

Among the Troops: Seeing the Iraq War Through Three Journalistic Vantage Points

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During Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Pentagon introduced a program “embedding” journalists in military units. Embedded reporters have been widely criticized for allegedly failing to adequately cover effects of the war on Iraqi civilians, while over-emphasizing the personal lives of troops. Proponents of the embedding program argue that the program provides journalists with a detailed understanding of military culture and life on the frontline. In addition to the embedded reporters, some journalists were stationed in Baghdad and others were independent and free to roam. I argue that these three journalistic vantage points channeled reporters toward particular news content, while limiting their access to others. I hypothesize that while embedded reporters effectively presented the military experience of the war and the Baghdad-stationed reporters successfully covered the Iraqi experience of the war, the independent reporters were able to provide the most balanced coverage of the war. I demonstrate that despite the largely one-sided story presented, articles by embedded journalists were both more prominent and more widely available than coverage from other vantage points. Due to the dominance of embedded reporting, I conclude by noting that the majority of war coverage in print media heavily emphasized the soldier’s experience of the war, while downplaying the effects of the invasion on the Iraqi people. By conducting a content analysis of 742 print news articles by 156 journalists from the major combat period of the war, this study offers one of the first systematic documentations of the substantive content of Iraq war coverage. Keywords: embedding program, Iraq war, media, content analysis, journalists.

“If this had been a war that had only been covered by embedded reporters . . . they would have only gotten a part of the story.”

Sam Howe Verhovek, *Los Angeles Times* (Shafer 2003)

On March 19, 2003, journalists wearing Army-issue desert camouflage crowded around a television screen in a mess tent in Kuwait, anxiously awaiting a speech by President George W. Bush declaring the beginning of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. They stood in the midst of the troops, many as young as 18 and 19 years old, who would be their companions and protectors as they swept across the Iraqi desert toward Baghdad. Though unarmed, these *embedded journalists*, taking part in the Pentagon’s controversial “embedding” program, would spend the next six weeks wearing chemical suits, sweating in six-man tanks, and taking cover from enemy fire as part of an invading force.

In Baghdad, their colleagues already knew the war had begun. Bunkered down in the Palestine and Sheraton hotels, they watched as the U.S. “shock and awe” bombing raid wrought death and destruction on the city center. These journalists stationed in Baghdad, many of whom had spent several months as hotel residents, were already accustomed to their beat, interviewing Iraqi civilians and sitting through press conferences with ministry officials. Yet, over the next several weeks, *Baghdad-stationed journalists* would bear witness to death and dying in the city that startled even seasoned war reporters.

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Months earlier, several journalists had checked out of their Baghdad hotels and traveled through Iran or Turkey into Iraqi Kurdistan. As the war began, these *independent journalists* followed the slow advance of Kurdish forces and U.S. Special Forces toward Kirkuk and Mosul. Other independent reporters, after hiring a four-wheel-drive vehicle and private security team, fanned out across the country, often buckling down in potential battlegrounds like Fal-lujah and Basrah. Following the action, independent journalists mixed with U.S. forces, Arab Iraqis, and exuberant Kurdish militants.

While hundreds of other journalists covered the war from Iran, Jordan, and Qatar, these three journalistic vantage points, though occupying three quite different social locations, witnessed the battles and suffering and told the world the story of the war that we know. According to the Pentagon, the U.S. military's embedding program provided journalists with the best access and greatest opportunities to cover the war. However, critics have charged that the embedded reporters failed to provide a balanced view of the war and its consequences. So far, much of the debate over the scope of embedded and independent coverage of the war remains largely mired in anecdotal or subjective evidence.

The current study is one of the first systematic documentations of the substantive content of Iraq war coverage provided by reporters from each of these three positions. By conducting a content analysis of print news coverage from the major combat period of the war¹, I examine whether pundit criticism of embedded reporting can be empirically verified and how the arrangements made by the various reporters and their news organizations enhanced or restricted opportunities for certain types of coverage of the war. Further, I assess the extent to which embedded reporting dominated other vantage points in both availability and prominence.

Background

Drawn from news agencies and newspapers around the world, nearly 700 reporters, photographers, and cameramen have been part of the embedding program, which attached journalists to military units. Several different individuals and units within the military establishment contributed to the creation of the program, drawing, in part, on the findings of a 1984 panel on media-military relations and the Pentagon-media conference held in 1992, both of which sought to find a mutually beneficial solution to historical tensions between the military and the media over press coverage of armed conflicts (McLane 2004; U.S. Department of Defense 1984).² The embedded reporters were sent to a week-long "Embed Boot Camp"

1. The "major combat period" began on March 19, 2003 with the U.S. "shock and awe" bombing raid of Baghdad and concluded with President George W. Bush's announcement of the end of "major combat operations" aboard the *USS Abraham Lincoln* on May 1, 2003. While combat clearly did not end in 2003, as a result of President Bush's announcement, many of the arrangements for journalists were altered. Moreover, a large number of journalists, especially those working for smaller publications, returned home. For this reason, I chose to focus on the major combat period.

2. In the past 150 years, with the growth of both contemporary warfare and the modern media apparatus, the armed forces and the press have often been at odds in a battle to control information dissemination. In 1853, William Howard Russell, a special correspondent for the *London Times*, became the first journalist to provide coverage of modern warfare from the front lines. Russell's firsthand reports of the Crimean War, often critical of British military leadership, shocked both the military and the royal family. Ultimately, the *Times* agreed to a degree of self-censorship, but a precedent had been set and news consumers would continue to expect the same caliber of war coverage in future (Hannan 1998; Knightley 1975). Since then, the relationship between the media and military has undergone many transformations. In World War II, the U.S. military introduced a "relaxed form of censorship" that "from the military's perspective . . . was the golden age of war reporting" (McLane 2004:79). By contrast, the low levels of censorship, convenient transportation, and the significant technological advancement of television made coverage of the conflict in Vietnam the ideal of war coverage for the American press (Knightley 1975; Lindner 2008).

