strength of the report by highlighting negative aspects of the report or the Senate Select Committee</b>
<i>Partisan</i>	<i>The partisan character of the discussion on the Senate Report</i>
<i>Negative Consequences</i>	<i>The negative consequences of releasing the Senate Report</i>
<i>Flaws</i>	<i>The flaws of the Senate Report</i>
<i>Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by Senate Report</i>	<i>The Senate has lied or dissembled facts in the Senate Report</i>
<b>Attacking CIA</b>	<b>Attacking CIA practices/claims</b>
<i>Ineffectiveness</i>	<i>The ineffectiveness or denies the effectiveness of EIT's</i>
<i>Illegality</i>	<i>The CIA practices included in the Senate Report were illegal</i>
<i>Brutality</i>	<i>The brutality of the CIA practices described in the Senate Report</i>
<i>Mismanagement</i>	<i>The mismanagement of the CIA</i>
<i>Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by CIA or Administration</i>	<i>Accusations of lying or dissembling aimed at CIA and/or administration</i>

## **Results**

### **Obama Administration**

Drawing from the theory and based on the indication of mixed interests of the Obama administration the expectation was that the Obama administration would continuously highlight elements of

national identity in its communication and would selectively use frames of minimization, disassociation and reaffirmation, and critical frames in its communication on the Senate Select Committee Report. In addition it was expected that the Obama administration would only limitedly use the word 'torture' in reference to EIT. These expectations are partly supported by the data.

Table 3 shows that the Obama administration used the word 'torture' 38 percent of the time when referring to EIT. This is a rather wide use of the 'torture' label and does not support the idea that the Obama administration selectively uses the torture frame. However a qualitative approach reveals that in one third of the time the Obama administration used the torture label, it stressed Obama banning the use of torture without specifically referring to EIT as used by the CIA which were described in the report. While indirectly this can still be linked to EIT as the use of those techniques were halted by this ban, the frame does not negatively highlight the CIA or link the CIA to torture. An illustration of this can be found in the following quote which discusses the actions taken in the aftermath of 9/11:

*"some of the actions that were taken were contrary to our values. That is why I unequivocally banned torture when I took office"* (Obama, 2014a).

The use of the torture label in this sentence does not refer to the CIA or EIT but stresses the actions taken against terrorists in the aftermath of 9/11 by America in general. This is essentially different than the use of the torture label in the following quote:

*"I think, study after study has shown that when people get tortured, when people are beaten, when people are put in a position of severe stress and pain, oftentimes they're willing to say anything to alleviate that stress and pain"* (Obama, 2014b).

In this quote Obama specifically refers to the study by the Senate Select Committee which was specifically about the use of torture by the CIA. However the CIA is not mentioned specifically, it is still a more general comment about the use of torture as an interrogation method. In none of the occasions where the word 'torture' was used by the administration did they mention the CIA. Instead the Obama administration officials ascribed the blame of the use of torture to the U.S. as a whole. The following quotes by a senior administration official discussing the position of the president in the debate illustrate this dynamic:

*"The President has said that we committed torture"* (Senior Administration Official, 2014).

*"he believes that the United States carried out activities that amounted to torture"* (Senior Administration Official, 2014)

In the first quote the responsibility for using torture is ascribed to “we”, without specifying who this group is. Later the senior administration official states the U.S. as a country is responsible for the use of torture. This can be interpreted as a reversed use of the cultural resonance frame. By using the torture frame in relation to the U.S., a negative frame of the U.S. is constructed which does not resonate with the cultural image of America the recipient has and is therefore less likely to be adopted by the recipient (Gamson, 1992). The use of the U.S. or ‘we’ is thus critical for the message sent by the administration.

Taking this in consideration the torture label was only used 25 percent of the time when discussing the practices used by the CIA and even in these occurrences it never mentioned the CIA directly in relation with the word ‘torture’. While the torture frame is thus acknowledged in a quarter of the references to EIT by the Obama administration, it does not indicate a negative discourse towards the CIA as they are not directly mentioned.

The same construction is used when highlighting the brutality of the actions taken. The brutality frame constitutes a frame trend which highlights the brutal character of EIT, stressing the negative character of EIT. Obama said in an interview with Jorge Ramos that “unfortunately, as the Senate report shows, we engaged in some brutal activity after 9/11” (Obama, 2014c). Again it is not entirely clear who is referred to with ‘we’ but it seems to refer to the American people in general as Obama replies to the statement “America doesn’t torture” and later says “we did some things that violated who we are as a people” building on the notion that American values were violated by the use EIT. The strength of the brutality frame is thus again limited by the logic of cultural resonance.

The implication that the responsibility is not ascribed to the CIA in the discourse of the administration is supported by Table 3, which shows that in 58 percent of the references to the EIT the technical term was used instead of a value laden term. This indicates that in the majority of the discourse a neutral approach was taken in discussing the EIT. The fact that the administration used the technical term the majority of the time underlines the idea that the administration is only limitedly conceding to criticisms towards the CIA. However this claim is only partly supported by the other data in table 4. The frame types that indicate an offensive attitude towards the CIA make up 36 percent of the total frames used in the discourse. While Illegality and ineffectiveness are never highlighted and brutality and mismanagement are each only used in 4 percent of the total amount of frames used in the discourse, the negative consequences of the CIA actions are stressed 25 percent of the total amount of frames used. In all occurrences of this frame, the administration stresses the negative effects of EIT on the moral authority of the U.S.. Obama claimed the use of EIT to be “detrimental” to America’s national security because of its negative influence on America’s moral authority. He said that the practices described in the report were “inconsistent with the values of our nation” (Obama, 2014a). This disassociation mechanism is continuously highlighted throughout

the communication by the administration. Frames highlighting the practices were un-American make up 16 percent of the total frames expressed by the administration. Disassociation is not only expressed through frames highlighting EIT were un-American but also by stating these practices belong the past, creating a distance between current and former U.S. policy. These frames are consistently paired with messages of reaffirmation to avert the attention away from the deviant behavior of the CIA and highlight the positive values of the U.S., the 'positive American values' frame accounts for 14 percent of the total frames (Rowling et al., 2011).

The release of the report is brought by the administration as a measure to counter this negative development and strengthen America's moral authority through transparency, which is the central positive consequence of the report highlighted by the administration. Moral authority is claimed to be one of the most important tools in safeguarding "America's national security" by White House press secretary Josh Earnest (Earnest, 2014). Earnest states that transparency was the motivating factor for the President's backing of the report (Earnest, 2014). Throughout the statements Earnest stresses the strong support of the President of the release of the report when simultaneously stating the importance of moral authority. This conveys an image wherein the President is directly responsible for making America safer as he supported the report, which counters the negative consequences of EIT on America's national security. The same dynamic is instigated when referring to mismanagement by the CIA. Earnest states that the report reveals there "was not good guidance, that there was not good leadership, and that there was not proper oversight of a lot of these programs" but that this has already been taken up by the administration as the president has set up a task force that he "created on his second day in office to make sure that proper guidance and oversight and reform was implemented as it relates to interrogation and detention of individuals in U.S. custody" (Earnest, 2014). In addition the notion that the President had outlawed torture practices on his second day in office was consistently highlighted in relation to the negative consequences of EIT. The ban of EIT frame came up 30 times in the administrations communication which is almost double of the amount of frames highlighting the negative consequences of EIT. Unfortunately this frame was not picked up during the preliminary test and is thus not included in table 4. However it indicates that the emphasis of the administration lies more on the positive role of the president specifically instead of on the negative consequences of CIA practices.

Thus while the discourse of the administration would be interpreted as quite offensive towards the CIA based on the numbers shown in table 3 and 4, a qualitative approach reveals the subtle neutralizing dynamics of the administrations wording. The CIA is never mentioned specifically in the negative context and the offensive frames are mainly used as a tool to highlight the positive influence of the President on the U.S. on both the national and international level. The finding that the administration is not aggressive towards the CIA in its communication is supported by the use of

defensive frames identified in the preliminary analysis. The legitimate character of EIT is stressed to counter the report's conclusions that the CIA exceeded its legal boundaries. The legitimacy frame makes up 11 percent of the total amount of frames used in the discourse. The administration frame the use of EIT as legitimate by referring to earlier inquiries on the CIA practices discussed. Earnest says on the subject:

*"the Department of Justice actually did conduct a review of the actions of CIA operatives that are mentioned in this report,...and upon looking at the facts in evidence decided not to pursue an indictment"* (Earnest, 2014).

As a result the accountability frame, highlighting those responsible for the use of EIT should be held criminally accountable, is not used at all. At least not in reference to criminal prosecutions. Earnest states the President believes that the transparency created by the report "is an important measure of accountability" (Earnest, 2014). This could be perceived as an attempt of the administration to frame the definition of 'accountability' as such to try to shift the discussion away from criminal accountability.

Another prominent defensive frame is the context frame, highlighting the pressure the CIA was under to react to terrorist threats in the aftermath of 9/11. This frame also accounts for 11 percent of the total amount of frames used. The pressure frame is used to put the use of EIT in perspective to downplay the negative image of the CIA set by the report and stress that while the use of EIT was not the way to go, the motives were legitimate.

*"In the years after 9/11, with legitimate fears of further attacks and with the responsibility to prevent more catastrophic loss of life, the previous administration faced agonizing choices about how to pursue al Qaeda and prevent additional terrorist attacks against our country* (Obama, 2014c).

