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The Role of Culture, Ethics and Credibility in the Misuse of Anonymous Sources: Jayson Blair and The New York Times Scandal

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The Role of Culture, Ethics and Credibility in the Misuse of Anonymous Sources: Jayson Blair and *The New York Times* Scandal

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University of Nebraska, 2005

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On May 11, 2003, in a front-page story, *The New York Times* admitted that Jayson Blair, a young African-American reporter, had falsified sources, plagiarized from a number of news organizations, and made up quotes for many of the stories he wrote for the *Times*. A qualitative study of Blair's book *Burning Down My Masters' House*, stories he wrote for the *Times* on the Washington D.C., sniper and the Iraq War, the May 11 front-page story, and articles written in the *Columbia Journalism Review* and *American Journalism Review* were compared to determine what role the use of anonymous sources played in Blair's decision to deceive his editors and readers. At the time of the incident, the *Times* had no formal written policy on the use of anonymous sources.

The study found that while the practice of using anonymous sources may have made it easier for Blair to fabricate stories, the newsroom culture of the *Times* and Blair's own lack of ethics played a significant role in the scandal at the newspaper. Newsroom culture addresses the process used to produce the newspaper especially time pressure,

racial diversity in the organization, and the "top-down" style of management in place at the *Times* during the scandal.

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Chapter I

Introduction

> *"I lied and lied – and then I lied some more. I lied about where I had been, I lied about where I had found information, I lied about how I wrote the story. And these were no everyday little white lies—they were complete fantasies embellished down to the tiniest made-up detail. ...I lied about a guy who helped me at a gas station that I found on the Internet and about crossing railroad tracks I only new existed because of aerial photographs in my private collection."*
>
> *Jayson Blair (2003)*
> *"Burning Down My Masters' House"*

In May 2003, *The New York Times* announced that a young star reporter, Jayson Blair, had made up sources and interviews and had stolen information from other reporters' work. On May 11, the *Times* used four full pages to report on Blair's mistakes and lies, printing corrections in hopes of restoring its credibility (Barry, Barstow, Glater, Liptak, & Steinberg, 2003). The scandal also led to the resignations of executive editor Howell Raines and managing editor Gerald Boyd. This was one among a series of such cases in the history of American journalism.

Janet Cooke, *Washington Post* reporter in her mid-twenties, wrote "Jimmy's World" – a story about an 8-year old boy who was addicted to heroin (Anderson, 1982). Cooke told *Post* editors that she could not reveal her sources for the story because her life was in danger. Seven months later, the *Post* carried a story that Cooke's Pulitzer Prize had been withdrawn because she had made up the article. Her source for "Jimmy" was actually a composite of sources (Anderson, 1982).

Stephen Glass, a young, up-and-coming reporter with the *New Republic* admitted that he had written dozens of stories using anonymous sources that did not exist (Dowd, 1998). Glass's story, "Hack Heaven," was called "factually challenged" by reporters at *Forbes Digital Tool*, the *Forbes* magazine Web site (Dowd, 1998, p. 14). This was the story that led to his downfall, along with the realization by his editors that many of his stories were fabricated – not only at the *New Republic*, but while Glass worked at the Heritage Institute's *Policy Review* (Dowd, 1998).

From these examples one would think the use of anonymous sources was a problem only for overzealous and ambitious young reporters. Not true. Jack Kelley spent 21 years with *USA Today* and won a Pulitzer Prize before he resigned in January 2004, when the newspaper began an investigation of his stories and found that Kelley had plagiarized information from other newspapers (Morrison, 2004). His actions led to the resignation of *USA Today* Editor Karen Jurgensen in April 2004 (Johnson, 2004).

And then there is Stephen Dunphy, formerly an associate editor and business columnist with the *Seattle Times*, who after 37 years with the newspaper resigned in 2000 when it was discovered that he plagiarized information in more than a dozen instances (Dorroh, 2004).

In early 1998, the *Dallas Morning News* printed a story on the White House sex scandal involving President Clinton and Monica Lewinsky (Smith, 1998). The Dallas newspaper charged that it had an anonymous source, a Secret Service agent, who saw the President and Lewinsky in a compromising position. This source, the paper claimed, had already been in touch with Independent Prosecutor Kenneth Starr. That was the evening edition. The morning edition retracted the story because the "source" said he made a

mistake, but not before Ted Koppel on ABC's *Nightline* reported the information (Smith, 1998, Background Report).

In a final example of the problem, *Boston Globe* in 1998 fired its metro columnist, Patricia Smith, for falsifying characters in four columns. The Globe said that as many as 48 columns written by Smith since 1995 may have contained fabrications (Neuwirth, 1998).

Have American mass media become reckless in their use of anonymous sources? Thirty years ago Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, two *Washington Post* reporters, became famous for their use of an anonymous source "Deep Throat" to report on a White House scandal, which eventually resulted in the resignation of President Richard Nixon (Swain & Robertson, 1995). In their book *All the President' s Men* (1974), the two write that early on in the investigation an "unwritten rule was evolving: unless two sources confirmed a charge involving activity likely to be considered criminal, the specific allegation was not used in the paper" (Bernstein & Woodward, 1974, p. 79). Woodward and Bernstein were not the first reporters to use an anonymous source, however their "Deep Throat" may have opened the door for what has become an inappropriate use of this important journalistic tool (Swain & Robertson, 1995, p. 3).

This thesis will examine the concepts of culture, ethics and credibility as these relate to one reporter's misuse of anonymous sources. Severin and Tankard (2001) use this explanation of the cultural studies approach to mass communication research:

> Cultural theorists attempt to examine the symbolic environment created by the mass media and study the role that the mass media play in culture and society (p. 16).

Altheide (1996) says that a cultural studies approach:

> ...seeks to examine the complex interaction between individual perspectives and patterns of meaning and symbolic ordering to understand new sources of social definitions and sort out their consequences (p. 11).

A study conducted by the Readership Institute (2000) found two types of American newspaper cultures. These are aggressive-defensive, which involves perfectionistic behavior by employees in order to protect their status and job security; or passive-defensive, in which employees do what it takes to please others in order to avoid conflict.

Media ethics and its role in a reporter's use of anonymous sources relates to the concept of decision making. White (1996) applied both Carter's Paradigm of Affective Relations and Kelman's Functional Theory to a journalist's ethical decision making process.

Carter's Paradigm of Affective Relations says that the value a person places on something depends on "salience" and/or "pertinence" (p.19). Things that are intrinsically valuable, such as your children, are salient and therefore their value remains high across all situations. Something with little intrinsic value has little salience but can become pertinent and also highly valued due to situational factors.

This can be the case despite the fact that a newsroom may have a written code of ethics. A study by Breed (1960) showed that journalists learn what is ethical or acceptable by understanding the newsroom's culture and its unwritten, informal code by

in his words, "osmosis." It is this situational factor of the newsroom culture that may result in an ethics code of little intrinsic value.

Kelman theorizes that ethical decisions are made through internalization and identification/compliance. He says that a person will internalize an idea because it is intrinsically valuable to them. Identification and compliance also involve accepting an idea, but the individual's acceptance of the idea is based on the source of the idea. Valuable relationships with a source will allow the person to identify with the source. If a source has power over the individual, the person will most likely comply with the source. Either way the individual's ethical decisions are made based on the relationship with the source.

The theory of social constructionism can also be used to understand how a reporter will make decisions in using anonymous sources. This theory holds that a person's reality is based on his or her knowledge and social interactions with other people. Rather than relying on objectivity, Reynolds and Barnett (2003) say that a reporter, particularly in breaking news situations, will rely on his or her own values rather than an organization's values or ethics in shaping a news story.

Using these values or ethics in shaping a news story could affect media credibility. Research has found that the concept of media credibility is based not only on source credibility, expertness and trustworthiness, but situational factors such as the perceived credibility of the medium itself. White and Andsager (1991) relate the concept of media credibility to The Heuristic-Systematic Model of Persuasion and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (p. 711).

In the first, developed by Chaiken, Liberman and Eagly in 1989, two methods of processing information are used, systematic and heuristic. Systematic processing requires "careful, analytic, and effortful examination of the message" (Severin & Tankard, p. 175). In heuristic processing, "people use inferential rules or schemas to form judgments or make decisions" (p. 175).

Petty and Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model developed in 1986 states that information is processed centrally through the rationality of an argument, or peripherally using such cues as credibility, liking and consensus (Lowery & DeFleur).

Gunther (1988) found that a curvilinear relationship existed between "extremity of attitude toward an issue" and media credibility of coverage of that issue (p. 279). He noted that two areas of theory, cognitive response theory, supported by Petty and Cacioppo, and social judgment theory, defined by Sherif et al., support the idea that it is the depth of an individual's position on an issue which explains media credibility differences. Gunther believes that these two models of theory can be complimentary rather than conflicting. He suggests that an individual's moderate involvement in a subject may also influence their perception of media coverage.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to perform a textual analysis of Jayson Blair's book "Burning Down My Masters' House" and stories he plagiarized or fabricated for *The New York Times.* The researcher will focus on the role anonymous sources played in Blair's deception as well as ethics in his decision-making process and his perceptions of media credibility as it relates to his work as a journalist.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Anonymous Sources Defined

Neal (1949) called use of anonymous sources one of reporting's older plagues:

> ...within its rightful field, the "don't print it" command is wholly justified. Many a person voices remarks under circumstances, which would make their publication distressing and damaging. Others, often in prominent positions, provide information useful to a reporter but not printable. A modified "off the record" allows use of the information if it is not accredited directly to the individual giving it (p. 117).

The distinction between "public" or "official" and "private" or "personal" utterances should be considered by reporters (Neal, 1949, p. 117). Ault and Emery (1959) suggested that there are circumstances in which the news source legitimately can request that certain information be kept off the record, at least temporarily. They write that generally it is held that the public's right to know overrules the discomfiture or harm to any individual involved in a legitimate news story. The reporter should remember this in weighing "off the record" requests.

Rich (1994) provided the following definitions of terms associated with anonymity.

> **Off The Record:** The information from this source may not be used at all. If you can get the same information from another source, you may use it, but you may not attribute it to the source who told it to you off the record.

Not for attribution: You may use the information as background, but you may not identify the source.

Background: This is similar to the term "not for attribution." Generally, it means that you may use the information but can't attribute it. Some reporters define background as the ability to use the information with a general attribution, such as "a city official said."

Deep Background: This term is rarely used or understood by most sources except for officials in Washington, D.C. It means you may use the materials for your information only but may not attribute it at all, not even with a general term, such as "government official" (pp. 96-97).

While these are the general definitions of terms associated with anonymity, they can vary throughout print and broadcast news organizations. For example, Rich (1994) explained that *The Wall Street Journal* made a distinction between "anonymous source" and "confidential source" (p. 96). The newspaper considers an anonymous source a person whose name is not used in the story "but whose identity we may later need to disclose – in the event of a libel suit..." (p. 96). The newspaper defined a confidential source as one whose name will not be published and whose identity will not be revealed in court, even if the reporter has to go to jail to protect the source.

There are many types of anonymous sources (Adams, 1962). Some of the descriptions used by reporters to keep sources anonymous include: "a high government official," "political leaders," "official sources," "a government spokesman," "an aide," and "authorities" (Adams, 1962, p. 80). Reporters also use phrases to shield sources, such as: "it was learned" and "documents obtained by" (Adams, 1962, p. 82).

Culbertson (1978) found that reporters used the following descriptions when referring to anonymous sources: official; spokesman; source; member; observer; aide; critic; expert; adviser; staffer; and investigator. Hallin, Manoff and Weddle (1993) classified anonymous sourcing in national security reporting as executive sources, former executive sources, Congressional sources, foreign sources and non-governmental sources.

Conceptualizing the Anonymous Source Problem

In his 1991 book *The Commanders,* an in-depth look at military-decision making during the invasion of Panama and the Persian Gulf War, Woodward said that he used approximately 400 sources, all of whom were "off the record" (Eastland, 1993, p. 39). Swain and Robertson (1995) take Woodward to task for his generous use of anonymous sources in *The Commanders*, as well as *The Agenda,* and *Veil*:

> His use of unnamed sources, despite his contribution to the watchdog function of the press, raises the most fundamental of questions about a reporter, and about the press as an institution: Can the reading public trust the veracity of this particular reporter? (p. 15).