The tensions continued into recent history with the media furiously complaining about the infamous "press pools" of the first Gulf War and the military fuming about independent journalists arriving in Somalia during mid-1990s before the troops (Hannan 1998; Paul and Kim 2004). Combined with the suggestions of the Sidle Panel (U.S. Department of Defense 1984), these experiences led Pentagon officials to develop training programs and other provisions for embedding in the next major conflict. For a more complete view of military-media relations, see Hannan (1998) and Paul and Kim (2004).

aboard the *USS Iwo Jima* and taught “basic pipe patching, safety awareness, and cruise missile fundamentals” (McLane 2004:80). Brendan R. McLane (2004) reported:

five days were spent with the Marine Corps . . . where reporters were familiarized with direct fire, nuclear-biological-chemical attacks, minefields, combat first aid, tactical marches, being taken captive by the enemy, and military jargon. They slept in barracks bunks, rose at 0500, and were outfitted with military packs and Kevlar helmets” (p. 82).

Journalists lived with the troops and were protected by them while embedded in the Persian Gulf. Some slept in tanks together, shared the same supply of food and water, and formed close bonds with soldiers. Moreover, embedded reporters were forced to sign a contract agreeing to allow their reports to be reviewed by military officials prior to release, to be escorted at all times by military personnel, and to allow the government to dismiss them “at *any time* for *any reason*.”³

Before a single word was printed, many critics claimed that embedded journalists had succumbed to “Stockholm Syndrome” (Brightman 2003; Pfau et al. 2004; Ricchiardi 2003).⁴ As Tom Rosenstiel, director of Project for Excellence in Journalism told the *Los Angeles Times*: “The virtue of embedding is that it allows reporters to eat, breathe, sleep, and experience war firsthand with soldiers . . . the danger is that you’re liable to start reporting from the point of view of the troops who are protecting you . . . you owe your life to them” (Getlin 2003). Andrew Jacobs (2003) of *The New York Times* admitted that he had formed a bond with the troops and they fully expected him to “beam triumphant clips to living rooms across the country.” *The Nation* ran with the obvious joke, headlining one article about the journalists “In Bed With the Pentagon” (Brightman 2003). Marvin Kalb (2003), in *Editor & Publisher* magazine, referred to the embedded reporters as “modern-day Ernie Pyles” who are “part of the massive, White House-run strategy to sell . . . the American mission in this war.” One anonymous reporter for a major daily bluntly commented: “I’ve come to think that ‘embed’ refers to the microchip they put in the back of your neck” (Leiby 2003).

Other journalists argued that the embedded reporters simply did not have freedom to roam or adequate access to combat and its consequences. George C. Wilson (2003), embedded for *National Journal*, compared being embedded to being the second dog on a dogsled team, writing: “You see and hear a lot of the dog directly in front of you, and you see what is passing by on the left and right, but you cannot get out of the traces to explore intriguing sights you pass, without losing your spot on the moving team” (p. 1142). The “embeds” were criticized perhaps most sharply by Michael Massing (2004) who chastised reporters for failing to report Iraqi fatalities, noting:

One result [of embedding] was severely limited access . . . [journalists] could see little of what was going on inside the city, had little contact with those fighting the US, and could not determine what impact the fighting would have on local residents” (p. 9).

Pentagon officials responded to criticism by arguing that the embedding experience was, for the first time, allowing journalists to understand “military culture.” Richard Leiby (2003) of the *Washington Post*, quoted Lieutenant Colonel Rick Long, coordinator of embedded journalists for the Marines, as saying of journalists, “‘you should not walk into a situation being a skeptic’ . . . [Leiby’s paraphrase] if something bad happens, it’s the military’s job to investigate . . . not the media’s.” The military described the embedding process as a unique opportunity to

3. The complete Pentagon Embedding Agreement can be found at <http://www.defenselink.mil/NEWS/FEB2003/D20030210EMBED.PDF>. The set of ground rules referenced in the contract are available at http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=5334.

4. Stockholm Syndrome is traditionally used in the context of kidnapping and refers to the 1973 hostage incident in Stockholm, Sweden. It is a condition in which captives begin to identify with their captors. With regard to the embedding program, it has largely been used to describe the socialization of journalists into military culture, with reporters reputedly adopting the identity of one of “a band of brothers.”

Table 1 • Three Journalistic Vantage Points within Operation Iraqi Freedom

	<i>Baghdad-Stationed</i>	<i>Independent</i>	<i>Embedded</i>
Mobility	None	Moderate to high	Moderate to high
Editorial restraints	News organization	News organization	U.S. military and news organization
Contract with U.S. government	Limited	No	Yes
Primary location, early war period	Baghdad	Northern Iraq and other major cities	Southern Iraq
Primary location, late war period	Baghdad	Baghdad and other major cities	Baghdad and other major cities
Expected access: civilians	High	High	Low
Expected access: military	Low	High	High

gather detailed information about the experience of war. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Bryan Whitman told *The Nation*: “you get extremely deep, rich coverage of what’s going on in a particular unit” (Brightman 2003). In the *Los Angeles Times*, media critic David Shaw (2003) defended the program: “For now, embedding is giving us a rare window on war. The critics should stop carping.”

Reporting of the war did exist outside of the embeds. Up to 800 nonembedded journalists reported from Iraq. According to war chronicler Jon Lee Anderson (2004), U.S. and European news agencies could assign journalists to one of two alternatives to the embedding program. “One was to travel into Iraqi Kurdistan via Iran and wait there until the war began . . . [and the other choice], which was the most uncertain, was to try to stay in Baghdad” (p. 61). Anderson claimed that news agencies paid tremendous amounts in bribes to Iraqi government officials to secure visas for their Baghdad reporters. By the time the invasion began, then, three clear and distinct journalistic vantage points had emerged: Baghdad-stationed journalists, independent journalists, and the embedded journalists (see Table 1).

The independent journalists invoked the ire of the Pentagon. RAND Corporation, a former Pentagon research group, now functioning as an independent think tank, referred to the independent reporters as “cowboy” and “four-wheel-drive” journalists (Paul and Kim 2004:67).⁵ Despite being unrestricted by the military, most of these reporters, under orders from their news organizations, stayed in Northern Iraq. However, some journalists lived up to the four-wheel-drive image, traveling to cover news across the country to capture both the action and the human costs.

Because the Baghdad-stationed reporters were dependent on the U.S. military for certain support systems including transportation, health care, and supplies, even these journalists had to agree to a set of Pentagon ground rules and wear a badge that, ironically, had the word “unilateral” in red (Anderson 2004). Additionally, for the first part of the war, before most Iraqi government officials went into hiding, journalists in Baghdad were assigned official government minders (Anderson 2004; Tumber and Palmer 2004). These constraints from both sides kept Baghdad-stationed reporters away from combat and Iraqi government property and limited them to recording the persistent bombing raids, documenting the collapse of the city and the civilian casualties, and collecting interviews with civilians for human interest stories.