Although the administration highlights its support of the release of the report, none of the main conclusions of the report are consistently supported in their discourse. The finding that the CIA has consistently misled and lied to Bush administration officials is not expressed by the administration. Although questions concerning the topic were asked during press briefings, the administration refrained from taking in a clear position on this issue. Earnest said on the topic:

*"We certainly would have the expectation that everybody in this administration, including everybody who works for the Central Intelligence Agency, would be truthful and honest with members of Congress, particularly when they're under oath"* (Earnest, 2014).

While a senior administration official stressed that these events “took place long before we were in office” and highlighted the small chance that the CIA could have lied or misled congress and/or the Bush administration:

*“so even by the time we took office, there had been inspector general reports, there had been processes within these agencies”* (Senior administration official, 2014).

Thus albeit the administration has not directly communicated its position on whether the CIA misled or lied, the statement stressing there have already been inspector general reports on these practices indicate the administration does not support this finding.

The other main finding of the report, that EIT were ineffective, is initially supported as the quote by Obama stated earlier illustrated that people who are subjected to torture are willing to say anything to make it stop implying the use of EIT is ineffective. This seems to be supported by the statement of the administration that use of EIT was “not only wrong, but also counterproductive”, however while this seems to imply ineffectiveness the administration highlights something else (Obama, 2014c). The administration claims EIT were counterproductive as they were installed to safeguard the national security of the U.S. but because EIT has negative effects on U.S. moral authority, which is identified by the administration as having a great influence on national security, EIT endangered the national security of America. This is further underlined by Obama in the interview with Ramos held on the day the report released, in which he states on the point of effectiveness of EIT that “the information we get isn’t necessary better than doing things the right way” (Obama, 2014b). Thus not dismissing the effectiveness of EIT but highlighting that better alternatives were available. However on the tenth of December 2014, Earnest (2014) states in a press briefing that whether EIT were necessary to obtain information or that other effective alternatives were available is “unknowable” (Earnest, 2014). This frame of the ‘unknowable effectiveness’ of EIT is upheld in all the communication of the administration after that press briefing. There thus seems to be a diachronic effect. Where Obama first highlights the availability of non-coercive alternatives to EIT that led to similar results and states the use of torture is not effective as people subjected to torture are willing to say anything the stop it, this frame is later transformed in the administration’s discourse to the argument that it is unknowable whether better alternatives were available. A significant transformation as the initial frame had a negative connotation, while the later frame holds on to a frame that is open to interpretation. Even though the unknowable frame indicates a more open frame, the administration continues to stress that:

*“Even if this information did yield important national security information, the damage that it did to our moral authority, in the mind of this President, means that those interrogation techniques should not have been implemented in the first place” (Earnest, 2014).*

Although the administration claims to be supportive of the release of the report, their discourse does not seem to consistently support the main conclusions of the report. The claim of the SSCI that the CIA lied or dissembled information from the Bush administration and the conclusion that EIT were ineffective are both not backed up by the administration. In addition while the negative consequences of EIT and the dismissal of torture are clearly highlighted the administration does not go into the content of the report, apart from the acknowledgement that the report revealed the brutality of practices used and mismanagement by the CIA. The negative consequences of EIT claim on the security of the U.S. is not related directly to the content of the report as this is not one of the conclusions.

The fact that the negative consequences of releasing the report form 6 percent of the total frames used by the administration seems to back up the idea that the administration was not that supportive of the report at all. However although the negative consequences of releasing the report are addressed such as an increased risk of terrorist attacks, these are argued to be of insignificant value when the positive influence of the release of the report on the moral authority of the U.S. is taken into account. Obama said that “there is never a perfect time to release a report like this” (Obama, 2014c). Countering the negative consequences of the report argument that may be attacks to Americans overseas as a result of the report.

This indicates that there is indeed a supportive discourse of the administration concerning the report. However as illustrated with the frames of ‘torture’ and ‘brutality’, these critical frames highlighting negative aspects of EIT are mainly used to highlight the positive influence of President Obama instead of going into the content or discussing the negative role of the CIA. Negative frames are consistently countered by neutralizing frames such as legality and pressure. This is illustrated by the administrations use of positive frames regarding the CIA. Positive attributes of the CIA are highlighted by the administration that specifically counter the conclusions of the report such as “professionalism”, countering the report’s conclusion that the CIA’s structure is deeply flawed and is unprofessional, “following the law”, countering the conclusion that the use of EIT’s was illegal and that the CIA deliberately kept things from the Bush administration, or by the use of frames that adhere to national sentiments such as patriotism which habituates a common positive response among U.S. citizens (Earnest, 2014; Obama, 2014a; Gamson, 1992). Though the administration has also acknowledged mismanagement of the CIA and have not used minimization frames, which indicates that the mismanagement was widespread. The emphasis on both professionalism and

mismanagement clearly underlines the mixed messages claim by O'Donnell (2014).

There is thus clear indication of selective use of frames by the administration that both positively and negatively reflect on the CIA. The use of torture is more widespread than expected but the power of the frame is neutralized by attributing the responsibility of the use of EIT to all U.S. citizens by using the word 'we' and 'U.S.' in relation to torture. Positive frames both highlight positive American values to counter the negative messages concerning 'U.S. torture' and positive attributes of the CIA specifically which is only criticized by the use of mismanagement frames, countered by stressing 'professionalism', and brutality, which is countered by positive American values. Overall the administration uses frames that highlight the negative aspects of CIA practices but neutralizes them by using frames of legality and pressure and disassociation. In turn a qualitative analysis reveals these negative frames are not used to critically reflect on the CIA as an organization but to positively highlight the actions taken by the President to address the issues brought forth in the Senate Committee report. The administration thus makes use of a type of advantageous comparisons dynamic to emphasize the positive effect President Obama has had on U.S. policy. By stressing the negative character of past behavior and accentuating how this is addressed by the current administration, the discourse makes an advantageous comparison between the pre- and post-Obama period.

### **CIA**

The expectation was that communication by CIA officials would be congruent with the administration insofar that it will use frames of minimization and disassociation and stress positive frames such as reaffirmation and status quo framing, but that it will refrain from using the torture frame or any other frames that reflect negatively on the CIA. This is not entirely supported by the qualitative data. Table 3 illustrates that CIA officials used the 'torture' label in 50 percent of the total references to EIT which is more than expected. However in all of the cases wherein the torture label was used, the context of the label implied the denial of the use of torture. In all references the word 'torture' was used as a response to allegations of torture mentioned by NBC journalist Chuck Todd in an interview with ex-CIA official Dick Cheney. The number of times the torture label was used thus gives a skewed image of the message in the discourse used by (ex-) CIA officials. When the denial of torture is exempted from the torture category, the torture frame is not used at all by any (ex-) CIA official and the technical term 'EIT' accounts for 97 percent of all references to CIA practices. The abuse frame is used once by ex-CIA official Michael Hayden but this is also not an acknowledgement of CIA using abusive tactics as the following quotes will illustrate:



Hayden: *"the Democrats on the committee have used one-half-assed unwarranted comment in one e-mail to justify the story that you have now bought hook, line and sinker that we used this to abuse other human beings"* (Hayden, 2014).

TAPPER: *"Well, without question, the CIA has acknowledged abuses, right?"*

HAYDEN: *"Maybe"* (Hayden, 2014)

Tapper then continues by naming some of the techniques detailed in the report such as rectal dehydration which Hayden claims to have been done "for the health of the detainee" while the report claims there was no "documented medical necessity" (Hayden, 2014; SSCI, 2014: 4). Hayden then argues this claim is based on "one e-mail with one very bad taste comment has used that e-mail to make this judgment" which highlights the weak foundation of the report's conclusion. This is an illustrative example of the defensive frames that persist throughout the discourse of the CIA. Frames that highlight flaws in the report account for 11 percent of the total frames used by the CIA. The flaw that is highlighted the most often by the CIA is that the SSCI did not interview any CIA personnel. There are multiple framing trends in the discourse of the CIA that highlight the illegitimate character of the report. The example of Hayden (2014) reveals another trend, namely the depiction of the report as a partisan attack on the republicans. The partisan frames make up 10 percent of the total frames used. Hayden (2014) stresses that *the Democrats on the SSCI* have used the email as a foundation for the argument that the CIA has abused prisoners. The frame is used by the CIA to put the discussion in an ideological perspective, which stresses the political motivations of the senate democrats instead of human rights interests or transparency. The flaws frame is also used to strengthen the claim of alternative interests for putting out the report, the following quote by Brennan on not interviewing anyone from the CIA for the report illustrates this dynamic:

*"This was unusual. In the vast majority of cases, SSCI's congressional reports have been the result of collaborative, bipartisan investigations. Over the course of my career, I have seen the value of the Committee's reviews. Even on politically sensitive matters such as the SSCI's investigation into the intelligence failures regarding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the Committee succeeded in producing a report that was supported unanimously. In that case, the Committee reviewed tens of thousands of documents and conducted interviews with more than 200 officers from the Intelligence Community, some of whom were interviewed up to four times"* (Brennan, 2014).