Schultz (1998) says that while the need for "checks and balances" and "scrutiny of those in power" continues today, journalists will struggle to live up to their watchdog role because of the growth of the media industry (p. 4). She says:

> the media is now a vast international business increasingly suspected of exercising self-interested political and economic power rather than acting as a disinterested check on the abuse of such power by others (p. 4).

Both journalists and their sources have reasons for anonymity. Anonymous sources may help a journalist speed an investigation into uncovering abuses of power or corruption, or a source's life may be threatened if his or her identity is revealed, particularly in the case of international stories (Boeyink, 1990).

However, the current use of anonymous sources is being exploited by many – particularly when used by the president and other politicians (Erickson & Fleuriet, 1991). Much of the "not-for-attribution" information the White House Press Corps receives is through briefings by senior White House officials and presidential aides (Halloran, 1983, p. A16).

Lannie Davis, White House counsel for former President Clinton, admitted handpicking reporters in order to "pro-actively" disseminate a story (Smith, 1998, Discussion). Davis suggested that, during his White House days, he was on the record only half of the time (Smith, 1998, Discussion 2).

Anonymous Sources and Agenda-setting

Davis is not the exception. Many presidents have used anonymity to set the agenda and to test policies and programs, thereby limiting any type of public discussion on issues (Erickson & Fleuriet, 1991). Agenda-setting has been defined as "the notion that news media can directly affect the public's priorities" (Protess, et al., 1991, p. 6). More recently, agenda-setting by the press has been related to agenda-building which has been defined by Lang & Lang (1983) as "a collective process in which media, government, and the citizenry reciprocally influence one another in at least some respects" (p. 59). Mass media will use framing to influence public opinion and the public agenda. Entman' s (1993) definition of framing is:

> ...to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular definition of a problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 52).

Wanta and Hu (1994) propose a model of agenda-setting based on the idea that, "if individuals perceive the media to be highly credible, they will become highly reliant on the media for information, will increase their exposure to media messages and, in turn, will demonstrate a strong susceptibility to agenda-setting effects" (p. 90). With respect to local and community news, McCombs (1997) sees "achievement of consensus" as the center of the agenda-setting theory (p. 433). McCombs writes that:

> Agenda-setting is about the transmission of salience, not the determination of opinions pro and con about a particular issue. In setting the public agenda, the news

media influence the salience or prominence of that small number of issues that come to command public attention (p.433).

Additionally, research regarding how individuals frame a problem plays a role in the agenda-setting process. Weaver et.al. (1981), determined that members of the public will view an issue as either socially relevant, personally relevant or both. This framing of a problem, socially or personally, allows researchers to expand agenda-setting theory to look at the role of personal experience and mediated experience in the agenda-setting process. More recently, scholars are looking at the concept of "intermedia agenda-setting" and how media influence the agenda of other media (Roberts & Bantimaroudis, p. 64).

Price and Tewksbury (1995) see agenda-setting as one aspect of framing and priming. Priming is "the effect of the media's agenda on the public's evaluations of political leaders"(McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, p. 9).

This relates to anonymous sources because journalists may grant anonymity without understanding the source's motives or agenda, thereby becoming a participant in furthering the source's agenda (Son, 2002). Sources may want to manipulate reporters to further their own cause (Rich, 1994). Erickson and Fleuriet (1991) say when presidential or administration anonymity is granted it can:

> ...rhetorically shape or create political realities, control or influence policy, camouflage issues, manipulate attitudes toward White House enemies, and impact both legislative decision-making and diplomatic maneuvering (p. 284).

During his first term, Ronald Reagan granted 194 interviews and 150 special briefings in which attribution restrictions applied (Cannon, 1984). Erickson and Fleuriet (1991) also noted that anonymity affects the public's ability to decipher presidential messages:

> Image enhancing, defamation, diplomacy, and disinformation plants disseminate false, negative, or self-serving presidential messages. These plants can create a mythic persona, sling mud, obfuscate political meanings, and deceive the public. Image enhancing plants extol a president's virtues in exaggerated, embellished, or fictive terms that symbolically associate the individual with the mythic presidency (p. 276).

Reporters have claimed that, in order to continue to get information, they must play this game (Erickson & Fleuriet, 1991). While this may be true, the end result is a misinformed public (Bok, 1982). Nowhere is this more apparent than in Washington, D.C. (Hess, 1981). Ann Devroy, a *Washington Post* reporter, was the first to break a story on President Clinton's budget that would eliminate many programs. In her front-page 1994 story, "Clinton to Propose ending 115 programs in '95 budget," Devroy cited "documents obtained by *The Washington Post*" (Miller, 1996, p.15).

While the story emphasized that the cuts, $3.25 billion, were not that much compared to the overall budget, Devroy's story sent the message that major cuts were on the way. By conventional measures of journalism, the *Post's* piece was a success: it beat the competition, set the tone for subsequent coverage and confirmed Devroy's reputation for the hustle that makes her a front-page regular. Yet, the last laugh, as with dozens if not hundreds of such stories each year, belong to the government officials who actually

scripted the piece. The White House, under siege for a "big spending" health plan and its opposition to the previous fall's proposed Penny-Kasich cuts, wanted a budget reception that made the president look tough on spending. So it leaked Devroy the materials, manufacturing "news" that would help create the climate of opinion it desired (Miller, 1996, p. 15).

Noelle-Neumann suggested that the climate of opinion depends on who talks and who keeps quiet. Those who are confident their opinions should be adopted express them openly, while those who have a different viewpoint tend to keep quiet. The opinion expressed openly will dominate the public scene, while the other will disappear (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

Content Analyses for Use of Anonymous Sources

In the March 6, 1999 edition of the *The New York Times,* two reporters broke a story about a suspected spy, Wen Ho Lee, a 60-year old Chinese American scientist working at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico (Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Lee was later charged with 59 felony counts of abuses of national security, including stealing information on the W-88 warhead for China. Lee was eventually exonerated by the United States government in connection with the W-88 warhead (Zhang & Cameron, 2003). Zhang and Cameron (2003) conducted a content analysis of the *Times'* sourcing patterns in their coverage of the Lee story. They found that the paper used official and anonymous sources more than non-official and identified ones.

Reynolds and Barnett (2003) looked at what role anonymous sources played at CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC in the first five hours of coverage following the September 11

attacks. They found that, "Journalists reported information from an anonymous source 55 times during the first five hours of live coverage," and that anonymous sources were used more frequently in the first hour than the fifth hour (p. 695).

Another study of the same broadcast outlets looked at the use of anonymous sources during the sex scandal involving former President Clinton and intern Monica Lewinsky (Esposito, 1999). Of the 1,107 stories analyzed in the study, Esposito found that about 72 percent contained at least one anonymous source, that the four networks averaged approximately one anonymous source per minute per story, and that NBC used more unnamed sources than named sources (p. 7).

During the first six days of covering the sex scandal, *The Washington Post* was cited as using the most anonymous sources of all the major newspapers according to a study by the Committee of Concerned Journalists (Childs, 1998). That study found that the *Post's* first six days of coverage of the Lewinsky story used fewer attributed sources and more anonymous sources than other newspapers. The *Post* has a policy requiring reporters to use two or more sources for information, and getting nearly everything on the record. However, only 16 percent of the *Post's* statements were attributed to named sources; 38 percent were attributed to multiple anonymous sources; and 26 percent were attributed to single anonymous sources (Childs, 1998, p. 9).

One study described veiled-attribution in *Time* and *Newsweek* by focusing on stylistic matters of word and phrase choice (Culbertson, 1978). Culbertson analyzed one issue per month of each magazine. He found a total of 2,030 veiled-attribution phrases in the 24 magazine issues. Of these, 943 were found in *Time*, and 1,087 were found in

Newsweek. The study found that overall, veiled attribution occurred about 70 percent in *Newsweek* stories and 75 percent in *Time* articles (p. 460).

Wulfemeyer (1985) studied 12 issues each of *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines in 1982 to find out how often anonymous sources are quoted in newsmagazines, and what types of anonymous sources are quoted. Wulfemeyer (1985) found that of the 388 stories analyzed, anonymous sources were quoted 81 percent of the time (p. 83). In the 24 issues analyzed, 1,274 anonymous quotations were identified in the 315 stories. (p. 85). Overall, more *Newsweek* stories, 691, than *Time* stories, 583, quoted anonymous sources. In both national and international categories, more *Newsweek* than *Time* stories tended to quote anonymous sources. Wulfemeyer's (1985) research found that while more than 80 percent of the stories in the newsmagazines contained at least one anonymous quote, the majority of stories identified the source by name (p. 85). Almost 30 percent of the stories quoted just one unnamed source and 70 percent quoted three or fewer (p. 86). Wulfemeyer's (1985) research did find examples of excessive use of anonymous sources. Four stories included 15 anonymous quotes, three stories had 17, one story had 20 and one story had 42 anonymous quotes in about four full pages (p. 126).

Wulfemeyer and McFadden (1986) examined two weeks (Monday through Friday) of network television newscasts in Fall 1982. Using newscasts from CBS, ABC, and NBC, the authors wanted to find out what percentage of network television news stories contain anonymous attribution; how frequently unnamed sources are quoted; what types of stories use anonymous attribution most often; and how unnamed sources are described. Anonymous attribution was included in about 55 percent of the network television news stories analyzed in this study (p. 471). In all, 484 quotes were attributed to unnamed

sources in the 227 stories that contained quotes using anonymous sources (p. 471). CBS used anonymous attribution more often than did NBC or ABC. In the 227 stories that contained anonymous attribution, 109 had just one reference to an unnamed source and only 33 stories contained four or more references to unnamed sources (p. 473).

Blankenburg (1992) measured the frequency of articles containing anonymous attribution in main news sections of the *The New York Times, The Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times* in February 1990 and February 1991. The stories selected were national and international news stories longer than 250 words. Results showed that from 23 percent to 35 percent of selected stories contained either one or both of the phrases, "source said" or "official said" (p. 13). The study showed that all three newspapers made substantial use of anonymous attribution. All three increased use in February 1991, during the Gulf War.

Denham (1997) studied almost 9,000 news paragraphs written about military conflicts in Somalia and Bosnia. Denham looked at stories from a stratified random sample of conflict reports from 1992, 1993, and 1994 in the *Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post* and *Associated Press* Results showed that 15.4 percent of the 8,780 news paragraphs about the conflicts in Bosnia and Somalia contained information attributed to an anonymous source (p. 56). He found that the use of anonymous sources varied significantly among these three news organizations. *The Washington Post* used veiled attribution most often (37 percent), followed by the *Los Angeles Times* (29 percent) and the *Associated Press* (18.3 percent) (p. 570).

The use of anonymous sources by the network (ABC, NBC, and CBS) news organizations during the 1997 Timothy McVeigh trial was also analyzed (Esposito,

1998). Esposito examined the number of times anchors or reporters cited unnamed sources, either individuals or groups, during newscasts. He found only 17 instances of journalists providing information from vague or unnamed sources. More than half of these anonymous attributions, 52 percent, came from CBS News, with four of these coming in one report (p. 27).

In CBS's May 7, 1997 broadcast, anchor Dan Rather opened by saying, "CBS News has turned up exclusive information about the Oklahoma City bombing trial" (Esposito, 1998, p. 27). Rather never disclosed how or from whom the information had been obtained. The correspondent covering the story, Scott Pelley follows by saying, "CBS News has learned tonight that Tim McVeigh's fingerprints and handwriting have now been linked to the credit card number that is so central to the case" (p. 27). Pelley never revealed how CBS News learned this information or why the information is so important to the case. Esposito concluded that despite their occasional lack of objectivity, correspondents covering the McVeigh trial did refrain from overusing unnamed sources, and that the McVeigh trial coverage was relatively free of anonymous attribution.

Esposito found this surprising because trial participants were given a gag order by the presiding judge forbidding them to talk to media. Esposito hypothesized that normally in such a situation reporters would go to great lengths to protect their sources in order to continue to obtain information. He concluded that this was a sign that trial participants followed the gag order eliminating "leaks" of information in the case (p. 31). Reporters were then forced to rely on other sources such as legal consultants and victims' relatives.