5. The Pentagon officially designates all nonembedded press as “unilateral” reporters. However, I distinguish between two different vantage points of nonembedded reporting. While Baghdad-stationed reporters enjoyed relative freedom, they were often trapped in a hotel and were required to submit to a military credentialing process. Truly independent reporters agreed to no terms, wore no military labels, and had no contractual restrictions.

In addition to the more colorful terms like cowboy and four-wheel-drive journalists, nonembedded reporters have also been known by the ambiguous term “independent journalists” (Paul and Kim 2004:xvi). I considered the term “roaming reporters,” but felt that what made this journalistic vantage point unique was not constant movement but the *freedom* to roam. Thus, I refer to nonembedded, noncredentialed reporters as independent.

Throughout this article, I refer to three *journalistic vantage points*. Each of these vantage points represents a different social location available to journalists during the war. Peter Berger (1963) claimed that “location in society constitutes a definition of rules which have to be obeyed” (p. 68). Social location is not only a set of rules, but also a set of expectations and relations. Whether in Iraq, the White House pressroom, or on the crime beat, a journalist’s vantage point produces a set of expectations, rules, and relations, which channel her/him toward certain opportunities for coverage, while limiting access to others. In the context of Iraq, this constellation of relationships and opportunities defined by the journalist’s social location created three distinct vantage points: embedded, Baghdad-stationed, and independent. This concept is more fully articulated below.

Previous Research

Nearly all existing research on media can be placed into one of three levels of analysis: production, content, and reception. Research on *production* varies widely, from studies of journalistic norms to an emphasis on the effects of political economy or elite opinion on journalists’ process of story construction. Scholarly work on media *content* attempts to systematically document the extent to which certain types of stories are reported or the manner in which issues are reported. Finally, research on *reception* centers on the capacity of media accounts to shape public opinion on an issue. The current study connects the first two levels of research—production and content—by suggesting that journalists with different production conditions (vantage points) produce different types of content. Based on the findings of past research on political communications, we can infer how the capacity of the government to control the process of news production and, thus, the content of war reporting might ultimately have had an important effect on the shaping of public opinion. In the following section, I first explain how existing literature on the role of news coverage in influencing public opinion can inform the current study. Next, I review past research on the content of war coverage. Finally, I explicate this study’s central concept—journalistic vantage point—drawing on previous accounts of news production.

News Coverage and Public Opinion

A substantial body of literature in communications has demonstrated the capacity of media reports to shape attitudes regarding political issues. Much of this research has focused on the dual concepts of *framing* and *agenda-setting* (for a review, see Kinder 1998). While many varied definitions of framing exist, perhaps the most frequently cited is Robert Entman’s (1993): “to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in a such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52). Or as Seow Ting Lee and Crispin C. Maslog (2005) paraphrased: “Frames package key ideas, stock phrases, and stereotypical images to bolster a particular interpretation” (p. 313).

Framing theory suggests that through numerous repetitions, the framed conceptual package becomes more readily accessible than alternative storylines. After regular exposure to the frame, media consumers come to adopt the framed storyline as their dominant way of thinking about an issue. An incredible number of studies have found support for the effect of framing in shaping attitudes on issues such as welfare (Sotirovic 2000), protest (McLeod and Detenber 1999), and higher education tuition capping (Price, Tewksbury, and Powers 1997). Shanto Iyengar (1991), for example, provided evidence for this theoretical model with his experiments on the effect of frames on attributions of blame. Research subjects exposed to individually-framed news items (rather than sociologically-framed items) were more likely to attribute blame for poverty on individual vice as opposed to larger socioeconomic conditions.

More recently, many communications scholars have come to see framing as “second-level agenda-setting” (McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver 1997; Jasperson et al. 1998; McCombs 1994; McCombs and Bell 1996). That is to say, the media exert great influence in both *what* we think about (agenda-setting), but also *how* we think about it (framing). Whereas agenda setting tells the media consumer which issues are most important, framing provides us with a narrative to conceptualize the issue.

A limited number of studies have more directly examined the effect of war coverage on attitudes regarding the military conflicts. John E. Mueller (1973), studying public opinion during the Vietnam era, found that the ultimate turn of opinion against the war was a reaction to the growing number of military fatalities—information relayed to the public by the press. As Herbert Gans (1979) wrote: “[the news media] transmit the only nonfiction that most Americans see, hear, or read” (p. 298). Michael Morgan, Justin Lewis, and Sut Jhally (1992) and Mary Beth Oliver, Marie-Louise Mares, and Joanne Cantor (1993) found strong relationships between television news viewing and support for the Persian Gulf War. Unfortunately, the cross-sectional designs of these studies did not allow the researchers to rule out selective exposure. Similarly, Martin Shaw and Roy Carr-Hill (1991), in a study of British newspaper readers, found that readers of more conservative newspapers were more supportive of the Gulf War, even controlling political orientation and demographic characteristics. However, without longitudinal data it is impossible to establish causality. Nonetheless, the general pattern of these findings, in combination with the immense amount of research demonstrating the power of media to shape political attitudes, suggest the press play an important role in influencing public opinion about war.

If, as critics claim, the embedding program was effective at leading the press corps to put forward a military-centric depiction of the Iraq War in 2003, it may have led media consumers to interpret the war primarily in terms of military successes, rather than in terms of the damage inflicted on Iraqis. Given past framing research, we would suspect that such framing would lead the public to make more favorable judgments regarding the war.

The Content of War Coverage

As Daniel C. Hallin (1997) observed, nearly all content analysis of war coverage to date has focused on three conflicts: Vietnam, the Falklands/Malvinas War, and the Persian Gulf War. Most of the works describing media coverage of conflicts prior to Vietnam are not systematic studies, but rather what Hallin calls “stories about ‘the great reporters and their times’” (p. 207). Beginning with the Vietnam era, however, researchers began to study media coverage they saw as largely supportive of military missions.