The flaws frame is used to imply that there was a deliberate partisan approach taken. Cheney claims that the "Senate Democrats" are not only damaging the CIA by releasing the report for a "political

reason” but also “trashing a very, very good program that worked, that saved lives, that kept us from another attack” (Cheney, 2014). By putting the emphasis on the negative consequences of the report on the national security, it tries to appeal to an emotion of fear. This makes the frame strong as a strong frame is characterized by its ability “to appeal to emotions, such as fears or anger” (Matthes 2011: 250).

The CIA even goes a step further than claiming the report is flawed, although this frame is not as widespread, it claims that the SSCI Democrats have lied about their conclusion that the CIA deliberately withheld information from the Bush administration. When asked about the finding of the SSCI, Cheney replied:

*“A statement by the Senate Democrats for partisan purposes that the president didn't know what was going on is just a flat out lie” (Cheney, 2014).*

Stressing that President Bush knew what was going on and he authorized the practices that were used (Cheney, 2014). The CIA thus denies they lied or dissembled illegal facts from the Bush administration, however Hayden leaves a bit of room for discussion on this subject stating the CIA “did not *intend* to mislead Congress about it” (Hayden, 2014). Indicating that there might have been misleading communication but that this was not intentional. Frames that deny lying or dissembling by the CIA account for 9 percent of the total frames.

The denial of lying or dissembling by the CIA is used by Cheney (2014) to stress the legality of CIA practices, in this regard the discourse of the CIA shows similarities with the communication of the Obama administration as in both the legality frame takes in a prominent position. However the CIA uses the high level command frame, which is identified by Porpora et al. (2010) as a tool to counter frames of minimization, to stress legality instead of emphasizing the events were not unique or isolated to a few individuals. By highlighting that the president knew of, and authorized the practices, the frame gives an extra boost to the legality claim. This is why the high level command frame makes up 11 percent of the total frames used by the CIA.

Similar to the administration the CIA also emphasizes the pressure the CIA was under to react to the terrorist threat lurking after 9/11, after which negative aspect of CIA practices are highlighted as a mechanism to justify the mistakes that were made. In addition as expected, the use of minimization frames is also frequent in the CIA discourse. Both frames highlighting delimiting extent and blame are used to disconnect the CIA from the deviant practices. In the following quote Brennan stresses the uniqueness of the cases wherein illegal, brutal practices were used, which the report claims was widespread:

*“In a limited number of cases, Agency officers used interrogation techniques that had not been authorized, were abhorrent, and rightly should be repudiated by all”* (Brennan, 2014).

There is thus a dynamic where there is limited conceding to the conclusions of the report. While the use of unauthorized techniques is acknowledged, it is dismissed that these were standard codes of conduct of the CIA at that time.

However as pointed out before there is a difference between what the SSCI and the CIA perceive to be legitimate or illegitimate, as the SSCI render the use of EIT as illegitimate practices. They do not only differ in their notion of legitimacy of EIT, but also in their conclusion about its effectiveness. It is however not a case of a simple yes or no discussion, there is a clear diachronic nature of the effectiveness of EIT frame as used by the CIA. Where in the initial statement by CIA director Brennan released on the ninth of December 2014, when the report was made public, stated:

*“Our review indicates that interrogations of detainees on whom EITs were used did produce intelligence that helped thwart attack plans, capture terrorists, and save lives”* (Brennan, 2014).

Implying that EIT produced useful intelligence, countering the findings from the SSCI. This is supported by a CIA ‘fact sheet’ released the same day which illustrates the effectiveness of EIT in obtaining information that had not yet been accessible through other methods:

*Ammar al-Baluchi, after undergoing EITs, was the first detainee to reveal that Abu Ahmad al-Kuwaiti served as a courier for messages from Bin Ladin after Bin Laden had departed Afghanistan. Before that, CIA had only general information that Abu Ahmad had interacted with Bin Ladin before the group’s retreat from Tora Bora in late 2001, when Bin Ladin was relatively accessible to a number of al-Qa’ida figures* (CIA, 2014).

This example clearly emphasizes the effectiveness of EIT in obtaining crucial information. However the effectiveness frame transformed significantly in the discourse of Brennan (2014b) on the eleventh of December 2014, when he made remarks on the SSCI study. The following quote illustrates the diachronic nature of the effectiveness of EIT frame.

*“I have already stated that our reviews indicate that the detention and interrogation program produced useful intelligence that helped the United States thwart attack plans, capture terrorists, and save lives. But let me be clear. We have not concluded that it was the use of EITs within that program that allowed us to obtain useful information from detainees subjected to them. The cause and effect relationship between the use of EITs and useful information subsequently provided by the detainee is, in my view, unknowable”* (Brennan, 2014b).

Where Brennan (2014b) initially highlighted the effectiveness of EIT specifically, he now makes an important differentiation between EIT and the general detention and interrogation program in effect at that time. Highlighting it were not the EIT per se that allowed the CIA to gather the vital information that prevented terrorist attacks. Instead Brennan now argues that it is “unknowable” whether the use of EIT provided useful intelligence (Brennan, 2014b). A similar change was found in the discourse of the administration, with the administration using the ‘unknowable’ frame one day earlier than Brennan (2014b). Both actors came from opposing standpoints, the administration claiming just as effective alternatives to EIT were available and the CIA illustrating that no other measures led to the information obtained through EIT with the example of Ammar al-Baluchi, but ended up emphasizing the ‘unknowable’ argument. This could indicate that the administration and Brennan have discussed how to frame the issue so that the CIA was not directly negatively affected, but the administration could keep up the negative consequences of EIT frame on U.S. moral authority as this was used to highlight the ban of President Obama on the use of EIT, positively reflecting on Obama.

In the same statement by Brennan (2014b) he also acknowledges the negative consequences of EIT on the moral authority of the U.S., stating he has “experienced this first-hand” (Brennan, 2014b). And Brennan (2014b) also highlights the President banning EIT because the techniques were inconsistent with American values. All frames that did not come up in earlier statements or speeches and are exactly in line with the discourse of the administration after the tenth of December.

All four frames, ‘unknowable’, ‘negative consequences of EIT’, ban on EIT and ‘un-American behavior’ are only supported by Brennan, and not by other (ex-) CIA officials. This could underline the expectation that the CIA and Obama need to uphold a somewhat similar discourse to show that their work relation is not affected by the release of the report.

As expected, the discourse by the CIA shows similarities with the communication of the administration insofar that they both use frames highlighting minimization and highlight the legality of practices. The CIA also uses the high level command frame to stress legality. However while the administration have limitedly embraced the torture frame, the CIA has completely refrained from using the word ‘torture’. In addition the disassociation and reaffirmation are used significantly less by the CIA, implying that the CIA does not perceive EIT to be deviant practices or deviance to be widespread and thus reaffirmation is almost not present in CIA discourse. Furthermore holds on to a more critical perspective on the study by the SSCI. The CIA emphasizes the flawed character of the report, highlights the report being the result of partisan interests and accusing the Senate Democrats of lying or dissembling facts to create false critical frames putting the CIA in a negative light. These frames are used to attack the legitimacy of the SSCI study and undermine the report’s findings. In addition there is a defensive frame not opted by the administration which is the frame highlighting

the effectiveness of EIT. (Ex-) CIA officials frequently highlight the effectiveness of EIT throughout the discourse, although Brennan only initially adopts the effectiveness frame and later on in his communication consistently uses the 'unknowable' frame in this discussion. In this aspect the discourse of the CIA is unexpectedly similar to that of the administration. It was expected that the administration would try to find a middle ground in criticizing the CIA to minimize the possible negative influence of the report on the relation between the two. However Brennan downsizing the effectiveness frame was not in expected but underlines the idea that Brennan's communication is steered by the Obama administration and is thus politically motivated. The similarities between the initial discourse of the CIA and the ex-CIA officials and difference between them after the 'unknowable' argument was introduced underlines this reasoning. In addition, the idea is supported by the quantitative data, the effectiveness of EIT frame accounts for 13 percent of the total frames expressed by the CIA of which 5 percent was expressed by Brennan before his statement on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December. This illustrates how strongly the transformation of the discourse of Brennan was.

### ***Congress***

As indicated from the different political interests and standpoints on the release of the SSCI study the discourses of the Senate Democrats and Republicans differ greatly and will therefore be discussed separately.

### ***Democrats***

The discourse of the Senate Democrats is mainly critical as expected. The majority of references to EIT used the torture label, accounting for 64 percent of the total references. In contrast to the administration the Senate Democrats did not downplay the strength of the torture frame by putting it in a national perspective, saying the U.S. committed torture. The Senate Democrats clearly state "the CIA's torture program" or even "the Bush administration program", which indicates attribution of blame to the Bush administration as a whole (Reid, 2014, Leahy, 2014). Highlighting the 'torture' practices happened under the Bush administration is a consistent factor in the discourse of the Senate Democrats, even though Feinstein concludes that President Bush did not know "about the full nature of the EITs until April 2006" (Feinstein, 2014b). Feinstein herself refers to the detention and interrogation program as the "Bush-era program" and Leahy who also stressed Bush his involved in the program later contradicts this, stating "the report released today details how, like the run-up to the war in Iraq, material that was held back from people who should have seen it. This included Members of Congress, White House officials, even Justice Department lawyers who were being asked to review the legality of CIA techniques. (Feinstein, 2014b; Leahy, 2014). This illustrates how political motivations might influence the discourse of the Senate Democrats, although they constructed the

report which concludes the Bush administration did not know of CIA misconduct they still frame the responsibility of the use of those brutal practices as directly related to the Bush administration. This while the lying or dissembling by the CIA argument, which largely clears the Bush administration of responsibility, makes up 26 percent of the total frames used by the Senate Democrats.