Esposito (1998) concluded his study by saying that the real issue in such coverage is not whether a source is named or not, but whether the reporter has obtained accurate

information. He suggested that his findings differed significantly from other research projects on the subject, one of which found that approximately 50 percent of 42 trial-related network news stories contained anonymous attribution (p. 32, Wulfemeyer, 1986, p. 472).

Credibility Studies Involving Anonymous Sources

In one of the earliest studies, Adams (1962) used 20 unnamed news sources selected from a list of 150 such sources, which had been used in *The New York Times* from 1940 to 1959. The 80 study participants were asked to rate the sources on a seven-point acceptance-rejection table. One equaled a complete acceptance of the source, seven equaled complete rejection, while four was considered neutral.

Adams found that terms using "government" or "official" were generally more acceptable than others such as "political leaders" or "indications." He also found that those sources which give no clues as to the real source, such as "it was learned" or "indications," were rated as less credible by the study participants.

Riffe (1979) did a follow-up study of Adams' 1962 study. Riffe used 18 unnamed sources from one week's news copy in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* in March 1979, (these sources were 18 of the same sources used by Adams' study) and compared his findings to the 1962 study.

Riffe (1979) found that governmental sources were viewed as less credible. He attributed this to the post-Vietnam and Watergate era. A 1975 Harris Poll showed that "those professing a great deal of confidence in the executive branch of the federal government" had dropped to 13 percent, a 15-percentage point drop from a 1974 poll

prior to President Nixon's resignation. Riffe reported that a Harris Poll done in the mid-1960s showed that 42 percent of respondents had a "great deal of confidence" in the government (pp. 618-619). However, Riffe's study found overall, unnamed sources were still regarded as more believable than unbelievable.

The importance of sources, whether they are named or anonymous, has always been apparent in traditional media coverage of the news (Sundar, 1998). But with the arrival of the Internet, subscribers are able to view a multitude of information with very little or no attribution. A study by Sundar (1998) looked at the effect of source attribution on perception of on-line news stories:

> The Internet has made it possible for gossip and rumor to not only gain wide circulation but also attain the status of "news." Many mainstream press reports, about topics as wide-ranging as a conspiracy behind the TWA Flight 800 crash investigation and President Clinton's sexual liaisons, are based on unsubstantiated information posted on the Internet. An important implication of this phenomenon is the gradual decline in the psychological importance of source in on-line news stories (p. 55).

Sundar had subjects read six news stories created on an on-line news service. Three of the stories contained quotes while three did not. Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire evaluating their liking of the story as well as the credibility, quality, and representativeness of the story. Sundar found that news stories with quotes rated significantly more credible than the same stories without quotes. Subjects also rated news stories with quotes significantly higher in quality than stories without quotes:

> These results confirm that journalists' preoccupation with getting quotes for news stories is a psychologically valid concern. More important, they dissect the perceptual effects of source attribution and pinpoint the areas in which quoted sources have an effect and areas in which they do not seem to have any effect. In confirmation of Hale's finding, the present study shows that the perceived credibility of a news story is significantly enhanced by source attribution (p. 63).

In 1998, Willnat and Weaver compared earlier findings of the public's perception of investigative reporting with that of a national telephone survey of 1,211 conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates. The survey showed while a majority of respondents approved of investigative reporting in general, the respondents did not approve of specific reporting techniques. Fifty-three percent said they approved of reporters running stories that quote unnamed sources (p.453).

Anonymous Sources and the Public's Perception

Does the use of anonymous sources by the media affect the public's perception of the media? Following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, a survey by The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press indicated that approval ratings of mass media were at an all-time high. About 89 percent of those surveyed gave mass media a positive rating for coverage of the event (Summary & Introduction). This is quite different from a 1997 poll conducted by The Pew Research Center. At that time, results indicated that the public's view of the press had declined since polls conducted in 1992 and 1985. Favorable ratings of network news and large national newspapers had

declined. Network news had suffered the largest decline in favorability, which was 73 percent in 1997 – down 11 percent from 1985 (Other Important Findings & Analyses). However, the Pew Research Poll found that while the public still approved of investigative journalism, they disapproved of some of the techniques used in this type of journalism. Sixty-six percent disapproved of reporters concealing their identity and paying informers for information, and 54 percent disapproved of the use of hidden cameras (Other Important Findings & Analyses). Survey results showed that 52 percent approved of news stories with unnamed sources, compared to 42 percent who approved in a 1981 Gallup survey (Other Important Findings & Analyses).

Following the developments at *USA Today* and *The New York Times*, Susan Page, the Washington D.C., bureau chief for *USA Today* suggested that newspaper editors "control the use of unattributed material. I think that's important, not that you don't use blind sources – sometimes you need to – but to have some controls there." (Smith, 2004).

Legal Implications of Use of Anonymous Sources

There are legal implications in the use of anonymous sources. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed a state decision declaring a reporter source verbal agreement invalid and striking down the damages based on promissory estoppel law (*Cohen v. Cowles Media*, 1991).

In the case, Dan Cohen, a public relations manager for a Minnesota Republican gubernatorial candidate, offered news media "dirt" on his candidate's opponent, but only after he had been promised confidentiality (Bunker & Splichal, 1993, p. 940). The reporters' editors, however, felt that newsworthiness of the source's identity was more

important to the story. Cohen's name was printed in the story and as a result he was fired. *Cohen* held that the First Amendment did not prevent a news source from suing when his identity had been revealed after being promised confidentiality:

> Editors could be induced to forgo significant information or controversial stories because of potential "promissory estoppel" risks. "Cohen" threatens to inhibit news gathering at its most fundamental level--at the source (Bunker & Splichal, 1993, p. 944).

Davis, Ross and Gates (1996) looked at the impact the case had on the use of confidential sources, the reaction of newspaper editors to this ruling, as well as how it affected newsroom policies and procedures. During the summer of 1994, surveys were mailed to 106 large-circulation American dailies. In the 64 survey responses returned, they found that 92 percent of the newspapers used confidential sources in reporting (p. 93). One-fourth responded that they used anonymous sources frequently, while 61 percent said they use them occasionally (p. 93). Ninety-two percent said they have policies regarding the use of anonymous sources – 42 percent had written policies (p. 93). The survey also found that respondents with a written policy used anonymous sources less often than newspapers with unwritten policies. Davis and Ross found that the Cohen ruling had little impact on newsrooms' source policies – two-thirds of the respondents said they reviewed their policies, only 19 percent actually altered their policy (p. 94).

Wilson and Babcock (1997) examined the views of newspaper ombudspeople on the use of anonymous sources. They found that ombudsmen were seasoned journalists, who consider the use of anonymous sources important and have definite ideas about

anonymous source policies. Respondents also said they receive few complaints about anonymous sources. However, they felt the public may be more concerned than readers' calls indicate and if asked directly about the use of anonymous sources would see it as a growing problem. Respondents to the study also favored policies to limit the use of anonymous sources and said that if readers were asked directly.

Earlier studies looked at how newspaper editors reacted to the discovery that anonymous sources in a Pulitzer Prize winning story by Janet Cooke were fabricated by the author. Anderson (1982) wanted to see if newspaper editors had changed their policies on the use of anonymous sources. While 87 percent of those responding agreed that *The Washington Post* was negligent in verifying Cooke's story, 73 percent did say that a fabricated story by one of their own reporters could make it past them to be published (p. 364). Other responses included:

- 75% said the press overuses unidentified sources (p. 364);
- 62% said the use of anonymous sources leads to more distortion of hyperbolic statements in stories (p. 365);
- More than 92% said that in the future newspaper editors will more carefully scrutinize stories that contain anonymous sources (p. 365);
- More than half of the respondents said they were surprised that a Gallup/*Newsweek* Poll showed that 33% of those surveyed thought reporters often made things up (p. 366).

Wulfemeyer (1983) examined how many newspapers and television stations have policies regarding anonymous sources, the basic elements of anonymous source policies

in television and newspapers, and what affect the Cooke incident had on the use of anonymous sources. Wulfemeyer found that 24 percent of the newspapers and television stations had formal written policies (p. 45). About 43 percent of the news executives said the Janet Cooke case had not affected their news organization's policies (p. 47). However, 53 percent said they did scrutinize stories more when anonymous sources were used (p. 47).

In 1990, Wulfemeyer surveyed news directors at 200 "all news" radio stations about the acceptance of a new code of broadcast ethics adopted in 1987 by the Radio-Television News Directors Association. The guidelines recognize the need to protect confidential sources and to only promise confidentiality when the promise can be kept. Wulfemeyer found that:

> About 97 percent of the news directors approved of granting confidentiality to news sources. About 60 percent said the news director and/or producer should be told the name of a source who is to be quoted, but unnamed in a story, before the story airs. About 35 percent thought too many unnamed sources are quoted in radio journalism (p.184).

Following *The New York Times* revelation that Jayson Blair had fabricated sources and plagiarized from other newspapers, an outside panel investigating the scandal recommended the *Times* hire an ombudsman and put into place a written policy on the use of anonymous sources (Steinberg, 2003).

The policy is listed on *The New York Times* Company Web site under "Principals for Granting Anonymity":

> The use of unidentified sources is reserved for situations in which the newspaper could not otherwise print information it considers reliable and newsworthy. When we use such sources, we accept an obligation not only to convince a reader of their reliability but also to convey what we can learn of their motivation — as much as we can supply to let a reader know whether the sources have a clear point of view on the issue under discussion (p. 1).

Following the *Times'* admission regarding Blair's deceptive reporting practices it was suggested by critics that the scandal could have been prevented if the newspaper had a written policy on the use of anonymous sources. Does having a written policy on sourcing guarantee honesty and integrity of reporters? Or is this a solution to only one aspect of a larger issue that encompasses a number of variables including ethics, newsroom culture, and media credibility?

In this study, the researcher will address the following questions:

1. What role do the uses of anonymous sources play in Blair's ability to deceive his employer and his readers?
2. What does analysis of these texts tell us about the organization's culture and how it relates to Blair's decision to plagiarize and fabricate stories?
3. What role do Blair's perceptions have in his decision-making process?
4. How does Blair view the concept of media credibility in relation to his role as a reporter for the *Times?*

Chapter III

Methodology

The majority of research in the area of anonymous sources has been conducted using content analysis. Altheide (1996) writes that:

> ...most approaches to content analysis were grounded in a tradition that equated 'true knowledge' with numbers and measurement... Assumptions were made about the media's impact on audience members, who essentially were regarded as being very passive and subject to influence... simply studying the frequency and pattern of messages would tell us what was happening to audience members... we now know that audience members are very active and interpret messages in many different ways (p.5).

In the same way, simply studying the number and frequency of anonymous sources will not tell us about other relevant social factors such as the culture of a newsroom that allows the use of anonymous sources or the ethics of an individual reporter who uses anonymous sources. Altheide (1996) says that documents are studied to understand the culture or social life in which they were written. He identifies three important concepts relevant to the study of documents (p. 9-10).

1. Context or the social situations surrounding the document.
2. Process or how something is actually created and put together.
3. Emergence or the gradual shaping of meaning through understanding and interpretation.

The researcher will use these concepts in analyzing *The New York Times* articles and book written by Jayson Blair.

Method of Selection

Altheide identifies three classes of documents necessary to the researcher for document analysis. The first are primary documents or "the objects of study" (p.3). These would include newspapers, magazines, and television or radio newscasts. Secondary documents "are records about primary documents and other objects of research" (p.3). Altheide defines these as published reports about primary documents and accounts that are at least one step removed from the initial source. The last category is auxiliary documents which Altheide says "can supplement a research project or some other practical undertaking but are neither the main focus of investigation nor the primary source of data for understanding the topic" (p.3).

In 2004, Jayson Blair wrote a book, *Burning Down My Masters' House*, in an attempt to justify his actions surrounding the *Times'* discovery of his deceptions. This book will be used as a primary document of analysis. The researcher will pay particular attention to Chapters 23 through 30, where Blair specifically discusses writing stories on the Washington D.C. sniper and the Iraq war.