Hallin (1986), in a study of *New York Times* and television coverage of Vietnam during the late 1960s and early 1970s, found that the media were highly supportive of the war until public opinion began to shift in 1966. Others have found that the press offered a sanitized depiction of the conflict in Vietnam, rarely depicting combat, blood, or injury (Lichty 1984; Patterson 1984). Similar studies of the Falklands War (Morrison and Tumber 1988; Taylor 1991) and the Gulf War (Steele 1992; Cook 1994; Katz 1992) likewise found that the press offered largely supportive, relatively gore-free coverage, heavily reliant on official military sources.

Astonishingly and despite the controversy surrounding the embedding program, few researchers have attempted to systematically analyze the coverage of the current war in Iraq. Of the existing studies, most have focused on how the embedding program led to stark differences in the rhetorical tone of news coverage. Michael Pfau and associates (2004), for example, conducted research using embedded and nonembedded coverage from four major American newspapers written during the first five days of the war. They argue that embedded reporters produced “decontextualized” news reports, focusing on the specific military unit to which they were attached. Pfau and colleagues (2004) wrote: “What is lost in such micro coverage is the big picture . . . Embedded reporters are attached to specific units for extended periods,

literally isolated from the broader war" (p. 77). Using a variety of scales, they created three clusters of dependent variables documenting the tone, "the depiction of the trustworthiness of troops" (p. 80), and the degree of episodic coverage.⁶

Consistent with their hypotheses, Pfau and associates (2004) found that embedded coverage was significantly more positive in tone and more trusting of troops than independent coverage. Subsequently, this group of scholars found comparable results in a study of television news programs (Pfau et al. 2005). Similarly, a study of 1,820 stories on five American news networks (ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and the Fox News Channel) and Al Jazeera found that while the majority of stories on all outlets (except Fox News) were "balanced," 9 percent of embedded reporters adopted a supportive tone as opposed to only 5.6 percent of "unilateral" reporters (Aday, Livingston, and Hebert 2005).

While these findings tell us much about the consequences of embedding for journalistic objectivity, without examining the actual content of news reports it is difficult to answer the sociological question of how the various journalistic vantage points inhibited or enabled journalists' access to various types of stories. The only research to directly address the substantive content of embedded reporting was conducted by the Project for Excellence in Journalism (PEJ) (Rosenstiel 2003). Using 108 embedded reports from ten different television news programs, they directly addressed public criticism of embedding. The PEJ's report rejected the commonly held notion that embedded reports shied away from action and tended to offer "'feel good' stories about troops' morale" (Rosenstiel 2003:5). Among the results, the PEJ found that 61 percent of reports were live and unedited, 21.3 percent showed weapons fired (although none showed "human impact"), and combat was the most commonly discussed topic, covered in 41 percent of stories.

While the PEJ's research offers the strongest documentation of the substantive content of embedded coverage, it is limited primarily because the study did not include any nonembedded reporters as a comparison group. Moreover, all existing research on the embedding program has limited its analysis of alternative vantage points to a single category of nonembedded journalists. However, as I have argued, Baghdad-stationed and independent journalists represent two completely different vantage points for reporting and with different levels of access. According to most histories of the war, Baghdad journalists interacted with military units less than other independents both quantitatively and qualitatively. In neglecting this important difference, previous research has yet to fully consider how embedding compares to other vantage points.

Vantage Point

Popular media criticism has largely offered two explanations for soldier-centric coverage produced by embedded reporters. The first, the Stockholm Syndrome theory of embedding has been widely advocated by newspaper columnists, TV pundits, and psychological researchers alike (Brightman 2003; Pfau et al. 2004; Ricchiardi 2003). The alternative conception—less widely discussed, but notably highlighted by Massing (2004)—focuses on the structural constraints of embedding.

The Stockholm Syndrome theory of embedded reporting emphasizes the social psychological effects of becoming part of a military unit. More crass versions of this perspective have envisioned embedded journalists bonding with the troops, then donning war paint and transmitting glowing coverage (Ricchiardi 2003). In a more sophisticated analysis, Pfau and associates (2004) argue for the "social penetration theory" of developing interpersonal

6. Using Iyengar's (1991) ideas about framing in news coverage, Pfau and associates (2004) suggested that episodic coverage tends to focus on individual level concerns (i.e., personal troubles), while the more desirable thematic coverage examine social issues. They hypothesized that embedded reporters produce more episodic coverage than nonembedded reporters.

relationships, in which “increasing levels of self-disclosure elicit more liking” (p. 78). This affective response, they claim, leads to more favorable coverage.

Of course, this theory is not entirely outlandish. It has been widely noted in scholarly research that socialization is one of the military’s strengths. Erving Goffman (1961) identified the military as a total institution, which he defined as a place of “residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (p. xiii). As a total institution, the military not only controls all of the individual’s activities, but it also informs the construction of identity and relationships. Joseph L. Soeters (2000) noted that uniformed organizations, particularly total institutions like the U.S. military, tend toward communal culture. In such an organization, “the only thing that matters in life is the military and the values for which the military stands: the nation or constitution, the king or queen” (p. 467). Soeters claimed that new members of an organization must “become a uniformed person” through a process of “mortification” that undercuts the person’s individual civilian identity and constructs a new identity as member of the institution (p. 478).

In the case of the embedded journalists, they *literally* became uniformed people, wearing military-issue camouflage uniforms. Furthermore, most had to sacrifice personal privacy and comfort while living with military units in the desert. It can be argued that, for the journalists, the mortification process included changing and defecating in front of the troops. To rationalize this mortification and surrender to the discipline of the institution, journalists may have needed to accept the basic values of the military organization. Accordingly, in Pfau and colleagues’ (2004) account, reporters “internalize[d] the values of the military units they are embedded in” (p. 78). Moreover, in accepting their identity as a member of an organization, it is possible that they would begin to identify with the other “like-situated individuals”—the soldiers. Thus, we can see how embedded journalists, though not kidnapped, might well come to identify with soldiers much as hostages identify with their captors.