Other indications that the communication by the Senate democrats is largely critical can be found in the 'brutality' frame which is also used by the administration but is more than three times more prominent in the discourse of the Senate Democrats. Next to the acknowledgement of the brutality of frames, these frames are strengthened by giving detailed examples that adhere to emotions of anger (Matthes, 2010):

*"In November 2002, an otherwise healthy detainee—who was being held mostly nude and chained to a concrete floor—died at the facility from what is believed to have been hypothermia"* (Feinstein, 2014b).

The brutality frame is further strengthened by illustrating internal CIA discomfort, indicating the CIA knew the practices were both morally wrong:

*"Sometimes CIA managers and interrogators in the field were uncomfortable with what they were being asked to do and recommended ending the abuse of a detainee"* (Feinstein, 2014b).

The example strengthening the 'brutality' frame is not present in the administrations communication and clearly shows a more offensive attitude towards the CIA. This difference between the administration and the Senate Democrats in their discourse is supported by an additional trend highlighting CIA discomfort using EIT. Feinstein (2014b) states that:

*"CIA officers often called into question the effectiveness of the CIA's interrogation techniques, noting how the techniques failed to elicit detainee cooperation or produce accurate information"* (Feinstein, 2014b).

This builds on the conclusion of the SSCI that EIT were ineffective in obtaining information and that the CIA knew this. Frames highlighting the ineffectiveness of EIT constitute 13 percent of the frames used in total by the Senate Democrats and illustrates a significant difference between the position of the administration and the Senate Democrats. This is further underlined by Democratic Senator King who states the "unknowable" argument, that is used at a later stage by the administration, on the effectiveness of EIT "speaks volumes" as this indicates that "the facts" that are in the report could not be refuted (King, 2014).

The differences between both discourses is backed up by the use of frames highlighting mismanagement. Again mismanagement frames can also be found in communication by the Obama

administration but it is used three times more often by the Senate Democrats and more importantly is not countered by claims stressing the professionalism of the CIA. However there are similarities between the discourses concerning the use of disassociation frames. Both accentuate the depiction of 'torture' as un-American. Surprisingly the Senate Democrats do emphasize the isolation of 'torture' practices to actions of a few individuals, which accounts for 4 percent of the total frames. Feinstein states "that a surprisingly few people were responsible for designing, carrying out, and managing this program" (Feinstein, 2014b). This is a striking statement taking into account the isolation of practices is not emphasized in the report and is also not used by the Obama administration which would have been logical considering their interests in keeping a good relation with the CIA. In addition the Senate Democrats also underline the positive attributes of the CIA, following a similar pattern to that of the administration. Senator from New Mexico, Mr. Heinrich stated:

*"This study is in no way a condemnation of the thousands of patriotic men and women at this great Agency who work tirelessly every day to protect and defend our Nation from very real and imminent threats using lawful measures; using effective measures"* (Heinrich, 2014).

This quote illustrates how messages that appeal to the cultural resonance dynamic such as patriotism and defending national security, are used to appeal to familiar emotions among U.S. citizens to create a general positive image of the CIA.

Despite of the widespread use of offensive frames towards the CIA such as brutality, mismanagement and ineffectiveness, the Senate Democrats are less critical in their communication than expected. The use of minimization frames and almost absence of frames highlighting the systematic nature of practices or high level command is contrary to the expectations. In some regards the discourse of the Senate Democrats is similar to that of the Obama administration. Although the discourse portrays a largely negative image of the CIA, unexpected positive frames are also prominent.

### **Republicans**

The discourse by the Republicans was expected to be supportive of the CIA by countering frames of 'torture' or stressing high level command, the systematic nature of practices or lying or dissembling by the CIA through minimization and reaffirmation frames. However this is only partly supported as there seems to be a divide within the Republican members of Congress on this issue between Senator John McCain and the other Senators. Senator McCain is the only Republican who largely highlights negative aspects of the CIA and its operations, claiming the report uncovers the "hard"

truth (McCain, 2014). The negative discourse on this issue by McCain is logical considering his personal experience being subjected to torture in the Vietnam war. The divide between McCain and the other Republicans is reflected in table 3 which shows the use of frames to refer to EIT is mixed. The torture frame makes up 37 percent of the total references to EIT used by the Senate Republicans. Unlike the use of the torture frame in the CIA discourse, which was expected to be similar, the use of the torture frame does reflect an offensive discourse towards the CIA. The torture frame was mainly highlighted by Senator McCain, although the abuse frame was also used by him once this was not the primary frame in his communication. Senator Risch also acknowledged that some techniques used equaled torture but highlighted these actions were isolated to a few individuals by saying "there were people that did that, but they were not authorized by the United States", dismissing high level command of coercive practices (Risch, 2014).

The rest of the references used by Republican members of Congress were in line with the expectation, with the EIT frame being the most prominent label being used in 63 percent of the total references of which 50 percent is communicated by other actors than Senator McCain. The discourse of McCain explains why there is an unexpected presence of frames that reflect negatively on the CIA such as lying or dissembling by the CIA, ineffectiveness and brutality in Republican Senate discourse. The statement of McCain shows high similarities with those of the Senate Democrats, stating EIT "failed their purpose to secure actionable intelligence to prevent further attacks on the United States" and claiming EIT "compromised" American values (McCain, 2014). The disassociation is also used exclusively by McCain, following the discourses of the administration and the Senate Democrats. However unlike the CIA discourse wherein the reaffirmation frame was not used as a result of the absence of disassociation, the positive American values frame does appear in the discourse indicating that there is acknowledgement of deviant behavior. This reveals that Republican Senator Graham is also mildly critical of the CIA stating:

*"I am convinced that the techniques in question violate the Geneva Convention"* (Graham, 2014).

Although this indicates Graham perceives EIT to amount to torture, he does not use the torture frame. Instead Graham uses counter frames highlighting the context wherein EIT were used.

*"I am also convinced that they were motivated by fear, fear of another attack"* (Graham, 2014).

The fear of another attack pressure is used to defend CIA actions highlighting that although the use of EIT "absolutely" led to a "net loser" for the U.S., "people at the time thought this was the best way to defend the Nation" (Graham, 2014). By emphasizing the CIA did what it though it had to do to defend "the Nation", the frame plays into the cultural resonance dynamic. Defending the national security is obviously perceived to be a natural response by U.S. citizens, through this logic of a natural



response the use of EIT is framed as a justified response to terrorist threat at that time (Gamson, 1992). In addition even though Graham does recognize that EIT was deviant behavior, he uses advantageous comparisons to counter this negative image. Emphasizing the U.S. “stands for humane treatment” and “our enemies stand for none of that” (Graham, 2014). By stressing the absence of humane treatment by U.S. enemies, both the use of EIT and the U.S. in general are put in a positive light.

The advantageous comparisons frame is also used by the rest of the Senate Republicans, however these Senators are more extreme in their comparisons. Senator Chambliss for example stresses the mildness of the techniques used by the CIA with the following example:

*“I agree that waterboarding, which only occurred against three detainees, is particularly severe. Many of the other techniques were not. By comparison, KSM, who was one of the detainees who was subjected to waterboarding, personally beheaded Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, and a number of other U.S. citizens have been tortured and beheaded by Al Qaeda-inspired groups since”* (Chambliss, 2014).

Comparing waterboarding to a beheading obviously falls in favor of the CIA. In addition the word “torture” is suddenly used to describe practices by Al Qaeda while waterboarding is only called “severe” also positively reflecting on CIA practices. Another more extreme use of the advantageous comparisons is illustrated by Senator Risch discussing the difference between the past detention and interrogation program and the current policy of the Obama administration:

*“They aren't picking up prisoners anymore. What they do is when they identify a high-value target, the target is droned. There's no terrorist left to interrogate now”* (Risch, 2014).

This quote is not only an illustration of the advantageous comparison frame, it also indicates the political stakes between the Republicans and Democrats. By stressing the current policy is not directed at interrogation but at killing, it depicts the current policy as being more brutal and/or less effective, as there is no interrogation possible, than the use of EIT. This frame implies a rejection of the criticisms of the use of EIT and criticizes the program instigated by the Obama administration. The political character of the discussion is limitedly supported by the use of partisan frames by the Senate Republicans, as it only makes up 3 percent of the total frames used. The emphasis lies more on undermining the report by stressing the flawed character of the report. Expressing a similar claim as the CIA claiming that the report is not credible as no “single witness was ever interviewed in this study being done” (Chambliss, 2014). To strengthen the argument that the report is flawed the Senate Republicans also accuse the Senate Democrats of lying or dissembling in the SSCI study. This frame is more prominent in the Republican discourse than in the CIA discourse, accounting for 9

percent of the total frames used.

To further counter the discourse of the Senate Democrats the negative consequences frame type is used, highlighting the negative consequences the release of the report has on the security of Americans overseas. While this frame type is also used by the administration, the Republican Senators use it three times as often and do not mention the measures taken against these threats by the administration which was used by the administration to counter the negative consequences of the report frame.