The researcher also conducted a Lexis/Nexis search through the University of Nebraska at Omaha Library to find *The New York Times* stories Blair wrote on the sniper and Iraq. The researcher went to the Guided News Search section and selected "general news" and the news source "major papers." The researcher used "Jayson Blair" in combination with the following terms to search for the articles: "Washington D.C.

sniper," "Iraq War;" and "Jessica Lynch." After entering the search terms and dates the researcher conducted a search of *The New York Times*.

The search returned a total of 49 articles on the Washington D.C. sniper from October 25, 2002 through April 30, 2003. Blair authored 43 of these stories and co-wrote or contributed to the six other articles. The stories vary in length from 500 to 3700 words.

The search for Iraq/Lynch content showed a total of 16 stories. Blair authored 11 of these and co-wrote or contributed to five beginning March 22 2003, through April 30, 2003. The stories vary in length from 300 to 1900 words. The overall total number of documents for both the Washington D.C. sniper and Iraq/Lynch is 65 (Appendix).

On May 11, 2003, the *Times* printed a front-page story about Blair's deception. The story includes a two-page segment inside called "Correcting the Record." This is a review of the articles written by Blair beginning with the Washington D.C. sniper stories through the Iraq/Lynch stories. The review was conducted by *Times* reporters and researchers for possible errors and fabrications. These two articles will be used as secondary documents in the research study.

Stories from two trade publications that address the Jayson Blair incident will also be used as secondary documents for this research study. They include, "All About the Retrospect," which was published in the June/July 2003 edition of the *American Journalism Review* and "Important If True," which was published in the magazine's August/September 2003 edition. The researcher will also use "The *Times* After the Storm," which ran in the July/August 2003 edition of the *Columbia Journalism Review.*

Chapter IV

Analysis

Research Question 1. What role do the uses of anonymous sources play in Blair's ability to deceive his employer and his readers?

Following Jayson Blair's resignation at *The New York Times*, the *American Journalism Review* published, "Important If True" (Rosen, 2003) which was prompted by Blair's misuse of anonymous sources. Rosen discussed Blair's coverage of the Washington D.C. sniper case and how he "contrived" anonymous sources:

> Blair's editors hadn't asked for the identity of those sources even though the story was controversial – they didn't even ask after officials involved with the case questioned the accuracy of Blair's information (p. 47).

Even after the *Times* ran its five-page story on May 11, 2003 on Blair's deceptions, the question of his misuse of anonymous sources did not even surface until the second page of the story.

The story contained corrections of Blair's stories that he wrote on the Washington, D.C. snipers, the war in Iraq and rescued prisoner of war Jessica Lynch. But of the 65 stories that Blair wrote or contributed to, only two of the corrections specifically dealt with Blair's use of an anonymous source and even then it does not address the sourcing issue but Blair's ability to draw conclusions from the source of the stories.

The five-page story in the *Times* contains 15 paragraphs on the issue of Blair and anonymous sources. According to the article, all of the *Times* editors working with Blair

on the sniper story say they would have asked Blair to identify his sources had they known about his history of troubles with the newspaper. But it would be difficult for the *Times* to delve too much into the sourcing issue because at the time of the incident it had no written policy on the subject.

In an interview for the *American Journalism Review* story, *Rocky Mountain News* Editor John Temple, a subscriber to the *Times*, indicated that he called the *Times* following the May 11 story to discuss with Howell Raines his concerns about how the newspaper handles anonymous sources. A *Times* spokesperson told Temple that the newspaper did not have a policy.

The *Times* however, does have an "integrity policy" which can be found on *The New York Times* Company Web site. The policy addresses anonymous sources in a general way:

> The use of unidentified sources is reserved for situations in which the newspaper could not otherwise print information it considers newsworthy and reliable. When possible, reporter and editor should discuss any promise of anonymity before it is made, or before the reporting begins on a story that may result in such a commitment. (Some beats, like criminal justice or national security, may carry standing authorization for the reporter to grant anonymity.) (p. 1)

The bulk of corrections in the *Times* story cite Blair's whereabouts on the day of the paper's dateline as his chief offense despite the fact that Blair uses anonymous sources liberally throughout the 49 articles he wrote or contributed to on the Washington D.C. sniper.

In his book, Blair states that, "The *Times* was getting smoked on the story, despite the enormous resources we had in place" and that "*The Washington Post* was dominating the exclusive elements of the news about the shootings, though their coverage was spotty, and the *Sun* in Baltimore clearly had the best handle on the story" (p. 230). Blair's coverage of the story focused on law enforcement sources in Maryland and Virginia.

Prior to working for the *Times*, Blair attended school at the University of Maryland, and his parents also lived in the Washington D.C. area. Blair stated that because he had either interned or worked as a freelancer for *The Washington Post*, the *Baltimore Sun*, and *The Boston Globe* he had a "rolodex still filled with names of people" he could contact in law enforcement (p. 230). "My rolodex was born for this story" (p. 231).

Blair discussed how sourcing works within law enforcement. He stated that in his first day on the story he was able to confirm information through an anonymous source about a tarot card left by the sniper at one of the shootings. Blair went on to say that the motive for detectives in giving information to reporters was:

> ...simply to be able to tell their buddies and grandkids that they were a part of the story. A reporter could easily exploit that desire, and that opportunity to be a part of the story would sometimes override the best judgment of even the most hardened detectives when the story got big (p. 231).

Blair also talked about the effect television cameras have on any breaking story. After receiving information about the ex-wife of one of the two snipers arrested in the case Blair hurried to her home only to find a television news crew already there. He said that once television arrived at a story one of two things happened:

> ...people clammed up and stopped talking because of all the lights in their eyes, or people who wanted to be on TV started blabbing even though they did not know what they were talking about. On a breaking news story it is often hard to trust anything you hear once the cameras arrive (p. 235).

Blair also discussed what role television cameras play in a reporter's ability to obtain information. He said that the only reason to attend a news conference as opposed to covering it live on television was because once the cameras were turned off, officials would give off-the-record information. "After the news conference ended, the same officials who dutifully declined to comment on certain matters in front of television cameras began providing details about Malvo's background" (p. 242).

He went on to discuss a source's role in getting the story correctly. Receiving a tip from an anonymous source, Blair wrote a front page story which he said was "hyped up both by my editors and myself," claiming that the United States Attorney for Maryland had interrupted the interrogation of one of the suspects who was on the verge of confessing in an attempt to take the case away from local law enforcement officials in Maryland (p. 247).

This story angered federal officials involved in the case. Blair blamed this on the source who would not return his calls:

> ...if the United States Attorney for Maryland, Thomas DiBiagio, had returned one of several calls he would have had the chance to get us to temper the story, but the callback did not come until two in the morning, when Barbara Comstock, (former

> Attorney General John) Ashcroft's shrill spokeswoman, reached me through the National Desk in my hotel room. It was a little too late by then. (p. 247)

When the *Times* ran corrections on the story it wrote that the conclusions that Blair had reached in his story were not justified. Blair said this claim was disputed later by testimony in the trials of the two suspects. While Blair had used five unidentified law enforcement officers as the basis for the story, he was never asked by editors to name his sources, even though other *Times* reporters had contradicted his interpretation of events.

Blair himself admitted that it was at this point in the sniper case when certain reporters from the *Times'* Washington bureau who were also assigned to cover the story would no longer work with him. And he continued to use the source that provided the information for the controversial story. The next time it was to confirm a story about a laptop computer found with the suspects that the source said implicated their guilt.

In a December 22, 2002 front-page article, Blair used unidentified law-enforcement officials to explain why the evidence pointed to Malvo as the actual shooter in the killings. As a result of this story, one of the prosecutors in the case, Robert Horan Jr., called a news conference questioning Blair's source and the details. " I don't think that anybody in the investigation is responsible for the leak, because so much of it was dead wrong," he said at the news conference (p. A25).

Blair wrote about some key evidence in the case that turned out to be untrue. In his article Blair wrote:

> *A videotape recovered from a security camera near the Home Depot parking garage in Falls Church, Va., where Linda Franklin, an F.B.I. analyst, was killed on Oct 14.

> The videotape shows someone who appears to be Mr. Muhammad inside the driver's seat of the car.
>
> *Saliva found on a grape stem on the hill where investigators contend someone fired the shot that killed Conrad E. Johnson, a bus driver, in Aspen Hill, Md., on Oct 22 (Appendix, p. A1).

The following is the correction the *Times* printed:

> DENIED REPORTS -- The article reported on supposed evidence from unnamed law-enforcement officials showing that Mr. Malvo was the likely triggerman in most of the shootings. The commonwealth attorney in Fairfax County, Va., said in a recent interview that at least two of the five pieces of evidence cited in the article do not exist. The first is a videotape said to have been recovered from a security camera near the Home Depot parking lot in Falls Church, Va., where Linda Franklin was killed on Oct. 14, 2002, showing someone who appears to be Mr. Muhammad in the driver's seat. The second is a grape stem bearing Mr. Malvo's saliva said to have been found near the site of another shooting (p. A27).

The May 11 story in the *Times* reported that following this incident, editors still did not ask Blair to identify his sources. Jim Roberts, the national editor for the *Times* said however, that he "had a more general discussion" with Blair in order to "determine whether his sources were in a position to know what he had reported" (p. A25).

Of the 15 stories Blair wrote or contributed to about the Iraq war and Jessica Lynch, 14 stories were found to have mistakes. Again the bulk of the corrections dealt with Blair's whereabouts in relation to the stories' dateline and whether he actually

interviewed the named subjects of the stories or plagiarized information from other newspapers.

The editor of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Douglas C. Clifton said:

> The *Times* took it as a matter of policy that you don't ask – that really encouraged corner-cutting and slovenliness. That was a shocker (Rosen, p. 50).

From his book, it would appear that Blair started his job as a *Times* intern in 1998 with an ethical outlook on becoming a reporter. In the first week as an intern, Blair wrote about a tour of the *Times* building, which included a hallway displaying the many Pulitzer Prizes the organization had won throughout the years. Blair was particularly interested in one reporter who received the award in 1990, a reporter he considered "one of my favorite writers" (p. 86). When Blair was informed by their guide, also a *Times* reporter, that the Pulitzer winner's writings are questionable, he wrote:

> Oh, he makes things up. I got it, but was surprised that a fellow reporter would say something like that. If he knew the correspondent made up details, why didn't he report him? (p.86).

But by 2001, following the attack on the World Trade Center, Blair wrote that the pressure among reporters to get their name in the paper had intensified. For Blair, who was desperate to get his name in the paper, interviewing a day trader for the business section would be his way to get a byline. He wrote:

> I interviewed scores of people, none of whom at the end of our conversations would give me their names. One man, though, gave me his first name as Andrew

> and, back in the office, I improvised by creating a last name for him. I had lifted quotes from other papers before, but never made something up (p. 181).

Again, the *Times'* integrity policy speaks to this issue:

> No reader should find cause to suspect that the paper would knowingly alter facts. For that reason, the *Times* refrains outright from assigning fictional names, ages, places or dates, and it strictly limits the use of other concealment devices.

Blair's motivation to get his name and byline into print conflicted with his earlier decision to lie to his editors when he told them he had a cousin who was killed in the Pentagon attack on September 11. Blair said he did this to get out of writing any of the "Portraits of Grief" profiling the victims of the attack (p. 179). By participating in the "Portraits of Grief" coverage, Blair would have been guaranteed a byline.

Was it really a lack of an anonymous source policy that motivated Blair in deceiving his readers and his editors? Or was misuse of anonymous sources just one of many contributing factors? In his book, Blair wrote extensively on the culture of the *Times* organization, including the process used to produce the paper and his perceptions of race in the organization.

Research Question 2. What does analysis of these texts tell us about the organization's culture and how it relates to Blair's decision to plagiarize and fabricate stories?

During his final days with the *Times*, Blair, who had been hospitalized months earlier for drug and alcohol abuse, maintained that his mental illness not only contributed to his problems at the newspaper but also was a factor in his creative writing ability. After resigning his position, Blair admitted himself to a psychiatric hospital for treatment. He said that numerous editors complimented his writing on one of his last stories. Blair wrote that the incident reminded him of a quote from Edgar Allen Poe which questions whether madness is actually the highest form of intelligence:

> I cannot speak for the broader population, people at large, or even generalize about a group of people. I can answer the question for me, and it is simply that at this fully psychotic stage, I was performing some of my best, although most fraudulent, writing (p. 287).