While this social psychological explanation may partially explain the power of the embedding program to shape news reports, a broader conception of the journalistic vantage point offers a more nuanced understanding. Regardless of where they are positioned—be it a hotel in Baghdad, the inside of a tank, or a newsroom in New York—the structural conditions of a reporter’s environment greatly influence the content of his or her stories. What Berger (1963) sees as a set of rules, expectations, and relations, Mark Fishman (1980) describes as “a bureaucratically constructed universe which defines the following things for [reporters] . . . their movement through a beat territory . . . their exposure to news sources . . . the meaning and relevance of what they are exposed to . . . [and] what occurrences are not worth seeing” (p. 134). In fact, in the “universe” that reporters encounter, they are constrained by traditional meaning systems, formal editorial rules, informal norms, physical access limitations, and the ideological commitments of their media outlet, among other factors. These constraints are backed by “a system of sanctions and rewards [including] employment policies, prestige endowments, and monetary compensation” (Pedelty 1995:12). I use the term *journalistic vantage point* to describe the perspective resulting from the collective constraints and sanctions of a reporter’s social location. A wide variety of journalistic vantage points exist (e.g., the mayoral beat, the sports beat, Washington correspondent, etc.) and they each channel reporters to produce different types of content. While journalists working within nearly all vantage points have some agency, some vantage points are far more limiting than others. In terms of the current study, the embedded and Baghdad-stationed vantage points were far more restrictive than being independent.

Past literature has noted several important ways in which journalists’ work is constrained. For example, a fair number of studies have documented how news-gathering routines homogenize the form and content of news products (Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Klinenberg 2005; Tuchman 1978). The news stories that journalists produce are affected by technical requirements, such as deadlines, expected word counts, as well as the availability of information.

In addition, a reporter's work is guided by the dominant ideology of the newsroom and norms of the profession. For example, the mainstream media tend to place strong emphasis on providing official sources and expert commentary over the views of political activists or local folk (Sigal 1973; Smith et al. 2001). Gaye Tuchman (1978) has shown how the division of news into "beats" fermented ideas about what is (and what is not) newsworthy. Moreover, in a capitalist news market, advertisers' interests greatly affect much of the content of news (Bagdikian [1983] 2000; Gamson et al. 1992).

In wartime, many of the same demands of the media outlet apply, but journalists' opportunities are further limited by several other conditions as past research demonstrates. In particular, Mark Pedelty (1995), in a unique ethnographic study of foreign correspondents during the conflict in El Salvador, examined how "institutional influences" of news organizations, press control by the Salvadoran military, the hierarchical nature of the press corps, reliance on "elite sources," and journalistic "myths, rituals, and behavioral norms" (p. 4) all shaped the resulting news content. In one striking example, Pedelty reprinted in full two articles by a single correspondent, one written for a U.S. newspaper and another for a European news institution. The U.S. report consisted of "a set of basic facts and elite source quotes strung together in a dispassionate and 'balanced' narrative" (p. 12). By contrast, in the European report, the author used "her own voice" and allowed for "authorial intervention" to signal disbelief in the trustworthiness of some of the sources. Pedelty concluded that the disparity can be explained largely via the objectivity norm in American journalism as well as ideological commitments of the American newspaper's editorial staff. While this example reveals the constraining power of news outlets, Pedelty also noted the military's role in shaping the vantage point of the foreign correspondents. For example, he described how "most of war correspondents' time was spent in the city attending press conferences, conducting interviews with official sources . . . [and] reconstruct[ing] battles scenes from . . . second hand sources" (p. 38). The capacity of the military and political officials to restrict reporters' access to battlefields was one of the most significant constraints of this vantage point.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, reporters from the three vantage points were constrained in similar ways. As in Pedelty's (1995) study, both Iraqi and U.S. military and political officials went to great lengths to generate favorable coverage by shaping the nature of the journalists' vantage points. The U.S. military promised embedded reporters access to troops and the frontlines in exchange for certain limitations on the reporter's freedom. Similarly, the Iraqi government provided Baghdad-stationed reporters with access to civilians provided official minders accompanied them. Independent reporters, though free from government minders and military companions, did not have as immediate access to official sources for interviews. In addition to the official rules, journalists in all three vantage points had to produce content in keeping with the expectations of their editors. Finally, each vantage point offered different opportunities for developing relationships. As several embedded reporters admitted, they formed close attachments with soldiers. Likewise, many Baghdad-stationed reporters developed bonds with Iraqi civilians. In this sense, we can conceive of the Stockholm Syndrome explanation not as a "competing" theory, but one potential shaping factor within the larger notion of journalistic vantage point.

Hypotheses

In the Iraqi conflict, the three vantage points for journalists were the result of a convergence of various constraints. At the same time as each vantage point created opportunities for particular types of coverage, it likewise limited other opportunities, channeling the reporter's coverage toward particular "beats." Just as conditions of newsrooms, such as deadline pressure and the need to create eye-catching leads, affect the news produced, each of the three vantage points had a set of conditions that channeled journalists toward reporting on certain

types of content. While certain organizational constraints and resources shaped all three vantage points, independent reporters, who experienced the least bureaucratic constraint, were also the least narrowly channeled toward particular content.

Despite the few previously mentioned attempts, the public debate over the value of embedded reporting still lacks adequate empirical grounding. To test the validity of popular criticism as well as the findings of initial research, I have distilled the basic ideas of the debate into three testable hypotheses.

Critics of the embedding system have suggested that the program gave journalists a deep understanding of the soldier's perspective of the war, but failed to capture the Iraqi experience. While the embedded system has sometimes been critiqued as providing only "feel good" coverage, previous research (Rosenstiel 2003) suggests that embedded reporters were able to provide coverage of combat. The critique of Baghdad-stationed journalists has been that they were unable to cover combat and focused exclusively on the impact of the war on Iraqis. Thus, based on popular debate as well as research on news routines, I hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Embedded reporters were more likely than Baghdad-stationed journalists to report the coalition soldier's experience of the war, using soldiers as sources and focusing on combat, soldier fatalities, military movement, and soldier human interest stories.

Hypothesis 2: Baghdad-stationed journalists were more likely than embeds to report the Iraqi civilian experience of the war, using Iraqi sources, and covering bombing, civilian fatalities, property damage, and Iraqi human interest stories.

Hypothesis 3: Independent journalists, with the freedom to roam, were more likely than embeds to cover the Iraqi experience of the war and more likely than Baghdad-stationed journalists to report the soldier's experience of the war, and, hence, to produce the most balanced reporting on the conflict.

