Detaining Dialogue: Framing Treatment during the 2013 Guantánamo Hunger Strike (abstract)

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Research Panel: Media and the Digital Age

Presenter: Kristen Traynor

Title: Detaining Dialogue: Framing Treatment during the 2013 Guantánamo Hunger Strike

Abstract: In recent years, prisoner treatment during the “War on Terror” has re-emerged as a prominent topic in news headlines and government debate. However, the media’s framing of such treatment toward prisoners at Guantánamo Bay has received scant scholarly attention compared to that of Abu Ghraib.

With a focus on elite and media framing of treatment during the prisoner hunger strike from February to August of 2013, the goal of this paper is to explain whether government portrayal of prisoner treatment influenced the way the media framed the situation or whether the media acted with more autonomy. In the study, I use QDA Miner with WordStat to perform a content analysis of statements made by government officials in the executive and legislative branches, as well as news coverage from three elite news outlets.

This research aims to determine whether frames employed by one set of actors impacted frame usage by another and discover the process through which frames flowed throughout the hunger strike period. This research speaks to the ways in which narratives surrounding human rights issues are affected by the dynamics of press-government relations and gives insight into the ways that groups may circumvent this relationship to affect the dialogue.

Keywords: Prisoner treatment, Guantánamo Bay, media framing

Biography: Kristen Traynor is a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Kent State University. Her research interests include press-government relations, media framing, public opinion, and human rights.