Although this statement would seem misguided, it does say something about the process by which the *Times* is produced and the culture that supports this process. Evan Jenkins wrote that when he started for the *Times* as a copyeditor in 1966, the newspaper was run by the editor's desk, or what he called the "bullpen" (p. 15). He called the bullpen, "a guardian of *Times* standards – not only for language, but for greater virtues like fairness and accuracy" (p. 15).

Jenkins said, however, that this system did have its flaws. Despite maintaining rigorous standards, bad writing was made presentable by the editors, and reporters who

were creative writers might not see their copy published. He added that reporters typically did not know what editors were doing to their copy until publication. According to Jenkins, the pendulum has swung the other way "from an editor's to a reporter/writer's paper" (p. 16). In the May 11 story, Blair was credited for "impressing colleagues with his lightning-quick writing ability and his willingness to work long hours" (p. A24).

Writing style also influenced which stories were covered. Blair wrote that Raines was accused of moving the newspaper from one where content and substance of stories was important to lighter stories that focused on celebrity culture. Blair's comment supported Jenkins' theory about the importance of writing:

> In Howell's defense though, the *Times* could be a boring read, particularly for those under forty years old, and his changes, ranging from better display of pictures to more eloquent writing, seemed to bring the paper alive (p.218).

Jenkins wrote that since his days at the *Times*, the change in the management structure has also had its effect on how the newspaper is put together. He calls it a "top-down" leadership making it difficult to speak the truth to management (p. 15).

Following his internship, Blair returned to work for the *Times* in hopes of securing a full-time reporter position with the organization. It was during this time that numerous editors commented on the number of corrections and mistakes in Blair's stories. Despite this, Blair was promoted to full-time reporter by a committee headed by Gerald Boyd, who was deputy managing editor at the time, and Joseph Lelyveld, then executive editor. But Jonathan Landman, who was Blair's direct supervisor at the time, opposed the

promotion and was quoted in the May 11 *Times* story, "that he wasn't asked so much as told" about the promotion (p. A24).

When Blair's mistake and correction rate continued to increase, Landman eventually wrote an e-mail to newsroom administrators that said, "we have to stop Jayson from writing for the *Times*. Right now" (p. A24). Later both Raines and Boyd would claim that neither ever saw the memo and "chalked it up to bad communication" (Rosen, p. 34).

Despite supervisors' concerns about Blair's high mistake rate, the May 11 *Times* article defended its policy on corrections and the decision to continue allowing Blair to write for the newspaper:

> Many reporters make mistakes, and statistics about corrections are only a rough barometer of journalistic skills. When considered over all, Mr. Blair's correction rate at the *Times* was within acceptable limits (p. A24).

Before coming to the *Times*, as a reporter for the *Diamondback* at the University of Maryland, Blair's high correction rate was already a concern. Akweli Parker, the editor of the student newspaper, said that even then "Blair exceeded the number of corrections *Diamondback* reporters were allowed" (Rosen, p. 33).

Still, he impressed faculty at Maryland's Phillip Merrill College of Journalism with his drive and charisma so much that after only one semester of reporting at the *Diamondback,* Blair was chosen to be editor. Nearly the entire newspaper staff supported another candidate, but Blair had "strong support from the journalism school" (Rosen, p. 33). Students who tried to warn faculty about Blair's journalistic integrity and

other issues, such as Blair's chronic lies and missed deadlines, say they were "written off as campus jealousies" (Rosen, p. 33).

Associate Dean Chris Callahan admits hearing complaints from students about Blair's personality and management style, but nothing about ethical concerns. He said:

> If anybody had said anything to me about an ethical breach, would I have leapt into action? Yes. We have the most severe penalties for ethical violations in the United States – and I wrote them (Rosen, p. 33).

Some think that Blair took advantage of this "top-down" leadership style both at the *Diamondback* and at the *Times*. After a disagreement with Patrick LaForge, a metropolitan editor who tracks corrections for the newspaper, Blair threatened to take up the issue "with the people who hired me – and they all have executive or managing editor in their titles" (p. A24).

Even though Blair seemed to have taken advantage of his relationship with Raines and Boyd, he still blamed the "top-down" leadership style of Raines and his "flood the zone" philosophy for leading to the importance of datelines over content of stories. Blair wrote, "Howell wanted the paper to read as if the *Times* had been everywhere imaginable on any given day" (p. 254).

According to Blair, being everywhere meant the *Times* had to push the envelope when it came to the use of freelance reporters, stringers and story datelines. A common practice, although not accepted by management, was the use of "toe-touch" datelines

(p. 253). A reporter would write a story in one location and then travel to the city where the story occurred in order to put the name of that city at the top of the story. Blair wrote:

> I had seen correspondents perform toe-touch and no-touch datelines, and watched some write stories from hundreds of miles away from where they were supposed to have been. I had partaken in some element of these deceptions, ones that were wholeheartedly sanctioned by the newsroom in an effort to make the *Times* seem omnipresent (p. 254).

Due to deadline and budget constraints, reporters have had to rely more and more on phone interviews, as well as e-mail, Internet databases and newspaper archives rather than face-to-face interviews.

Additionally, it took an enormous amount of manpower to cover stories despite the *Times*' admission of how many reporters actually covered a story. Blair gave the example of the airplane crash that happened in Queens shortly after the World Trade Center attack and the number of reporters who covered this story compared to the number actually receiving credit in the newspaper:

> In the end, of the more than thirty reporters on the story, less than a dozen received bylines for their work. It was typical *Times*, not wanting the public to realize that their reporters were not gods, that it took so many people to do solid reporting. It was essentially a policy of lying for marketing. Their deception was a message not lost on me (p. 194).

This "top-down" leadership style also had its effect on the push to win awards. Blair said that following September 11, editors began talking about winning a Pulitzer Prize for the newspaper's coverage of the event. In his opinion, the management became too focused on winning a Pulitzer rather than on what effect the event had on peoples' lives.

Blair said that there was an arrogance that existed at the *Times* that led to a detrimental effect not only on what was determined to be news but also on the treatment of its readers. He said this arrogance:

> ...caused them to make frequent gross professional and personal misjudgments. It also caused gross misjudgments of the news value of certain stories, and an unwillingness to admit that they had made mistakes. The *Times* was among the few major newspapers in the country at the time working without internal safeguards to protect against serious mistakes that were overlooked by editors (p. 96).

He added that the *Times* was one of the few major newspapers in the country that did not have an ombudsman. Since the Blair scandal, the *Times* has hired what it calls a "public editor" for this position.

Blair may be correct in his assertion of arrogance at the newspaper. In the May 11 story, the writers said there were several reasons for the Blair problem, one of which was, "few complaints from the subjects of his articles" (p. A24). Even reporters from *The Washington Post* did not complain when Blair stole information from their stories.

The *Columbia Journalism Review* contacted some of those interviewed by Blair (Hassan, 2003). For an April 1, 2003 story on a military mortuary, Blair misquoted

Second Lieutenant Cathy L. Milhoan the spokeswoman for the 512th Airlift Wing at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. Milhoan said that when she contacted Blair, he apologized for the errors but no corrections were printed until the *Times*' May 11 story. Milhoan, who keeps a file on all articles done at the base, said that after rereading Blair's story, she discovered that Blair had plagiarized part of the article from the *Delaware State News*.

The public affairs officer for the National Naval Medical Center, Lieutenant Commander Jerry Rostad, never called to complain about an April 19, 2003 front-page story Blair had written for the *Times*. The story on injured soldiers gave a dateline of Bethesda, but Rostad said Blair was never on the base. Of the six people interviewed for the story, one soldier said he was interviewed by phone and three said they did not even speak with Blair.

Rostad said he did not call the *Times* to complain because at that time he was "above my eyeballs in media requests" and because:

> I likened it to a business relationship or a relationship you have with a neighbor. You have to think about whether you want to complain. I didn't want to willy-nilly call *The New York Times* and start World War III with them (Hassan, p. 21).

Lee Gardner, an editor with the *Baltimore City Paper* said that Blair contacted him regarding a controversial trial in Baltimore. Gardner said that he was helpful and provided Blair with information because his quotes were not for attribution. Blair ran the story using Gardner's quote and name. Gardner said he did not complain because he felt

it was not a big deal, and as an editor, he often heard people say that they were misquoted.

Blair's deceptions were finally discovered after a reporter for the *San Antonio Express-News* complained that a front-page story in the *Times* about a woman's son who was missing in action looked like her story.

Race and socio-economic status also appeared to play an important role in the culture of the newsroom. Blair claimed that race influenced how people were treated, how and which stories were covered. In his book, Blair offered numerous examples of stories that involved torture and killing of whole races that did not make it to the front page because of editors' biases. He pointed out stories that included the *Times*' treatment or placement of multiple murders in Harlem, the murder of a homeless woman in Central Park, the massacre in Rwanda and even the Holocaust. Blair said when he researched the paper's coverage, he found that the *Times* had written only six front-page stories during World War II that mentioned Jews were the target of Hitler's extermination efforts (p. 116).

Blair also wrote that the "race" question followed him around at the *Times*. Following two weeks of rehabilitation in January 2002 for drug and alcohol abuse, Blair said life at the *Times* became more difficult simply because he was black and an addict:

> A close friend in the newsroom had told me confidentially that being a recovering addict at the *Times* was bad enough, but that being a recovering black addict was something that many would not forgive me for any time soon. I would have to do my "time in purgatory" (p. 209).

Blair brought this up again when he quoted another reporter at the *Times* who was also a recovering addict:

> "I can't imagine trying to recover while still working at the same place you worked when you were using," he said. "Then, on top of that, the place is *The New York Times*, which is particularly unforgiving, and you are black. A black recovering drug addict at *The New York Times*. Not a position I envy" (p. 213).

Blair suggested that his editor, Jonathan Landman, was using race and addiction against him:

> I did not suggest that race was at play, but the combination of what I knew about Jon's stand on affirmative action and minority hires in the newsroom, and the patronizing tone that was being delivered to me on a daily basis, left me convinced that it was a factor – a black recovering addict at the *Times* was not going to be given the same leeway that a white one might be (p. 221).

Blair wrote that many in the newsroom felt that his being hired had more to do with affirmative action than his qualifications. Based on a recommendation from Jerry Gray, a black editor, Blair was offered a six-month trial employment extension after his internship ended. Blair discussed his concerns with the editor that others in the newsroom might think he was given the job because of his skin color.

> "Some people might see you as an affirmative action hire," I remember him saying. "But you take it how you can get it. There will be enough times when the color of your skin will in no way be to your advantage" (p.91).

The *Times* May 11 article said, however, that Blair's supervisors and Maryland professors emphasized that he was originally given the internship at the newspaper,

"because of glowing recommendations and a remarkable work history, not because he is black"

(p. A24).

Jenkins wrote that he did not believe Blair was "cut some slack" because he was black. Rather he said, " It would be a huge mistake to forget that black, white, or green, he was also cut some slack because he could write" (p. 16).

Research Question 3. What role do Blair's perceptions have in his decision-making process?

Blair's perceptions of race, his mental illness and his alcohol and drug abuse appeared to have been the most significant influences on his decision-making process. In the preface of his book, Blair wrote about a columnist with *The Wall Street Journal* who accused Blair of using his book to focus on how race and discrimination affected his behavior. Blair responded:

> The truth of the matter is that as a black man it would be impossible to disentangle the role that the color of my skin has played in my life, but this book is about much more than race. Throughout my career in journalism I found myself dangling on a precipice – it can be debated how much of it was environmental and how much of it was genetic – above the struggle with addiction and undiagnosed mental illness. My illness, manic depression, undoubtedly contributed to my success as a journalist, providing me with the energy to write and report non-stop for days and put in countless hours of reporting (p. x-xi).

Blair spent much of his book discussing his perceptions of race and racial equality. He chose journalism as a profession because he was attracted to its "pursuit of balance, fairness and objectivity," which if used correctly was the "ultimate equalizer" and the best avenue for social change (p. 76). He particularly used this in his coverage of the Washington D.C. sniper case. In a discussion on slavery Blair wrote:

> In my worldview, it was often difficult to disassociate a person's hopes and dreams, and their failings and judgments, from their backgrounds. I also believed strongly that it was impossible to divorce the impact of the oppressors' actions on the oppressed (p. 251).