Research Design

To investigate these claims, with the help of two research assistants, I coded 742 articles written by 156 journalists for content appropriate to evaluating the hypotheses. For several practical, theoretical, and methodological reasons, I limited the scope of the current research to English-language, print articles produced by journalists in Iraq during the major combat period. For the sake of analytic clarity, I examined only reporters on Iraqi soil during the major combat period. Because some of my primary research questions hinge on journalists' access, reporters in neighboring countries or on warships in the Gulf were not considered in the current study. Reporters stationed elsewhere in the Middle East had completely different beats than the journalists in Iraq covering the actual conflict. Likewise, because much of the content of news coverage has changed in a variety of ways during the multi-year "post-war" period, this study includes only news reports produced between March 19, 2003 and May 1, 2003.

To assemble the set of newspaper articles used in the current study, I used a variety of methods to identify all institutionally-supported embedded, Baghdad-stationed, and independent journalists covering the conflict. The original list of journalists in Iraq was drawn from an online media map developed by the Poynter Institute to track the locations of journalists during the major combat period of the war.⁷ The media map data included the names, locations, and news agencies of 452 journalists from both the electronic and print media positioned

7. The media map, which the Poynter Institute stopped updating in mid-May 2003, is available at http://www.poynter.org/content/content_view.asp?id=27071. Robin Sloan of Poynter Online graciously provided me with the original data supporting the media map.

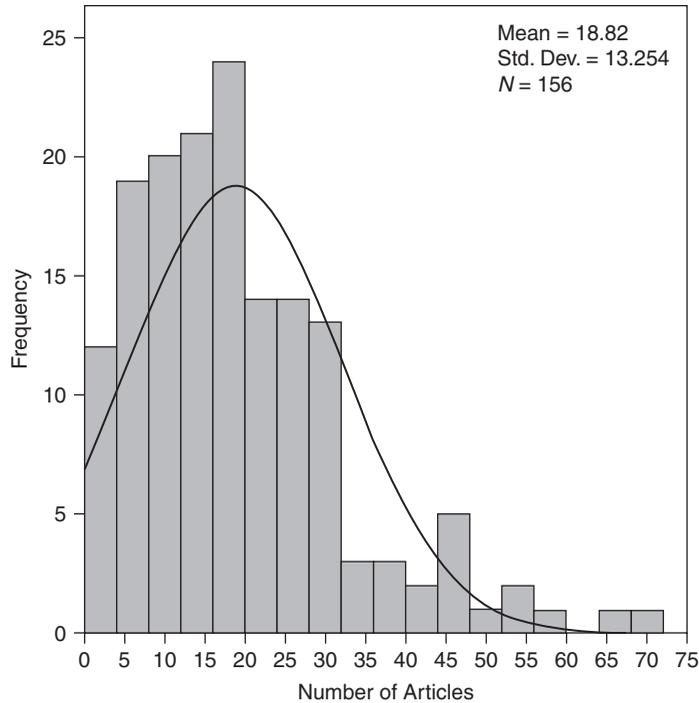


Figure 1 • Histogram of the Population of Articles by Journalists

throughout the Middle East. After excluding electronic media, non-English language media, and reporters not in Iraq, the population included 156 journalists. Using this data as a starting point, I visited news agency Web sites (many of which had free sections dedicated to their coverage of the major combat period) and searched a variety of news search services to verify and augment the list of reporters.

After verifying all relevant information about the 156 journalists in the population, I used news agency Web sites, Lexis-Nexis, America's Newspapers, Factiva, ProQuest National Newspapers, and microfilm archives to develop a complete list of articles produced by these journalists during the major combat period. The results of this search are represented in Figure 1. The number of articles ranged dramatically from two or three think pieces written by a photographer to 70 articles produced by a prolific news wire journalist. However, the number of articles by journalists was fairly normally distributed with a mean of 18.8 articles per journalist.

Using this list of articles, I randomly selected five articles from each of the 156 journalists.⁸ While sampling in this fashion guarantees that the largest number of journalists is included, it over-represents the presence of journalists with fewer articles and under-represents journalists with more articles. However, the focus of the current research is on the actual content of the reporting (i.e., the effect of embedding) rather than the way in which the media was received by the consumer. Furthermore, proportional sampling would not accurately replicate the marketplace of news, as those journalists producing the most articles do not necessarily have the highest visibility. Given the centrality of the effect of journalistic vantage point to this

8. Thirteen of these reporters wrote fewer than five articles during the period. For these journalists, all available articles were coded.

study, it was important to include as many reporters within each category as possible, allowing me to compare the effectiveness of each vantage point in presenting both the military and the Iraqi experience of the war.

A codebook was developed, the 742 selected articles were collected, and three researchers coded them over a 12-week period. As a test of intercoder reliability, 10 percent of the articles were double coded and the codebook was refined until reliability of 95 percent or higher was achieved. In analyzing the differences among the journalists' three wartime vantage points, my strategy was to examine the mean differences in the dependent variables (Tables 2 and 4) and model them in logistic regression analyses with controls (Tables 3 and 5).⁹

Dependent Variables

Five dependent variables were used to measure the degree to which the coalition soldier's perspective was represented. These dependent variables were coverage of soldier human-interest stories, combat, military movement, soldier fatalities, and use of a soldier in the field as a source. I created dummy variables to indicate any mention of each type of content in an article.

Likewise, five dependent variables were coded to measure representation of the Iraqi experience of the war. These dependent variables were coverage of Iraqi human-interest stories, bombing, property damage, civilian fatalities, and use of an Iraqi civilian as a source. These were also coded as dummy variables.¹⁰

Independent Variables

The independent variable of primary interest in this study is the journalists' wartime vantage point. In the analyses presented below, embedded reporters are the reference category, with Baghdad-stationed and independent reporters each being represented with dummy variables. Of articles in the sample, 17 percent were written by Baghdad-stationed reporters, 20 percent by independents, and 63 percent by embedded reporters (see Table A2 in the Appendix).

In each of the logistic regression analyses presented, five control variables are included. First, I controlled for three journalist characteristics: gender (male = 1), nationality, and prominence of news agency. Because the journalist's nationality was not ascertainable in all cases, I simply coded the journalist's news agency as either United States-based or foreign-based (foreign news agencies are coded as 1). As an indicator of prominence of the news agency, I created a dummy variable representing whether or not the journalist was employed by one of the five news agencies with most print reporters in the region (Reuters, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, Associated Press, and *Chicago Tribune*, respectively).

I also accounted for characteristics of the individual article by controlling for both the article's length and publication date. Naturally, longer articles were more likely to cover more types of content (e.g., long magazine articles tended to cover many more topics than brief wire stories).