As expected the Senate Republicans use frames highlighting effectiveness and legality of EIT to counter the conclusions of the report. Effectiveness particularly takes on a prominent position in the discourse, making up 15 percent of the total frames that come up in the discourse of the Senate Republicans. The unknowable argument is not used by the Republicans implying they generally use a more critical perspective concerning the SSCI study.

Concluding although generally the Senate Republicans used a discourse that reflected negatively on the SSCI report, there were exceptions. Senators McCain, Graham and Risch used frames that negatively reflected on CIA operations which was not expected. However the latter two also portrayed frames that countered these 'negative' frames and used them far less frequent than McCain. The other Senators used counter frames, highlighting shared ties between American citizens to undermine the 'torture' frame. The discourse was overall more critical towards the SSCI report than that of the CIA, not using the "unknowable argument" and often accusing the Democratic members of the SSCI committee of lying or dissembling facts that undermines the report's conclusions.

### ***News Media***

Drawing from the existing literature the expectation was that U.S. news media coverage on the CIA Report would challenge the minimization, disassociation, and reaffirmation frames offered by the Obama administration through rejection of isolation, stressing the systematic nature, claiming high level command and accusing the administration of lying or dissembling. However as pointed out before, the subject of torture has a highly ideological character as indicated by the polls of the PEW research center (2014a). The newspapers included symbolized each ideological standpoint, democrat and republican, and was therefore expected to have different coverage. The results underline this finding and therefore the discourse used in both newspapers will be discussed separately.

### ***New York Times***

The NYT seems to have fully embraced the characterization of EIT as 'torture'. The use of the word 'torture' as opposed to 'abuse' or 'EIT' for example has become the standard in the coverage of the NYT as Margaret Sullivan, public editor of the NYT, puts it:

*"Whether to use the term torture as opposed to, for example, harsh interrogation techniques, is now pretty obvious. The Times's stance on this has evolved. Two of my predecessors as public editor called for the change, and I wrote in 2013 about language use, including torture, as well as terms such as detainee, and urged The Times to do some soul-searching about it. And earlier this year, the executive editor, Dean Baquet, made a policy change, authorizing the use of the term"* (Sullivan, 2014).

This development is clearly apparent in both the news articles and the editorials of the NYT. Because there is not a significant difference in quantitative data between the news articles and editorials, the data in table 3 is an aggregation of both types. This shows that the NYT has the highest use of the torture frame in its communication, accounting for 79 percent of the total references to CIA practices. The abuse frame is also used by the NYT but mainly in combination with the torture frame wherein abuse was never the primary frame. Only once the abuse frame came up on its own, however even in this case the brutality of the practices was continuously highlighted combined with claims of illegality depicting the practices used as "torment" which does not resonate with the idea of using the 'abuse' frame to downsize the severity of the practices used (NYT, 2014). The non-value laden term EIT was only used for 12 percent of the total references to the CIA practices, which underlines the acceptance of the torture frame.

In contrast to the Abu Ghraib case where there was an overwhelming dominance of the 'abuse' label, the coverage on the Senate report in the NYT is dominated by the torture label. In all the articles wherein the torture frame was used, it was the primary frame. So although the term EIT makes up 12 percent of the total references to CIA practices, a qualitative approach those articles also highlighted the inhumane character of the practices and did thus not stay merely technical in their description. In the article 'CIA Chief Recounts 9/11 Horrors' for instance it is stated that "in some cases abhorrent methods were used against captives" (NYT, 2014).

None of the NYT articles thus used the technical term EIT as its leading frame. When applying a stricter standard of the strength of a label in an article is used, being the presence of a certain label in a headline, 53 articles opened with a headline that included the torture label, as opposed to none using the abuse frame. The use of the phrase 'torture report' is also dominant in the news articles, being used 33 times in NYT articles and editorials. Where the more lenient standard also showed EIT to be a leading frame, the stricter standard only puts torture forward as a primary label. Further underlining the acceptance of calling EIT torture by the NYT. Furthermore there does also not seem to be a diachronic effect present as the use of either EIT or torture as a primary frame does not

appear more or less often in a specific time period.

The embracement of the torture frame by the NYT is further illustrated by the fact that most of the time torture is not framed as “alleged torture” or “according to the findings of the Senate Report the practices constitute torture” or only used in quotes, which would create a certain distance between the author and the claims. However the word ‘torture’ is used as if it is a fact that the CIA tortured in the post 9/11 period reviewed in the report. This is illustrated by the following statement:

*“After weeks of torture that included being subjected to prolonged stress positions and sleep deprivation at a secret site in Romania, the prisoner, Janat Gul, begged to be killed” (NYT, 2014).*

In addition the NYT consistently refers to the Senate Report as the report on CIA torture practices. The wide use of the torture frame indicates that the NYT upholds a discourse that is supportive of the SSCI report conclusions and reflects critically on the CIA as an organization and its use of EIT. As can be seen in table 4, there is a clear majority of frames that indicate as such, even though frames that could indicate otherwise – frames that counter the conclusions of the report and try to stress its illegitimacy – are present as well. Additionally, the frames that emphasize the negative aspects of EIT, being ‘brutality’, ‘ineffectiveness’ and ‘illegality’ form 37% of the frame in the discourse. Only 10% of the used frames regarding EIT highlight its positive aspects, being ‘effectiveness’ and ‘legality’, or emphasize the softening context wherein the EIT practices took place. Furthermore the frames highlighting the negative aspects of the CIA as an organization such as ‘lying or dissembling by the CIA’, ‘mismanagement’, ‘systematic Nature’ and ‘high level command’ sums up to 26 percent of the NYT frames while the counter frames dismissing these criticisms, such as ‘dismissal of lying or dissembling by CIA’, and minimization and reaffirmation frames only make up 5 percent of the total frames with denial of lying or dissembling by the CIA and delimiting blame not coming up at all.

The frames used in the NYT thus clearly reveal a critical perspective of CIA operations in line with the Senate Democrats. The discourse of the NYT shows high framing similarities with that of the Senate Democrats in regards that are not specifically factual based such as stressing the link between the Bush administration and the illegal use of EIT, as is illustrated by the following quote on the relation between the CIA and the Bush administration:

*“The White House didn't press very hard for information, and the agency withheld details about the brutality of the techniques while exaggerating their effectiveness, the report shows” (NYT, 2014).*

The NYT implies that the report came to the conclusion that the Bush administration is also partly to blame for the misrepresentations of the effectiveness of EIT as they did not press for information. However there is not any information in the report that portrays the Obama administration as

reluctant in pressing for information. The idea that the Bush administration is partly to blame came up in the discourse of the Senate Democrats and is an interpretation of the 'facts' laid out in the report. However it is not explicitly mentioned in the report as is led to believe in the quote of the NYT. The report exclusively attributes the responsibility for lying or dissembling information about EIT to the CIA. This is an example of how the discourse of the Senate Democrats steers NYT coverage.

The data on the use of frame types, shown in table 4, underlines this as there is high similarity in the use of CIA critical frames by the NYT and the Senate Democrats, however in some regards the NYT upholds a more critical discourse. While for example the frame highlighting that those responsible for the use of EIT should be held criminally accountable is only limitedly used by the Senate Democrats, the party that was expected to be the most critical towards the CIA, it relatively comes up three times more often in the discourse of the NYT. This indicates that the NYT thus not merely reflects the discourse of the Senate Democrats. A qualitative approach supports this:

*"Those who have committed crimes have to be held accountable regardless of who they are"* (Begg, 2014).

The accountability frame is highlighted here by using a source, ex-Guantanamo detainee Moazzam Begg that is not a voice of a political actor. Multiple external sources are quoted advocating accountability of those responsible for human rights abuses under the CIA.

In addition frames of minimization, disassociation and reaffirmation come up significantly less in the discourse of the NYT than in the discourse of the Senate Democrats. While Dianne Feinstein, one of the most prominent Democrat figures in this discussion emphasized that the responsibility for the command and use of EIT was instigated by an isolated group of individuals within the CIA, this statement does not come up in any of the news articles or editorials of the NYT (Feinstein, 2014).

Frames that critically reflect on the Senate report, being 'flaws' and 'lying or dissembling in the Senate report' and 'negative consequences of the report', only account for seven percent of the total frame utilized by the NYT. In addition when these frames are used, they are undermined by stronger frames. For example in the editorial 'Senate Report: Harsh Tactics didn't work' in the run up to the 'flaws' argument the following is stated:

*"Earlier this year, Feinstein accused the CIA of infiltrating Senate computer systems in a dispute over documents as relations between the investigators and the spy agency deteriorated. The report was written by the California Democrat's staff members, including Daniel Jones, a former FBI agent"* (NYT, 2014b).

After which the 'flaws' argument is presented:

*“Former CIA officials forcefully disputed the report's findings. So did Senate Republicans, whose written dissent accused Democrats of inaccuracies, sloppy analysis and cherry-picking evidence to reach a predetermined conclusion”* (NYT, 2014b).

The argument highlighting the possible infiltration of Senate computers by the CIA, damages the legitimacy of the CIA and shows their determination of the CIA to hinder the drafting of the report. This undermines the claim of the CIA which is presented as a “dissent” rather than a claim that is supported by facts, whereas the senate report is depicted as “a mountain of evidence from CIA files” (NYT, 2014b). In addition the emphasis on the inclusion of a former FBI agent in the writing of the report further undermines the ‘flaws’ frame as he would know what went on in the CIA during that time as Jones was working for the CIA in 2004 as an analyst.