Blair felt that John Muhammed and Lee Malvo, the two men arrested for the killings, were being denied due process under the law. Despite the fact that six of the ten shootings committed by the two had occurred in Maryland, the suspects would be prosecuted in Virginia, where only two of the murders happened. Blair maintains that this was because Virginia's death penalty laws were much stronger than those in Maryland. Muhammed and Malvo would be more likely to receive the death penalty and swift execution in Virginia, a state which also had no provisions for executing minors. Malvo was 17 years old at the time of his arrest.

In an October 30, 2002 front-page story in the *Times*, Blair wrote that state and federal law-enforcement officials in Maryland were interrogating Muhammed, "who was explaining the roots of his anger," when the U.S. Justice Department interrupted the interrogation to order the suspect be turned over to the United States Attorney for Maryland to face federal weapons charges (Appendix, p. A1).

However, in the May 11 story, when the *Times* corrected Blair's mistakes, they disputed that officials told them that Muhammed was not discussing the "roots of his anger" but that the conversation focused on "minor matters, like getting a shower and a meal" (p. A25).

Blair particularly felt that Malvo was being "railroaded without much thought to the culpability of others, like his parents and guardians" (p. 250). He wondered about the boy's personal rage and the, "cumulative effects of abuse, abandonment and race" (p. 251). In a front-page *Times* story on February 10, 2003, Blair interviewed victims of the sniper killings and infused his beliefs as quotes and inferences in the story.

With Kellie Adams, one of the victims of a liquor store shooting in Alabama, Blair wrote that the victim had been corresponding with the woman who cared for Muhammed after his mother died when he was 3:

> "There are similarities in our backgrounds, and I see bits and pieces of myself in even them," she said of Mr. Muhammad and Mr. Malvo, who was abandoned by his father at a young age (Appendix, p. A1).

For the May 11 examination of Blair's errors, Adams told the *Times* that she never made this comment to Blair and did not compare her background to the backgrounds of the two suspects.

In Chapter 27 of his book, Blair described in detail a visit to the New York Eastern Correctional Facility on Christmas Day in 2002. He and his girlfriend visit with Daniel, a black prisoner, who was convicted of murdering a man while committing a robbery. At the time of the shooting and then 17-years-old, Daniel had claimed that he needed the money to pay for college. In an earlier chapter in his book, Blair discusses his decision not to finish college at Maryland and instead take the job offer from the *Times*. He would say to colleagues at the paper, "I'm just another black man without a college degree" (p. 95).

In Chapter 27 of the book, Blair also recounted his family's involvement with the prison system. Blair wrote about a cousin who was on death row in Illinois, and about his father who had "written to inmates and researched Christian prison ministries while I was a teenager" (p. 262). He added that 15 of his relatives were in prison on everything from drug charges to murder.

Blair may have incorporated these thoughts into the February 10 story on victims. In that story he wrote about an interview with James Ballinger III, whose wife Hong Im was killed during a robbery in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in September 2002. Malvo and Muhammed were being tied to this robbery and a number of others prior to the shootings in Washington D.C. In the story Blair wrote:

> A couple of years ago, Mr. Ballenger retired and began volunteering at a local prison. His wife took a job selling beauty supplies. They spent a lot of time at church and raising their sons, James IV, 20, and Joshua, 11. Since Ms. Ballenger was killed in a robbery outside the beauty store on Sept. 23, Mr. Ballenger has taken a job in a doughnut shop to help pay the bills, and has relied heavily on the donations of others. Much of his time has been spent helping the boys cope. James IV has left college, but plans to return in the spring. Mr. Ballenger has also spent much time taking a message of forgiveness to church pulpits and television programs across Louisiana, arguing ferociously that Mr. Muhammad and Mr. Malvo should not be executed (Appendix, p. A16).

But when the record was corrected on May 11, the *Times* wrote that there were factual errors with the story:

> James Ballenger III said in a telephone interview that he is not a part-time preacher or any kind of preacher. Mr. Ballenger did not volunteer at the local prison; it was a paid position. He had not "relied heavily" on donations from others; he said he accepts them but does not rely on them. The article said that he took "a message of forgiveness to church pulpits and television programs across Louisiana, arguing ferociously that Mr. Muhammad and Mr. Malvo should not be executed," referring to the two suspects arrested in the sniper shootings. Mr. Ballenger said he never addressed this topic from a church pulpit and that he made his points "peacefully." Mr. Ballenger said that he discussed the fact that his son, James IV, had dropped out of college on the condition that it not be published, and that he was upset to see it in the paper (p. A27).

Blair wrote that, despite his problems with alcohol abuse and depression, he was still able to ascertain what editors considered newsworthy and that is why he was one of the first to jump on the Jessica Lynch story. Blair wrote:

> It was not that Lynch had suffered any more than other captives in Iraq. It was simply because stories about her, because she fit a certain profile – would get good play in newspapers and television stations. The fright caused by an All-American-looking woman in the hands of evil Iraqi captors who might harm her, even sexually assault her, played strongly into racial and gender stereotypes (p. 289).

Blair added that this is why the "media beast" preferred to focus on Lynch rather than Shoshanna Johnson, the black woman who was also taken captive in Iraq (p. 289).

In his first story on Lynch, written for the March 27 edition of the *Times*, Blair wrote about the captured private's family watching television and hearing about the ambush of an Army maintenance crew. He wrote:

> Then they heard that an Arab television network was broadcasting images of soldiers who had been captured. Then they heard that one of the prisoners of war was a woman. They found some relief, though, when they heard that the woman was black (Appendix, p. B13).

When the *Times* corrected the record on this story it revealed that "several people at the Lynch home - including photographers and other reporters – said they had not met or seen Mr. Blair there" (p. A26). Blair had never met or spoken with the Lynch family, so how would he know that they were relieved when they found out the other captured woman was black? Two days earlier, in a story by Jim Yardley, the *Times* identified by name all of the prisoners of war, including Johnson (March 25, 2003, p. A1). Why didn't Blair use Johnson's name in his March 27 story and how did he reach the conclusion that the Lynchs were relieved it was a "black woman"?

Blair also believed that his drug and alcohol abuse had little affect on his personal habits or his ability to do his job. In October of 2001, he wrote about a story that resulted in the *Times* printing a 123-word correction saying that it "marked the first time that alcohol and drugs really got in the way of my writing" (p. 198). He also credited cocaine

for helping him in his reporting, saying that, "It gave me the energy and focus that Ritalin, which I took as a child, could not" (p. 199).

However, as early as November 1999, the *Times* said that Blair was repeatedly warned that he was too sloppy, "in his reporting and in his appearance" (p. A24). One editor even suggested to Blair that he find a better way to "nourish himself" rather than relying on scotch, cigarettes and vending machine food (p. A24). Even at this point, which was only six months after he returned to the *Times* as a reporter in training, Blair's writing and correction rate was of concern to his editors.

According to Blair, alcohol and drug use was common among employees of the newspaper, as was the practice of abusing rules regarding use of company cars and filing false travel expenses. "Everyone seemed to know about my drinking, even the metro desk administrator who was used to signing off on the frequent multi-hundred-dollar tabs from Robert Emmett's bar" (p. 136).

Blair also said that taking a company car for personal use was no secret with newsroom administrators and that he took the car "often drunk, usually high" just to make his commute to work more comfortable, as opposed to riding the subway (p. 142).

Blair also admitted to using his expense account for personal dinners and even said that he could have written off a three-week trip to Spain with his girlfriend, "on the company dime and no one would have noticed, let alone said anything if they did" (pp. 276-277).

Blair also submitted expense receipts for places he never reported from and in one case from a dinner with a law enforcement official who later said he had never met Blair

and was in Florida on that date. The May 11 *Times* article admitted that checking Blair's expense records would have set off alarms that he was lying about his whereabouts.

> Close scrutiny of his travel expenses would have revealed other signs that Mr. Blair was not where his editors thought he was, and, even more alarming, that he was perhaps concocting law-enforcement sources. But at the time, his expense records were being quickly reviewed by an administrative assistant; editors did not examine them (p. A25).

Research Question 4. How does Blair view the concept of media credibility in relation to his role as a reporter for the *Times*?

The *Times'* story on Blair said that his "deceptive techniques flouted long-followed" rules at the paper (p. A24). The article briefly covered several of these rules, which are a part of the newspaper's "integrity" guidelines:

> When we use facts gathered by any other organization, we attribute them; writers at the *Times* are their own principal fact checkers and often their only ones; we should distinguish in print between personal interviews and telephone or e-mail interviews (p. A24).

The article went on to point out that a dateline on a story is only used when the reporter has visited the place.

In the 15 articles that Blair wrote or contributed to on the Iraq War, all but one had corrections which specifically relate to these integrity guidelines. The article having no corrections is an April 5, 2003 story written by Todd Purdum with contributions from four other reporters and Blair. The majority of the story deals with a nighttime ambush in Iraq so it is difficult to surmise what Blair contributed, if anything to this article.

Blair's book does provide an idea about how he interprets his credibility as a reporter in relation to the *Times'* integrity guidelines. For example, an April 15, 2003 story Blair co-wrote with Michael Wilson deals with a North Carolina couple separated by war. Wilson covers the husband's perspective in Iraq and Blair writes about the wife back home.

The *Times* May 11 correction on this story said:

> The article's dateline – the label of the place and, ordinarily, the time where the reporting was done - was given as Jacksonville, N.C., April 11. According to *The New York Times* Manual of Style and Usage, "Because believable firsthand news gathering is the *Times's* hallmark, datelines must scrupulously specify when and where the reporting took place." But in a telephone interview, Sarai Thompson, whose husband is a marine stationed in Iraq, said she had been interviewed by Mr. Blair by phone, not in person (p. A26).

Despite the fact that Blair did not even go to North Carolina, he still saw this story as a good story, "even if I was not showing up on location" (p. 290). Blair wrote:

> Rich detail was accumulated and my editors knew that I was collecting most of it from New York, but planned to just fly in to get the dateline in North Carolina. There was just no flying in (p. 290).

He added:

> The story landed on the front page, along with others that had fabrications. It was the solid piece that slipped through the cracks of deception (p. 290).

Blair has a loose interpretation of what is ethical to use from other news reports without giving credit and what is actually plagiarism, and the use of creative writing as opposed to fabricating details.

In an April 19, 2003 story on a wounded Marine, the *Times* correction read:

> Of the six wounded soldiers quoted in what Mr. Blair described as "long conversations" at the medical center, one, Lance Cpl. James Klingel, said he was interviewed by Mr. Blair, but by telephone from his home in Lodi, Ohio, after he had been discharged. Telephone records described by *Times* officials suggest that Mr. Blair made this 27-minute call from his desk at the paper in New York on April 17. Three men - Staff Sgt. Eric Alva, Lt. Col. Jonathan Ewers and Hospitalman Brian Alaniz - said they had not spoken to Mr. Blair, Commander Rostad said. (Two others could not be reached.) (p. A26)

When Blair wrote about this story in his book he saw it this way:

> I cobbled together wire reports with a fresh interview with a corporal whose arm was in a sling to put together a front-page story on those wounded in battle. I also relied on White House pool reporters' notes from that day that President Bush went to the medical center to visit the wounded (p. 291).

The *Times* article also questioned Blair's facts in the story:

> In a telephone interview, Corporal Klingel said that Mr. Blair had manufactured or embellished parts of the article. He said that, for example, the following quotation attributed to him by Mr. Blair had been made up: "I am still looking over my shoulder. I am sure I will be standing on the back porch and worry about who might come shooting at me out of the bush." In addition, he denied he had told Mr. Blair he was having nightmares about his tour in Iraq. And he said he had not spoken to Mr. Blair about "his mind wandering from images of his

> girlfriend back in Ohio to the sight of an exploding fireball to the sounds of twisting metal," as Mr. Blair described (p. A26).

Blair's interpretation of this said:

> I embellished a bit with the line about the images of his girlfriend back home, although he did say he missed her and he did say that he had horrid images of exploding fireballs and twisting metal. The thoughts happened separately, but I brought them together for the lead (p. 291).