9. We would expect, other things being equal, that the articles written by any individual journalist to be more similar to one another than to articles written by other journalists. To address this issue, using STATA 9.0 statistical analysis software, I clustered the data by journalist when conducting the logistic regression analyses (StatCorp 1997). This method, which adjusts the standard errors of regression coefficients, weakened only the significant relationship between gender and combat coverage from the .01 to the .05 level, showing no effect in any of the other analyses. A subsequent analysis revealed that combat coverage was more unevenly distributed among female reporters than male reporters, with some female journalists mentioning combat in nearly all articles and others never covering it at all. There was a more even distribution of combat coverage among male journalists.

10. In most cases, coding the articles was a straightforward process. For example, combat (which I defined as ground-based armed fighting), if mentioned even briefly, was coded as present. In some cases, where greater ambiguity existed, a rule was created and followed by all coders. For example, I created the rule that acts of looting alone would not be coded as property damage as the looted goods could still be recovered in an undamaged condition.

Table 2 • Bivariate Analysis of Variables Representing the Soldier's Perspective Variables by Vantage Point

<i>Vantage Point</i>	<i>Combat</i>		<i>Military Movement</i>		<i>Soldier Fatalities</i>		<i>Soldier Source</i>		<i>Soldier Human Interest</i>	
	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Baghdad-stationed	44	83	35	92	13	114	31	96	0	127
Independent	67	78	60	85	15	130	62	83	2	143
Embedded	230	240	244	226	89	381	438	32	174	296
Total	341	401	339	403	117	625	531	211	176	566
	34.6%	65.4%	27.6%	72.4%	10.2%	89.8%	24.4%	75.6%	0.0%	100.0%
	46.2%	53.8%	41.4%	58.6%	10.3%	89.7%	42.8%	57.2%	1.4%	98.6%
	48.9%	51.1%	51.9%	48.1%	18.9%	81.1%	93.2%	6.8%	37.0%	63.0%
	46.0%	54.0%	45.7%	54.3%	15.8%	84.2%	71.6%	28.4%	23.7%	76.3%

Publication date is also an important control variable as the nature of the material that could be covered changed during the course of the major combat period. For example, reporters from all three vantage points were more likely to cover combat during the first two weeks of the war, simply because there was more combat. The actual article date was recorded during the coding process. However, in the analyses below, article date has been recoded into more conceptually useful time periods, dividing the total period roughly in halves.¹¹ The early war period (coded as 1) represents the period from the initial invasion through the capture of Baghdad on April 8, 2003. The later war period begins with the fall of Baghdad as U.S. Marines and locals famously pulled down the statue of Saddam in the city center and continues through the declaration of the end of major combat on May 1, 2003. The Appendix includes descriptive statistics of all the independent variables.

Results

The Soldier's Perspective (Tables 2 and 3)

Confirming the hypotheses, embedded and independent journalists were far more successful than Baghdad-stationed reporters at covering the actual events of the military experience. Combat coverage was found in 46 percent of all articles, but appeared in only 34.6 percent of articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters, as seen in Table 2. Controlling for journalist and article characteristics, Baghdad-stationed reporters covered combat significantly less than embedded reporters (see Table 3). However, there was no significant difference between embeds and independent journalists in coverage of combat. Controlling for vantage point, male reporters were also significantly more likely than female reporters to cover combat, with 1.6 times the odds, as shown in Table 3.

Likewise, both embedded and independent reporters covered military movement more than Baghdad-stationed journalists. Whereas over half of the articles by embedded reporters mentioned military movement, only a quarter of the articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters covered it. In fact, Baghdad-stationed reporters had 74 percent lower odds than embeds of covering military movement. No significant differences existed between embedded reporters and independents in coverage of military movement. However, as Table 3 reveals, articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters were significantly less likely to include coverage of military movement.

11. The analyses were also computed entering the date as a continuous variable. However, it did not change any of the other findings.

Table 3 • Logistic Regressions of Variables Representing the Soldier's Perspective

Variable	Combat		Military Movement		Soldier Fatalities		Soldier Source		Soldier Human Interest	
	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio
Baghdad-stationed	-.929***	.395	-1.324***	.260	-1.024*	.359	-3.909***	.020	—	(infinite)
Independent	-.24	.787	-.484	.620	-.823*	.439	-2.989***	.050	-3.476***	.030
Gender (m = 1)	.493*	1.637	.422	1.520	.678	1.969	.449	1.567	-.462	.630
Foreign	.377	1.458	.223	1.250	.351	1.420	-.347	.706	-.808	.446
Early war period	.795***	2.215	1.117***	3.050	.800***	2.224	-.404	.667	.168	1.183
Top 5 agency	.261	1.298	.101	1.110	.269	1.308	.241	1.273	-.828**	.437
Article length	.001**	1.000	.001*	1.000	.001**	1.000	.000	1.000	.000**	1.000
Constant	-1.593***	.203	-1.518***	.219	-3.138	.043	2.206	9.077	-.311	.733
Pseudo R ²		.065		.099		.067		.371		.172 [†]

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

[†]including Baghdad reporters, the Cox and Snell R² is .24.

Moving beyond the larger events of the war, embedded reporters presented the soldier's experience of the war most extensively. Embedded reporters were significantly more likely than either independent or Baghdad-stationed reporters to report soldier fatalities ($p < .05$ for both types). While 18.9 percent of articles by embedded reporters covered soldier deaths, only about 10 percent of articles by independents included such reports, as Table 2 reveals. Controlling for journalist and article characteristics, articles by embedded reporters had over twice the odds of articles by independents of covering soldier fatalities. Still, a difference of less than nine percentage points is a relatively minor effect.

Embedded reporters were also significantly more likely than independent reporters to use a soldier in the field as a source. Ninety-three percent of articles by embedded reporters used a soldier as a source, compared to 42.8 percent of independents and 24.4 percent of Baghdad-stationed reporters. While independents used soldier sources far more frequently than Baghdad-stationed reporters (see Table 2), independent reporters still had only .05 times the odds of embedded reporters using a soldier as a source, as seen in Table 3. Vantage point alone accounted for 37.1 percent of the variance in articles' use of a soldier as a source (see Table 3).¹²

Finally, human-interest stories covering the experiences, histories, and feelings of soldiers were covered almost exclusively by embedded reporters. No Baghdad-stationed reporters and only 1.4 percent of independents in the sample wrote articles that included soldier human-interest coverage. Among embedded reporters, 37 percent of all articles included this type of content. This dramatic difference is apparent in Table 2.