A quantitative approach thus reveals the similarities and differences between the discourses of the NYT and Senate Democrats. The data in table 3 also indicates that there is not much similarity between the discourse of NYT used in news articles and editorials with that of the administration, the CIA or Senate Republicans. This is supported by a qualitative analysis. The main argument by the administration, that the use of EIT negatively affected the moral authority of the U.S. is only addressed by one short article and is not mentioned in any other articles. The fact that the argument claiming EIT being contrary to U.S. values is only used in 2 percent of the total frames used supports this. The only frame by the Obama administration that is, logically, prominently featured in the discourse of the NYT is the acknowledgement of torture. The legality of practices, which was prominent in the discourse of the CIA, is also not frequently stressed in the NYT. Lastly the negative consequences of the report argument, one of the most prominent frames in the discourse of the Senate Republicans, also receives significant less attention in the NYT. Although the other prominent frame of the Republicans, the effectiveness of EIT, does make up 5 percent of the NYT dialogue, this is half of the times the ineffectiveness of EIT frame is highlighted.

The fact that the discourse of the NYT is mainly led by frames that reflect critically on the CIA is even more evident in the editorials. Although there is no significant quantitative difference between the news articles and editorials, a qualitative analysis does reveal that there is an apparent difference. This is firstly signified by the headings of some editorials such as “Here Come the Torture Apologists” and “It’s Cruel. It’s Useless. It’s the C.I.A.”, indicating a strong anti-CIA perspective. Secondly the frames used in the discourse of the Senate Democrats and in the news articles are highlighted in a more extreme manner. For example the frame adhering part of the responsibility of the use of ‘torture’ practices to the Bush administration is stressed by Rosenthal (2014) in the following statement:

*“President George W. Bush and Mr. Cheney do bear direct responsibility for the atrocities at C.I.A. prisons after the 9/11 attacks”* (Rosenthal, 2014).

While the frame in the NYT news article implied that the Bush administration was partly to blame for the use of torture, the NYT editorial by Rosenthal (2014) attributes direct responsibility of the Obama administration to the torture practices. Thus dismissing that there was any need for the CIA to lie or dissemble facts from the Bush administration. While the SSCI report came to a conclusion that the CIA had acted outside of their legal boundaries without the knowledge of the Bush administration, implies that the Bush administration cooperated in the use of torture practices by stating:

*“the Justice Department drafted memos providing the brutal program with a veneer of legality”* (Romero, 2014).

The quote thus discards the lying or dissembling by the CIA frame and instead emphasizes the justice department authorized the actions of the CIA that are depicted as torture by the NYT, underlining the idea that the Bush administration was directly responsible for the use of ‘torture’ techniques by the CIA.

The argument that the discourse used in the NYT is overall not inclusive towards the statements expressed by the Obama administration is also explicitly highlighted in the editorials, heavily criticizing Obama’s position on the issue. After accusing the Bush administration of dissembling brutal practices under his leadership, the NYT states:

*“That policy of concealment continued into the Obama administration, with perhaps even greater zeal than under Mr. Bush”* (NYT, 2014c).

Similar critical reflections on the Obama administration’s position on the SSCI report came up numerous times in the editorials. Nonetheless, the editorials were not all mainly critical on discourse that did not reflect that of the Senate Democrats. For example the editorial *“We’re always still Americans”* stresses the context frames and uses frames of minimization as is illustrated in the following quotes:

*“I have sympathy for people who were charged with defending the nation’s security after that surprise attack”* (Friedman, 2014).

Emphasizing the context of 9/11 and that practices were used to defend U.S. national security, using the cultural resonance dynamic. In addition Friedman makes use of minimization frame stressing *“it is hard to read the summaries of the Senate Intelligence Committee’s report and not conclude that some officials and the C.I.A. took the slack we cut them after 9/11”* (Friedman, 2014). The content of the editorials is thus mixed in its discourse, both reflecting critically on the CIA and the Obama

administration as well as highlighting factors that defend CIA actions.

The discourse of the NYT thus underlines the 'watchdog' theory as the NYT critically reflects on the CIA operations using the study by the SSCI, but also primarily highlights counter messages to the 'torture' frame in its editorials. Although the NYT only limitedly uses the frames identified by Porpora et al. (2010), the use of the frame trends identified in the preliminary analysis indicates a similar perspective rejecting the claims made by the CIA and the Congress Republicans and to a more limited extent by the Obama administration. The discourse by the NYT not only critically reflects on the CIA as an organization but the editorials also heavily criticize the Obama administration. This indicates that there is no support for the cascading model by Entman (1993) and that the Democratic readership base of the NYT does not create an ideological bias in the content of the NYT. However it does also not completely support the indexing model (Bennett, 1990). The results rather build on the argument made in the article by Porpora et al. wherein they state that the "the press exercises greater independence of elite political opinion than the indexing model admits" allowing the NYT to communicate their own image of the events (Porpora et al., 2010: 254).

### ***Wall Street Journal***

Looking at table 3, although the use of the torture frame in the WSJ is quite high, it is significantly lower than that of the NYT. The torture frame it makes up 63 percent of the total references to EIT, 16 percent less than that of the NYT. The difference is better depicted by the use of the term 'EIT', which accounts for 34 percent of the references. Almost three times more than the technical term is opted by the NYT. The difference becomes even more apparent when looking at the frequency wherein the torture frame was used in a header. Whereas the torture frame appeared in 48 percent of the news articles and in 80 percent of the editorials of the NYT, the torture frame only appeared in 5 percent of the news articles of the WSJ and in none of the editorials. Indicating a significant lower level of acceptance of the torture frame by the WSJ than in the NYT. This is further underlined by a qualitative analysis. In their news articles the WSJ only uses the word 'torture' in a quote, with one exception illustrated later on, or in relation to a claim made by another actor, while the NYT themselves attribute the 'torture' frame to EIT. This signals a discourse that reflects less critically on CIA operations than the NYT.

This is supported by the use of frames by the WSJ. Frames that emphasize the negative character of EIT by stressing, 'brutality', 'ineffectiveness' or 'illegality' accounts for 19 percent of the total frames used by the WSJ. While frames that counter these messages by highlighting positive aspects of EIT by accentuating, 'effectiveness' and 'legality', or frames that highlight the context wherein the practices took place make up 30 percent of the total frames. In addition these claims are supported by the data in table 4 on the use of messages that attack the integrity of the SSCI study



such as stressing the partisan character, accusations of lying or dissembling in the Senate report or flaws of the report, which sum up to 27 percent of the total use of frames by the WSJ. Frames accentuating the negative character of the CIA as an organization such as 'lying or dissembling by the CIA', 'mismanagement', 'systematic Nature' and 'high level command', which combined form only 7 percent of the entire use of frames by the WSJ.

The discourse of the NYT strongly emphasizes accusations of lying or dissembling by the CIA, the ineffectiveness and brutality of EIT, while the WSJ prominently highlights opposite frames such as the partisan character of the report, the effectiveness of EIT. Nonetheless the WSJ also frequently uses references that highlight the brutality of EIT, this indicates that although the WSJ largely portrays EIT being effective, their discourse also widely reflects on the brutal character of EIT. However there is a big difference in the use of the brutality frame in the news articles in comparison with the editorials. The brutality accounts for 16 percent of the total frames used in the news articles, but only for 2 percent in the editorials of the WSJ. Which indicates the editorials are more critical in their content than the news articles. This will be discussed later on.

Although the brutal character of EIT is prominent in both the news coverage of the WSJ and the NYT there is a large difference in the overall image portrayed of CIA practices by the newspapers as indicated by the use of the other frames listed in table 4. To illustrate this difference, articles with the same topic covered in both newspapers will be briefly compared using a qualitative analysis. For example, the NYT placed an article on the use of torture in a secret CIA facility in Poland, "Ex-Leader: Poland Agreed to CIA Site, Not Torture". On the same subject the WSJ posted an article with the following header, "Former Polish President Allowed CIA to Operate Secret Detention Center". While the NYT stresses that although the Polish leader acknowledged he allowed the prison sites, he did not know of the CIA used torture methods at the sites. The WSJ has a different emphasis focusing on the first part of the NYT header, stressing that the Polish leader allowed the CIA to operate a secret detention center, shifting the responsibility for what happened to him instead of the CIA as is done in the header of the NYT. In addition this is supported by the use of the torture frame. The NYT clearly acknowledges that the practices that occurred at the Polish CIA site equaled torture. However the WSJ only mentions torture once in relation to the CIA, stating:

*"Earlier this year, the European Court of Human Rights found Poland guilty of violating the European Convention of Human Rights by allowing the CIA to torture people at a secret site on its territory" .*

As in the header, the WSJ does not place the emphasis on CIA practices, which are now stated to equal torture, but on Poland being guilty. This is the only acknowledgement of EIT equaling torture by the WSJ in their news articles. Although the WSJ acknowledges CIA torture, the advantageous comparisons dynamic is used to highlight the bad practices by Poland instead of the CIA. In addition

the NYT placed an article named "CIA Paid Poland to Ease Qualms Over Secret Prison: Senate Report", while this again places a negative emphasis on the CIA, this finding is not mentioned in the coverage of the WSJ.