Blair said that the information on Staff. Sgt. Alva and Hospitalman Alaniz were provided by Corporal Klingel and that he "cobbled together what they had said to news services in the White House pool report," from President Bush's visit to the hospital (p. 292). In an attempt to justify how he obtained his information, Blair went on to explain that much of the reporting on the White House is done through pool reports, which usually involves only about two or three reporters following the President at an event. Blair said these reporters then write up the story and all other correspondents covering the President are "allowed to lift from it freely" (p. 293).

Blair never actually admits to plagiarism, despite the fact that the *Times* article indicated that in his coverage of the Iraq War Blair plagiarized from a number of news organizations including the *Associated Press*, *The Washington Post, The Daily News in New York, The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and the *San Antonio Express-News*. Even with the story that was Blair's last at the *Times*' and the one that resulted in his resignation, Blair still does not admit to plagiarizing. In this story about a missing Army sergeant

from Texas, he wrote that because his notes and laptop computer are now at the *Times* it is difficult to say as he puts it "when I picked up what from whom" and that he "lifted liberally from an *Associated Press* story and another one published in the *San Antonio Express-News*" (p. 295).

Despite Blair's criticisms of the *Times*' integrity and honesty, he did not seem to have a problem with his own integrity when he wrote about his relationship with a public relations professional from an Internet company. Before having sex with the woman one night, she asked Blair if the company would be mentioned in his story:

> When it came to ethics it was hard to know where to draw the line, but there is no doubt that the night had an impact. The Internet company received several mentions in my business stories for the *Times* (p. 138).

Following the September 11 terrorist attacks, Blair admitted to lying about a cousin who was killed in the Pentagon, so he would be excused from writing the *Times'* "Portraits of Grief," which would eventually earn the newspaper a Pulitzer Prize. Blair justified his decision to lie based on his own morals saying "It frustrated me that talk had already begun on the metro desk in early October, not a month after the attacks, about how we were going to win a Pulitzer for them" (p. 179).

However, just two pages later, Blair justified risking the credibility of the *Times* when he invented the last name of a source in order to get a story published with his byline. He wrote:

> The pressure had become intense to even get your name in the paper. While it was not the most important thing occurring, in retrospect, it was clear that many

reporters needed some validation, their names appearing on a piece of paper as testament to history that they were there, that they saw these devastating and painful things. Our editors did not seem to understand this (p. 181).

Chapter V

Discussion

Conclusions

Whether the use of anonymous sources has become an overused journalistic tool leading to abuses and fabrications in news reports has been debated in the last several years. Following *The New York Times* admission that Jayson Blair took advantage of this and other means to falsify news reports, it was believed that the situation could have been prevented if the *Times* had had a written policy in place. But would this have made a difference in the case of Blair?

Lack of questions by editors on the sources of information, or the motives of sources for giving you the scoop makes it easier to fabricate information. Particularly for an individual like Blair who, even though he received accolades from editors for turning out an enormous number of stories, received more than one reprimand for the high number of errors.

More so, it may be Blair's interpretation of what was ethical and what was unethical in relation to his own agenda. Carter's Paradigm of Affective Relations says things that are intrinsically valuable, in Blair's case the importance of journalism as the "ultimate equalizer," are salient and therefore their value remains high across all situations. It is this perception that allows Blair to defend his actions of concocting sources, making up quotes and plagiarizing. Because he appears to believe that the *Times* did not live up to his version of journalism as the "ultimate equalizer," he reasoned that it was okay to adopt a number of deceptive practices.

One example was using the "no-touch" method of getting a dateline for a story. Blair believed the newspaper was dishonest about the "toe-touch" method. He wrote that the *Times* was also dishonest about how many reporters actually worked on a story and did not receive credit in the form of a byline -- a practice he said was done purely for the sake of marketing. Later, Blair would reason that it was alright to make up the last name of a source because he really wanted a story with his byline to appear in the newspaper.

While covering the Washington D.C., sniper case, Blair used a large number of anonymous sources to write his stories. Blair wrote that law enforcement officials had their own agenda when requiring anonymity, and that much of the time it was simply to be able to tell their grandchildren and friends that they were a part of the story. Blair reported that it was difficult not to exploit this.

Blair also seemed to use anonymous sources to frame a story to be in line with his perspective on race and the criminal justice system. He believed that Muhammed and Malvo were being denied due process, so through the use of an anonymous source he wrote that Muhammed was discussing the "roots of his anger" when his interrogation was interrupted by federal officials.

In both of these areas, agenda setting and framing, it would have been beneficial for Blair's editors to know who the source was to determine the validity of the information. This could have been an additional check on Blair's work, because with much of what he wrote the issue was not whether he used named or unnamed sources, but whether he had accurate information. Instead, Jim Roberts, the national editor, said he had a "general discussion" with Blair regarding his sources for the story.

It is difficult to determine from the Blair scandal if using anonymous sources had any effect on the public's perception of media credibility. Because in this case, not only did Blair make up anonymous sources, he also made up quotes and information from named sources. Besides, the *Times* never really dealt with Blair's use of anonymous sources because they had no policy in place. They themselves had no standard about what was acceptable or unacceptable so it would be difficult to focus too much attention in this area.

Equally important is a newsroom culture that Blair maintained did not value nor was committed to diversity. He continually saw the newspaper's views on diversity as the root of all his problems rather than such tangible aspects as plagiarizing from other news services, the high number of mistakes he was making in his stories, taking the company car for personal use, or charging personal dinners and drinking parties to his expense account. Blair did, however, have a point when he talked about how editors determine the importance of a story and the depth of coverage of a story based on racial and socio-economic information.

The *Times'* policy on diversity and promoting minorities at the newspaper did attempt to deal with these issues. However, it may have also served to cause morale problems. It would appear that while the top managers and recruiters approved of the policy, the editors charged with enforcing it did not buy into it. This may have hindered both groups in dealing truthfully and responsibly with concerns about Blair.

The newsroom culture at the *Times* contributed not to Blair's decision to deceive his editors and readers, but to dealing with the problem from the start. At issue was the "top-down" style of management that either did not know or ignored claims about Blair's

problems. This "top-down" style of management also contributed to faculty at the University of Maryland ignoring student concerns regarding Blair's high rate of corrections on the college newspaper and his erratic behavior.

The process of producing the paper was another contributing factor. Raines' "flood the zone" theory, which stressed getting it first over getting it right, may have promoted a mindset of cutting corners when it came to fact checking. This along with the move to more creative writing may also have been a factor. Particularly in the case of Blair who liked to "embellish" when he wrote. It is difficult to tell if the "toe-touch" dateline reporting was a reality at the *Times*, or if this is Blair's personal interpretation of the newspaper's dateline policy.

While Raines seemed to be moving the newspaper to one where the content featured more elements of celebrity culture rather than serious issues, the culture in the newsroom also seemed to take on its own celebrity identity. Many reporters complained about Raines' "star system" that highlighted only a few writers including some, such as Blair, who did not have the skills but whose way of thinking on the issues was more in line with the new executive editor's.

While the *Times* insists that one of the reasons Blair got away with his deception was because subjects of his stories did not call to complain, they are also responsible for not having a mechanism in place, such as an ombudsman, that would deal independently with readers' complaints.

Blair also was unrealistic about what effect alcohol and drugs had on his ability to perform his job. He believes that most of the time it was a positive aid in his ability to

report and write, despite the fact that the *Times* had problems with his work almost from day one.

Blair said that drugs and alcohol were a way of life at the *Times* and claimed the organization was well aware of the amount of drugs and alcohol used by staffers. Blair said that not only did *Times* management know about it, it sanctioned the use of alcohol and drugs, and said the company paid a large bar bill he submitted for reimbursement. The *Times* does have an employee assistance program for alcohol and drugs, which Blair took advantage of, but it is difficult to know how the newspaper treats employees who have used the program and whether or not they support them when they return to work.

Future Study

This study indicates that it would be valuable for future research in the area of the misuse of anonymous sources to focus on the culture of a news organization and how ethics influence the process by which the newspaper is produced. Because journalists tend to dislike scrutiny, observational study of newsrooms has been limited (Gans, 1979: Graber, 2002).

A newspaper may have ethical guidelines but how are these applied to putting the newspaper together? For example, the *Times* had integrity guidelines, but these didn't influence Blair's ethical decision making. How are ethics applied then to the process of creative writing over factual writing, the use of datelines, and how many people actually report on a story and how many are given credit for contributing to the article?

Future study should also include how a celebrity culture has influenced the process of producing a newspaper. This celebrity culture or emphasis on entertainment may help

explain media behavior (Postman, 1985). Raines had moved the *Times'* coverage to lighter news for the front page of the newspaper in order to make it more readable and attract a younger audience. The emphasis on celebrity had made its way into the newsroom, as well. Has the need for winning Pulitzer Prizes and receiving book deals become the focus of mainstream journalism? Blair was working on a book contract to write about the Washington D.C. snipers while he was covering the story for the *Times*.

And what about the issue of race in a newsroom? As a progressive Southerner, Raines' strong views on race and equality may have clouded his judgment in dealing with Blair, who held similarly strong beliefs. As a result, Raines either ignored, or did not want to hear, about problems from editors and managers who dealt with Blair on a daily basis.

Fifteen years after Janet Cooke resigned from *The Washington Post* for fabricating a story about an 8-year-old heroin addict, Ben Bradlee wrote about the event in his autobiography *A Good Life* (1995). Bradlee, who was executive editor at the time, wrote about what led to the scandal that disgraced the newspaper and forced Cooke to give back the Pulitzer Prize she had been awarded in 1981. It is interesting that much of what happened to the *Post* in 1981 is similar to what led to problems at the *Times* in 2003.

Bradlee wrote that the *Post* was also trying to diversify its newsroom with the addition of more ethnic minorities and women. Enter Cooke, who despite the fact that she was young and inexperienced, 24-years-old when she was hired at the *Post*, could, as Bradlee put it, "write like a dream; had top-drawer college credentials; and she was black" (p. 439). Bradlee said that editors described Cooke as being "consumed by blind and raw ambition, but talented" and that she had 52 bylines within the first eight months after

arriving at the *Post* (p. 440). And like Blair, there was a reporter at the *Post* who questioned Cooke's story but whose concerns were written off as jealousy. Editors who had concerns also kept silent.

Bradlee wrote that *Post* ombudsman William Green, charged that Cooke's story made it into the newspaper because of the lack of "quality control" or "editing" (p.439). Bradlee agreed and said "beware the culture that allows unknown sources to be accepted too easily," and that it was important to "encourage people to express their reservations about someone else's story"(p. 448). He also acknowledged the *Post's* communication problems among staff and managers saying "we share information down, better than we share it up" (p. 449).

Shortly after the Blair scandal, the *Times* appointed an independent committee to examine the *Times'* newsroom practices. Headed by Alan Siegal, the committee released its report on July 28, 2003 and made it available to the public on *The New York Times* Company Web site. The following were the committee's recommendations in the areas studied by this researcher:

> Rationalizing our byline and dateline policies, to disclose clearly to readers who is responsible for an article, and from what location.
>
> Assuring that each desk has a system for tracking errors and monitoring the performance of those who make them.
>
> Reviewing and revising existing guidelines for the use of anonymous sources.

> Improving the accessibility of editors and enhancing the internal exchange of information within the staff (p. 4).

While these guidelines were accepted in principle by the *Times*, it remains to be seen if the incident with Jayson Blair will bring about any significant and long-term changes at the *Times*.