Another specific subject that is covered in both newspapers is the use of two psychologists as external contractors by the CIA. The NYT extensively highlights the conclusion of the Senate report that the psychologists had "no practical interrogation experience and no specialized knowledge of al-Qaida" and were paid 81 million dollars for their services (NYT, 2014d). The WSJ however only mentions the use of the psychologists once and instead highlights their expertise on the subject:

*"Much of the program was developed by two contract psychologists for the CIA who came up with the list of enhanced-interrogation techniques based on their prior experience with the Air Force's Force Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School, a program known as SERE"* (WSJ, 2014).

Although the financial side of the story is mentioned in the article, the WSJ places a positive emphasis on the use of the psychologists by presenting their past experiences, framed as expertise, instead of mentioning the conclusion of the report that they lacked knowledge on the subject.

In both examples the WSJ did not mention specific information to steer the image portrayed by the article in a direction that positively reflects on the CIA. In addition to these types of framing mechanisms the WSJ consistently highlights the partisan character of the report as pointed out before. The WSJ portrays the study by the SSCI as an "attack by Senate Democrats" in their news coverage (Gorman, 2014). The partisan character is highlighted to undermine the arguments of the Senate Democrats as depicted by the following quote:

*"Sen. Mark Udall, a Colorado Democrat who was defeated in last month's election, said in a tweet that the report "corrects the record" on the CIA's "brutal torture" program"* (Nicholas, 2014).

By highlighting Udall was defeated in the latest election, his criticisms on the CIA program are framed as political revenge which undermines the legitimacy of his argument. In comparison, the NYT states CIA officials are "determined to paint the Senate report as a political stunt by Senate Democrats tarnishing a program that saved American lives" (NYT, 2014e). Both quotes illustrate the different standpoints of the newspapers. Where the WSJ perceives the report to be highly politically motivated, the NYT discards this argument stressing that this is merely a claim made by the CIA instead of a legitimate criticism.

The editorials by the WSJ uphold an even more critical discourse than the WSJ news articles. In contrast to the NYT, the editorials of the WSJ are unilateral in their discourse. There is only one instance where the torture frame is acknowledged in the editorial "A flawed report's important lesson", however after the use of the torture frame, its strength is continuously undermined by

arguments highlighting flaws as indicated by the header. This is further strengthened by frames of minimization, disassociation and reaffirmation. That the editorials of the WSJ oppose the general discourse used in the NYT is illustrated by the following quote that strengthens the argument that the Senate report is flawed:

*“The most stinging critique came from Mr. Kerrey, a Democrat who served eight years on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, which issued the report. In his USA Today piece he slammed the report’s partisanship: “I do not need to read the report to know that the Democratic staff alone wrote it” (Noonan, 2014).*

The exact same logic is used in the editorial of the NYT stressing the cooperation of ex-CIA official Jones in drafting up the report, to undermine the flaws argument. Here the authority of Kerrey as an ex member of the SSCI and as a Democrat is used to portray the legitimacy of the flaws claim.

Concluding the discourse used in the WSJ thus prominently reflects the frames expressed by the Senate Republicans and the CIA, using frames highlighting flaws and the partisan character of the report to undermine the reports findings. In addition messages stressing the context of 9/11 was dominantly present in WSJ articles and the most obvious indicator of a pro-CIA discourse, the effectiveness of EIT frame made up most of the total frames used by the WSJ. The discourse of the WSJ was generally more critical towards the SSCI report than the discourse of the Senate Republicans and the CIA, indicating the WSJ did not just merely reflect the messages sent by these parties. There was very little representation of the views of the Obama administration and the Senate Democrats leading to the conclusion that the indexing theory is not supported. In addition the cascading model is also not verified as the communication of the Obama administration, who is the highest political actor, is almost absent in the discourse of the WSJ. Following the NYT, the WSJ also seems to have created their own discourse with relative independence from political elites. Although the frames used by the CIA and Congress Republicans were leading for the articles, the emphasis on the partisan and flaws argument illustrated through examples that were not given by political elites indicates “independence of elite political opinion” (Porpora et al., 2010: 254).

Table 3. Labels Used to Describe Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, by Type, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal	EIT	Total
Obama Administration (n = 8)	4%	38%	0%	0%	58%	24
Congress Democrats (n=14)	8%	64%	0%	0%	28%	125
Congress Republicans (n = 5)	7%	37%	0%	0%	56%	27
CIA Officials (n=5)	3%	50%	0%	0%	47%	34

NY Times (n=103)	8%	79%	1%	0%	12%	535
WSJ (n=28)	2%	63%	1%	0%	34%	96

a These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in each article. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 4. Frames used in the news articles, by Type, by Actor, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

Frame Type	White House	Congr. D	Congr. R.	CIA	NYT	WSJ
Delimiting Blame	0%	4%	3%	3%	0%	1%
Delimiting Extent	0%	0%	3%	9%	1%	2%
Appropriating Justice	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Un-American Behavior	17%	9%	3%	1%	2%	2%
Positive American Values	14%	6%	9%	0%	1%	1%
Humanitarianism	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Advantageous comparisons	1%	0%	4%	1%	3%	2%
Status Quo/Tradition	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
Denial of Isolation	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Systematic Nature	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
High level Command	1%	1%	1%	11%	4%	0%
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by CIA	0%	26%	1%	0%	14%	5%
Effectiveness	0%	0%	15%	13%	5%	19%
Time Span	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%
Pressure	11%	1%	5%	8%	2%	5%
Legality	11%	0%	6%	14%	2%	5%
Partisan	0%	1%	3%	10%	4%	16%
Negative consequences	6%	1%	16%	4%	3%	4%
Flaws	0%	0%	8%	11%	1%	9%
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by Senate Report	0%	0%	9%	3%	3%	2%
Ineffectiveness	0%	13%	6%	0%	10%	7%
Illegality	0%	4%	0%	0%	6%	2%
Brutality	4%	13%	1%	0%	21%	10%
Mismanagement	4%	15%	0%	0%	7%	2%
Accountability	0%	2%	0%	0%	6%	2%
Negative Consequences of CIA	25%	5%	3%	3%	2%	2%
Denial of Lying or dissembling CIA	0%	0%	5%	9%	0%	2%
<b>Total frames used</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>264</b>

These data are based on the number of times a certain frame is used in news articles. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

## ***Conclusion & Discussion***

The Abu Ghraib case ignited a scholarly discussion on the use of torture or abuse frame by the Bush administration and its implications on the general discourse used in the media. Building on this, this study has tried to explore the validity of the theoretical models of Bennett et al. (2006), Rowling et al. (2011) and Porpora et al. (2010). The study has revealed that although some of the framing dynamics present in the Abu Ghraib case are still relevant for the current study, the use of the 'abuse' frame was not indicative for the general discourse used by the different stakeholders. The abuse frame came up very limitedly and was almost never the primary frame. Instead the technical term EIT was often used to indicate a more conservative discourse, countering the torture frame. The non-value laden term EIT came up most often in the discourse of the Obama administration, the CIA and Congress Republicans, thus representing those stakeholders who were previously expected to have used the abuse frame to counter claims of torture. Overall the expectations of the discourse employed by the different stakeholders was supported by the quantitative and qualitative approach. Because of the dual interests of the Obama administration, to both acknowledge the torture frame but to also defend CIA actions as torture frame could have damaging consequences to the political relation between the CIA and the administration, their discourse was also mixed. While the torture frame was acknowledged by Obama, the main findings of the report were very limitedly supported. The administration initially implied to support the ineffectiveness of EIT argument but later transformed this to the statement that the effectiveness of EIT is unknowable. The other main finding of the report, that the CIA lied to and dissembled information from policy makers is not backed up by the administration stressing the legitimate character of the events described in the report. Furthermore frames of disassociation are used, to distance the U.S. from the torture practices labeling them as 'Un-American' and belonging to the past. Frames of disassociation revealed a trend in the administration's discourse to use the report to positively reflect on the policy of the Obama administration without attributing blame to the CIA specifically. By using frames that appeal to the cultural resonance dynamic, the administration upholds a discourse that to a certain extent supports both the pro- and anti-CIA view but is mainly engaged in positive reflection of administration policy.

As expected, the CIA discourse is prominently dominated by frames countering the conclusions of the Senate report. The CIA mainly does so by highlighting frames that undermine the perceived legitimacy of the report such as flaws in the report and emphasizing the partisan character of the report. Furthermore the CIA stresses the positive aspects of EIT such as effectiveness and legality, however CIA leader Brennan follows the administration in the unknowable argument while initially also stressing the effectiveness of EIT. The discourse of the CIA thus surprisingly adapts somewhat to the discourse of the Obama administration and also limitedly uses the negative

consequences of EIT frame to critically reflect on CIA practices.

The Senate Democrats almost exclusively use frames that highlight negative aspects of CIA practices. Underlining the conclusions by the Senate report, Congress Democrats dominantly stress frames that emphasize ineffectiveness, mismanagement, brutality and lying or dissembling by the CIA. Nonetheless chair of the SSCI, Dianne Feinstein, also stresses frames of minimization, a finding not supported in the report. In addition the Senate Democrats frequently highlight positive attributes of the CIA by using cultural resonant frames such as patriotism that counter the torture frame. This is a striking finding considering the Senate Report portrayed the use of torture as a CIA policy of that time without implying the actions were isolated to a few individuals.

Congress Republicans largely used frames that countered the torture frame and attacked the Senate report by stating flaws and stressing the partisan character following the discourse by the CIA. However Senate Republicans did not adopt the unknowable frame expressed by Brennan and upheld a more critical discourse than the CIA. Nevertheless Republican Senator McCain was a big exception holding on to a discourse identical to that of the Senate Democrats, which can be explained by his history with torture, leading to a more mixed portrayal of frames used by the quantitative data.

Arriving at the essence of the study, namely the relation between the discourse used in the NYT and WSJ, the study finds no support for the cascading model. The view of the Obama administration, being the highest political actor in the discussion, is both minimally reflected in the NYT and the WSJ. However the indexing model is also not completely supported as there are clear general preferences that can be derived from the use of frames by both newspapers. The NYT generally upholds a more supportive discourse of the Senate report in line with the Senate Democrats. However some specific frames are used more extensively than in the discourse of the Congress Democrats such as the lying or dissembling by the CIA claim. Nevertheless in the editorial section of the NYT the messages are more mixed, also expressing support for the CIA highlighted by frames emphasizing the pressure the CIA was under in the aftermath of 9/11. On the contrary the WSJ is more unilateral in its articles, with a clear pro-CIA discourse, dismissing the conclusions of the report by highlighting the flaws of the report and the partisan basis following the arguments of the CIA and the Senate Republicans. Similar to the NYT the WSJ expresses a more critical discourse than that of the similar minded actors, using the partisan and effectiveness claim more often and making more far reaching arguments. The difference in the discourses of the newspapers and political elites indicate that the newspapers enjoy a certain level of independence from political actors in framing the SSCI report. As Porpora et al. (2010) argue this leads to a more interpretative form of the indexing model wherein all positions on the issue are taken into account but there is a perspective that is favored.

The finding of this study reveals that there has to be more emphasis on the interests of the

different media actors in the scholarly debate. The results of the NT and the WSJ underline the importance of ideological differentiation of newspapers based on their readership base as the discourses of both newspapers reflect the ideological bias as stated in the study of the PEW center (2014a). Whereas the majority of the Republicans condone the use of torture on suspected terrorists, Democrats have a more mixed stance on the issue although the majority disapproves of the use of torture methods in these situations (PEW, 2014a). This is exactly reflected in the discourse of both newspapers, the NYT mostly upholding an anti-CIA/torture perspective but also limitedly offering defensive frames and the WSJ only prominently highlighting pro-CIA communication.

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## Appendix

Table 2. Labels Used to Describe Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, by Type, White House Officials, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal	EIT	Total
n=8	10%	90%	0%	0%	0%	10

a These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in each article. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 2. Labels Used to Describe Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, by Type, New York Times, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal	EIT	Total
News (n = 83)	8%	74%	2%	0%	18%	308
Editorials (n = 20)	8%	86%	1%	0%	5%	227

a These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in each article. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 3. Labels Used to Describe Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, by Type, Wall Street Journal, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal	EIT	Total
News (n = 20)	1%	53%	1%	0%	44%	72
Editorials (n = 8)	4%	79%	0%	0%	18%	28

a These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in each article. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 4. Labels used to describe enhanced interrogation Techniques in the Header, by Type, New York Times, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal	None	EIT	Total
News (n=83)	1%	48%	0%	0%	51%	0	83
Editorials (n=20)	0%	80%	0%	0%	20%	0	20

These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in each heading. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 5. Labels used to describe enhanced interrogation Techniques in the Header, by Type, Wall Street Journal, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal	None	EIT	Total
News (n=20)	0%	5%	0%	0%	95%	0	20
Editorials (n=8)	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	0	8

These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in headings. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 8. Labels Used by Senate to Describe Enhanced Interrogation Techniques, by Type, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

	Abuse	Torture	Mistreatment	Scandal
Democrat (n = 14)	11% (9)	89% (73)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Republican (n = 6)	6% (1)	94% (17)	0% (0)	0% (0)

a These data are based on the number of times a certain label is used in each article. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 9. Frames used in Senate statements, speeches and interviews, by Party, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

Frame Type	Democrat (n=14)	Republican (n=6)
Delimiting Blame	4% (7)	3% (2)
Delimiting Extent	0% (0)	0% (0)
Appropriating Justice	0% (0)	0% (0)
Un-American Behavior	9% (17)	5% (4)
Positive American Values	6% (11)	8% (6)
Humanitarianism	0% (0)	0% (0)
Advantageous comparisons	0% (0)	4% (3)
Status Quo/Tradition	0% (0)	0% (0)
Denial of Isolation	0% (0)	0% (0)
Systematic Nature	1% (1)	0% (0)
High level Command	1% (2)	1% (1)
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by CIA	26% (52)	4% (3)
Effectiveness	0% (0)	15% (12)
Time Span	0% (0)	1% (1)
Pressure	1% (1)	6% (5)
Legality	0% (0)	6% (5)
Partisan	1% (2)	3% (2)
Negative consequences	1% (1)	10% (8)
Flaws	0% (0)	8% (6)
Limited Conceding	0% (0)	3% (2)
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by Senate Report	0% (0)	9% (7)
Ineffectiveness	13% (26)	6% (5)
Illegality	4% (8)	0% (0)
Brutality	13% (26)	0% (0)
Mismanagement	15% (30)	1% (1)
Accountability	2% (4)	0% (0)
Negative Consequences CIA	5% (10)	0% (0)
Denial of Lying or Dissembling CIA	0% (0)	5% (4)

These data are based on the number of times a certain frame is used in statements, speeches and interviews. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 7. Frames used in the news articles, by Type, New York Times, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

Frame Type	News (n=83)	Editorials (n=20)
Delimiting Blame	0% (1)	1% (1)

Delimiting Extent	0% (2)	0% (0)	0%
Appropriating Justice	0% (0)	0% (0)	0%
Un-American Behavior	2% (8)	3% (4)	2%
Positive American Values	0% (2)	3% (4)	1%
Humanitarianism	0% (1)	0% (0)	0%
Advantageous comparisons	3% (13)	4% (5)	3%
Status Quo/Tradition	0% (2)	0% (0)	0%
Denial of Isolation	0% (1)	0% (0)	0%
Systematic Nature	1% (7)	2% (2)	1%
High level Command	4% (20)	4% (5)	4%
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by CIA	15% (72)	9% (12)	14%
Effectiveness	6% (30)	2% (2)	5%
Time Span	1% (3)	1% (1)	1%
Pressure	1% (6)	4% (5)	2%
Legality	2% (9)	2% (2)	2%
Partisan	3% (15)	8% (10)	4%
Negative consequences	4% (21)	0% (0)	3%
Flaws	1% (7)	0% (0)	1%
Limited Conceding	1% (7)	0% (0)	1%
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by Senate Report	4% (17)	0% (0)	3%
Ineffectiveness	9% (42)	13% (17)	10%
Illegality	5% (22)	9% (12)	6%
Brutality	22% (107)	17% (22)	21%
Mismanagement	7% (32)	10% (13)	7%
Accountability	6% (30)	7% (9)	6%
Negative Consequences CIA	5% (10)	1% (2)	2%
Denial of Lying or dissembling CIA	1% (3)	0% (0)	0%
<b>Total</b>			<b>617</b>

These data are based on the number of times a certain frame is used in news articles. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.

Table 8. Frames used in the news articles, by Type, Wall Street Journal, December 9, 2014, to February 28, 2015

<b>Frame Type</b>	<b>News (n=20)</b>	<b>Editorials (n=8)</b>	
Delimiting Blame	1% (1)	2% (2)	3
Delimiting Extent	1% (1)	0% (0)	1
Appropriating Justice	0% (0)	1% (1)	1
Un-American Behavior	2% (3)	3% (3)	6
Positive American Values	1% (2)	1% (1)	3
Humanitarianism	0% (0)	0% (1)	1
Advantageous comparisons	0% (0)	6% (6)	6
Status Quo/Tradition	0% (0)	0% (0)	0
Denial of Isolation	0% (0)	0% (0)	0
Systematic Nature	1% (1)	0% (0)	1
High level Command	0% (0)	0% (0)	0



Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by CIA	8% (13)	0% (0)	13
Effectiveness	20% (32)	17% (17)	49
Time Span	0% (0)	3% (3)	3
Pressure	1% (2)	9% (9)	11
Legality	4% (6)	8% (8)	14
Partisan	14% (22)	20% (20)	42
Negative consequences	2% (3)	7% (7)	10
Flaws	6% (9)	13% (14)	23
Limited Conceding	2% (3)	1% (1)	4
Accusations of Lying or Dissembling by Senate Report	1% (1)	3% (3)	4
Ineffectiveness	11% (18)	1% (1)	19
Illegality	2% (3)	2% (2)	5
Brutality	16% (25)	2% (2)	27
Mismanagement	3% (4)	0% (0)	4
Accountability	3% (5)	1% (1)	6
Negative Consequences CIA	2% (3)	1% (1)	4
Denial of Lying or Dissembling CIA	2% (3)	1% (1)	4
<b>Total</b>			<b>264</b>

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These data are based on the number of times a certain frame is used in news articles. Numbers in parentheses are the counts for each cell; percentages are rounded.