Appendix

1. Detective Says Sniper Suspect Was Interrogated After He Requested Lawyer, *The New York Times*, April 29, 2003 Tuesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 22, 768 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., April 28

2. Aftereffects: The Missing; Family Waits, Now Alone, for a Missing Soldier, *The New York Times*, April 26, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition -Final, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1343 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, LOS FRESNOS, Tex., April 25

3. A NATION AT WAR: VETERANS; In Military Wards, Questions and Fears From the Wounded, *The New York Times*, April 19, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1576 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, BETHESDA, Md., April 18

4. A NATION AT WAR: THE SPOUSES; A Couple Separated by War While United in Their Fears, *The New York Times*, April 15, 2003 Tuesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1659 words, By JAYSON BLAIR with MICHAEL WILSON, JACKSONVILLE, N.C., April 11

5. A NATION AT WAR: RECUPERATION; Former P.O.W. Returns Home For Treatment at Army Hospital, *The New York Times*, April 13, 2003 Sunday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 13, 463 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, April 12

6. Lawyers for Sniper Suspect Raise Issue of Chemical Exposure, *The New York Times*, April 12, 2003 Saturday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 7, 460 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

7. Report Describes Sniper Suspect's Defiance Under Questioning, *The New York Times*, April 7, 2003 Monday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 16, 511 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

8. A NATION AT WAR: THE FAMILIES; For One Pastor, the War Hits Home, *The New York Times*, April 7, 2003 Monday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1033 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, CLEVELAND, April 6

9. A NATION AT WAR: THE RESCUE; Family Begins Trip to Rejoin Freed Soldier, *The New York Times*, April 6, 2003 Sunday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 6; National Desk; Pg. 6, 343 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, CHARLESTON, W.Va., April 5

10. A NATION AT WAR: THE RESCUE; Gifts and Offers for Book Deals Arrive at Rescued Private's House as She Has Surgery, *The New York Times*, April 5, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 6, 673 words, By JAYSON BLAIR with MARK LANDLER, PALESTINE, W.Va., April 4

11. Tapes Hint at Possible Flaws In Sniper Suspect Confession, *The New York Times*, April 5, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 8, 1086 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., April 4

12. A NATION AT WAR: THE ATTACK; Nighttime Ambush in Iraqi City: An Episode in a Drawn-Out Battle, *The New York Times*, April 5, 2003 Saturday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1, 1914 words, By TODD S. PURDUM; Reporting for this article was contributed by Michael Wilson and Dexter Filkins in Nasiriya, Iraq; Mark Landler in Landstuhl, Germany; Jayson Blair in Palestine, W.Va.; and Thom Shanker in Washington.

13. A NATION AT WAR: THE RESCUE; Freed Soldier Is in Better Condition Than First Thought, Father Says, *The New York Times*, April 4, 2003 Friday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 10, 903 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, PALESTINE, W.Va., April 3

14. A NATION AT WAR: THE HOMETOWN; Rescue in Iraq and a 'Big Stir' in West Virginia, *The New York Times*, April 3, 2003 Thursday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1724 words, By DOUGLAS JEHL and JAYSON BLAIR, PALESTINE, W.Va., April 2

15. A NATION AT WAR: THE MORTUARY; The Last Stop on the Journey Home, *The New York Times*, April 1, 2003 Tuesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 12, 894 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, DOVER, Del., March 31

16. A NATION AT WAR: THE CASUALTIES; For Families of the Dead, A Fateful Knock on the Door, *The New York Times*, March 31, 2003 Monday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 13, 1232 words, By JAYSON BLAIR with MONICA DAVEY

17. A NATION AT WAR: MILITARY FAMILIES; Relatives of Missing Soldiers Dread Hearing Worse News, *The New York Times*, March 27, 2003 Thursday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 2; National Desk; Pg. 13, 1420

words, By JAYSON BLAIR, PALESTINE, W.Va., March 26

18. A NATION AT WAR: FAMILIES; Watching, and Praying, As a Son's Fate Unfolds, *The New York Times*, March 25, 2003 Tuesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1611 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, HUNT VALLEY, Md., March 24

19. Chief in Sniper Case Considers a Job Change, *The New York Times*, March 22, 2003 Saturday Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 6, 945 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, GAITHERSBURG, Md., March 21

20. Motion Contends Sniper Defendant Killed 2, *The New York Times*, March 22, 2003 Saturday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 6, 375 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

21. A NATION AT WAR: A TOUGH DUTY; Bearing the Worst News, Then Helping the Healing, *The New York Times*, March 22, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section B; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 7, 669 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, NORFOLK, Va., March 21

22. Police Chief In Sniper Hunt May Not Profit From Memoir, *The New York Times*, March 21, 2003 Friday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 12, 414 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, March 20

23. Lawyers Plan Jury Challenge In Sniper Case, *The New York Times*, March 13, 2003 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 25, 324 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

24. Sniper Suspect Is Disciplined for Cell Graffiti, *The New York Times*, March 8, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 15, 443 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., March 7

25. Judge in Sniper Case Bars Cameras From Trial, *The New York Times*, March 4, 2003 Tuesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 22, 523 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., March 3

26. Making Sniper Suspect Talk Puts Detective in Spotlight, *The New York Times*, March 3, 2003 Monday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 15, 849 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., March 1

27. Sniper Case Defense Lawyers Seek Voiding of a Confession, *The New York Times*, February 27, 2003 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 24, 752 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

28. Peace and Answers Eluding Victims of the Sniper Attacks, *The New York Times*,

February 10, 2003 Monday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1696 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Feb. 8

29. Gun Tests Said to Bolster Sniper Case Against Two, *The New York Times*, January 25, 2003 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 13, 430 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Jan. 24

30. Virginia Indicts Young Sniper Suspect on Murder Charges, *The New York Times*, January 22, 2003 Wednesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 12, 649 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

31. In Absence of Parents, A Voice for the Accused, *The New York Times*, January 19, 2003 Sunday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section 1; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 16, 1156 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Jan. 18

32. Like Sniper Case, Hearing for Youth Is Out of the Ordinary, *The New York Times*, January 18, 2003 Saturday Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 11, 1021 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Jan. 17

33. Teenager Held in Sniper Case Will Be Tried as Adult, *The New York Times*, January 16, 2003 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 18, 1154 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Jan. 15

34. Hearing Starts for Teenager in Virginia Sniper Case, *The New York Times*, January 15, 2003 Wednesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 13, 1211 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Jan. 14

35. Mother Used Sniper Suspect As Collateral, Report Says, *The New York Times*, January 7, 2003 Tuesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 15, 540 words, By JAYSON BLAIR

36. Prints Reportedly Tie Sniper Suspect to Killing, *The New York Times*, January 6, 2003 Monday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 15, 628 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Jan. 5

37. Execution Opponent Joins Sniper Case, *The New York Times*, January 2, 2003 Thursday Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 10, 793 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, LEXINGTON, Va., Dec. 31

38. Defense in Sniper Case Wins Access to Police Interviews, *The New York Times*, December 31, 2002 Tuesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 14, 871 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Dec. 30

39. Teenager's Role Tangles Case Against Older Sniper Suspect, *The New York Times*, December 22, 2002 Sunday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section 1; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1527 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, CENTREVILLE, Va., Dec. 19

40. Sniper Case Will Be First Test of Virginia Antiterrorism Law, *The New York Times*, December 17, 2002 Tuesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 22, 673 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, RICHMOND, Va., Dec. 9

41. Laura Bush Visits the Youngest Sniper Victim, *The New York Times*, December 13, 2002 Friday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 35, 364 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Dec. 12

42. Holes in System Hid Links in Sniper Attacks, *The New York Times*, November 29, 2002 Friday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 2; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1947 words, By DAVID M. HALBFINGER and JAYSON BLAIR

43. Questions Over the Reward For Tips in the Sniper Case, *The New York Times*, November 27, 2002 Wednesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 17, 584 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, ROCKVILLE, Md., Nov. 26

44. Mother of Sniper Suspect Is Ordered Back to Jamaica, *The New York Times*, November 21, 2002 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 24, 794 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Nov. 20

45. Sniper Defendant's Bid for Experts Is Rejected, *The New York Times*, November 20, 2002 Wednesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 21, 670 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Nov. 19

46. Older Sniper Suspect's Lawyers Consider a Change of Venue, *The New York Times*, November 14, 2002 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 28, 447 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, MANASSAS, Va., Nov. 13

47. Young Sniper Suspect Was Confused on Rights, Lawyers Say, *The New York Times*, November 12, 2002 Tuesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 3; National Desk; Pg. 19, 708 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, BALTIMORE, Nov. 11

48. Statements by Teenager May Muddy Sniper Case, *The New York Times*, November 11, 2002 Monday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 10, 982 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Nov. 10

49. November 3-9: NATIONAL; SNIPER SUSPECTS CHARGED, *The New York Times*, November 10, 2002 Sunday, Late Edition - Final, Section 4; Column 3; Week in

Review Desk; Pg. 2, 144 words, By Jayson Blair

50. Officials Link Most Killings To Teenager, *The New York Times*, November 10, 2002 Sunday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section 1; Column 6; National Desk; Pg. 22, 588 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Nov. 9

51. As Sniper Suspects Go to Court, State Cites New Evidence Against One, *The New York Times*, November 9, 2002 Saturday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 15, 1180 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, MANASSAS, Va., Nov. 8

52. Computer 'Diary' Cited in Sniper Case, *The New York Times*, November 8, 2002 Friday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 29, 764 words, By JAYSON BLAIR and ERIC LICHTBLAU, WASHINGTON, Nov. 7

53. ASHCROFT DECIDES VIRGINIA WILL TRY SNIPER CASES FIRST, *The New York Times*, November 8, 2002 Friday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1215 words, By ERIC LICHTBLAU and JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Nov. 7

54. Prosecutor in Virginia Files Charges in Sniper Shootings, *The New York Times*, November 7, 2002 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 24, 701 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, FAIRFAX, Va., Nov. 6

55. Defendant in Sniper Case Ordered Held Without Bail, *The New York Times*, November 6, 2002 Wednesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 18, 755 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, GREENBELT, Md., Nov. 5

56. Young Sniping Suspect Ordered Held Till Trial, *The New York Times*, November 5, 2002 Tuesday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 16, 585 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, WASHINGTON, Nov. 4

57. RETRACING A TRAIL: THE SUSPECTS; The Mentor and the Disciple: How Sniper Suspects Bonded, *The New York Times*, November 3, 2002 Sunday, Late Edition - Final, Section 1; Column 2; National Desk; Pg. 1, 3707 words, This article was reported and written by Dean E. Murphy, David Gonzalez and Jeffrey Gettleman; Jayson Blair, Sarah Kershaw, Jim Yardley, Al Baker, Charlie LeDuff, Nick Madigan and Jo Thomas contributed to this article.

58. Sniper Suspects Linked To Yet Another Shooting, *The New York Times*, November 2, 2002 Saturday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 5; National Desk; Pg. 10, 862 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, SILVER SPRING, Md., Nov. 1

59. Prosecutor Says U.S. Involvement Did Not Block Sniper Confession, *The New York Times*, October 31, 2002 Thursday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 20, 717 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, ROCKVILLE, Md., Oct. 30

60. RETRACING A TRAIL: THE INVESTIGATION; U.S. SNIPER CASE SEEN AS A BARRIER TO A CONFESSION, *The New York Times*, October 30, 2002 Wednesday, Correction Appended, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1300 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, ROCKVILLE, Md., Oct. 29

61. RETRACING A TRAIL: THE OVERVIEW; SLAYING OF WOMAN IN SNIPER ATTACKS LAID TO TEENAGER, *The New York Times*, October 28, 2002 Monday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 1, 1479 words, By JAYSON BLAIR with ERIC LICHTBLAU, VIENNA, Va., Oct. 27

62. RETRACING A TRAIL: A MEMORIAL; Drivers Attend a Fallen Colleague's Funeral to Pay Respects and to Move On, *The New York Times*, October 27, 2002 Sunday, Late Edition - Final, Section 1; Column 4; National Desk; Pg. 37, 650 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, SILVER SPRING, Md., Oct. 26

63. Retracking a Trail: Checkpoints; The 2 Suspects Were Stopped By the Police Several *Times*, *The New York Times*, October 26, 2002 Saturday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 6; National Desk; Pg. 13, 753 words, By JAYSON BLAIR with AL BAKER, BALTIMORE, Oct. 25

64. THE HUNT FOR A SNIPER: THE POLICE CHIEF; After Three Weeks of Tension, Face of Inquiry Wears a Smile, *The New York Times*, October 25, 2002 Friday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 31, 889 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, ROCKVILLE, Md., Oct. 24

65. THE HUNT FOR A SNIPER: THE ARREST SITE; A Moment of Happy Fame for a Town, *The New York Times*, October 25, 2002 Friday, Late Edition - Final, Section A; Column 1; National Desk; Pg. 26, 513 words, By JAYSON BLAIR, MYERSVILLE, Md., Oct. 24

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