Soldier human-interest stories seem to be primarily the providence of "think pieces" and smaller periodicals. Longer articles were significantly more likely to include human interest stories, as can be seen in Table 3. Journalists from the top five news agencies were significantly less likely to provide human-interest coverage. Working for a top five news agency reduced the odds of including soldier human-interest stories by 2.3 times. Taken together, vantage point, article length, and news agency accounted for 17.2 percent¹³ of the articles' coverage of soldier human-interest stories.

In summary, independent and embedded reporters seem to be equally suited to covering the actual events of the war: combat and military movements. However, embedded reporters excelled in frequently covering both the soldiers' day-to-day lives and their deaths, in part because they rely on the soldiers as sources in nine out of ten articles (see Table 2). In all dependent variables, Baghdad-stationed reporters under-performed the other two vantage points in presenting the soldier's perspective. One obvious explanation for this discrepancy is that no soldiers were in Baghdad until early April. However, even when controlling for time period, Baghdad-stationed reporters were still less likely than embedded reporters to cover the soldier's perspective in every single measure (see Table 3).

The Iraqi Perspective (Tables 4 and 5)

As expected, the results are nearly reversed in analyzing the coverage of the Iraqi perspective, with embedded reporters reporting the Iraqi experience far less successfully than the independent reporters. Both independents and Baghdad-stationed reporters were significantly more likely to report bombings than embeds. Baghdad-stationed reporters had 3.2 times the

12. Pseudo R^2 , proposed by Aldrich and Nelson (1984), is a goodness of fit measure well suited to logistic regression, ranging from 0 to 1 and serving "in the spirit of R^2 " (p. 57). While it can be roughly understood as the "variation explained," it is actually the proportion of cases correctly predicted by the model. "The formula for computing pseudo R^2 is a simple one: pseudo $R^2 = C/(N + C)$ where C is the chi-square goodness of fit statistic, and N is the sample size" (Walsh 1987:182). See also the ensuing dust-up over Walsh's use of pseudo R^2 (Forde 1989; Walsh 1989). Aldrich and Nelson (1984) advocated the use of pseudo R^2 because logistic regression tends to result in much lower R^2 statistics than those produced by ordinary least squares due to the more limited variation in dichotomous variables.

13. Because no Baghdad-stationed reporters wrote articles including soldier human-interest stories, the odds of reporting this type of story is reduced over that of an embedded reporter an infinite number of times. When combining both types of independent reporter into a single category, the Cox and Snell R^2 is .24.

Table 4 • Bivariate Analysis of Variables Representing the Iraqi Perspective Variables by Vantage Point

Vantage Point	Bombing		Property Damage		Civilian Fatalities		Iraqi Source		Iraqi Human Interest	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Baghdad-stationed	58	69	84	43	63	64	95	32	52	75
Independent	60	85	68	77	43	102	106	39	63	82
Embedded	106	364	184	286	54	416	105	365	40	430
Total	224	518	336	406	160	582	306	436	155	587
	45.7%	54.3%	66.1%	33.9%	49.6%	50.4%	74.8%	25.2%	40.9%	59.1%
	41.4%	58.6%	46.9%	53.1%	29.7%	70.3%	73.1%	26.9%	43.4%	56.6%
	22.6%	77.4%	39.1%	60.9%	11.5%	88.5%	22.3%	77.7%	8.5%	91.5%
	30.2%	69.8%	45.3%	54.7%	21.6%	78.4%	41.2%	58.8%	20.9%	79.1%

odds of embedded reporters of covering bombing, with only 22.6 percent of articles by embeds mentioning bombing. By contrast, 45.7 percent of articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters and 41.4 percent of articles by independents included bombing coverage. Articles from the early war period and longer articles were also significantly more likely to mention bombing.

Articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters were also significantly more likely than those by embedded reporters to mention property damage. However, Baghdad-stationed reporters also far surpassed independents in covering property damage. As Table 5 demonstrates, there were no significant differences in coverage of property damage between independents and embedded reporters. Articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters had 2.5 times the odds of embedded reporters of mentioning property damage, with 66.1 percent of articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters covering it. By comparison, 46.9 percent of articles by independents and 39.1 percent of articles by embedded reporters included coverage of property damage. Longer articles were also significantly more likely to mention property damage.

Unlike the significant yet relatively minor differences by vantage point in reporting of soldier fatalities, the gaps in coverage of Iraqi civilian fatalities are startling. Civilian fatalities were mentioned in 49.6 percent of articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters, compared with only 29.7 percent of articles by independent reporters and 11.5 percent of embedded reporters. Both types of nonembedded reporters more frequently covered civilian deaths than embedded reporters, with independent reporters having 2.8 times the odds and Baghdad-stationed reporters having 5.6 times the odds of embeds of reporting fatalities. These gaps are all the more astonishing given the relative magnitude of civilian fatalities. Whereas 172 coalition soldiers died during the major combat period (Iraq Coalition Casualty Count 2005), a minimum of 2,100 and up to 10,000 civilians were killed (Ford 2003).¹⁴ Civilian fatalities were also significantly more likely to be mentioned in longer articles and in articles by journalists from foreign news agencies.

This difference can be explained in part by the fact that independent and Baghdad-stationed reporters used civilians as sources far more frequently. Nearly 75 percent of articles by both independent and Baghdad-stationed reporters used Iraqi civilians as sources, compared with only 22.3 percent of articles by embedded reporters. To be sure, this difference is enhanced by the more limited access that embedded reporters had to civilians in the early period of the war. However, even controlling for this significant effect of time period, Table 5 reveals that articles by independent reporters and Baghdad-stationed reporters were significantly more likely than those by embedded reporters to use Iraqi civilians as sources. In fact, Baghdad-stationed reporters had 7.8 times the odds and independents had 8.4 times the odds of embedded reporters of using Iraqi civilians as a source.

14. Estimates of Iraqi civilian fatalities vary widely. According to Ford (2003) in *The Christian Science Monitor*, the most reputable source, Iraq Body Count (<http://www.iraqbodycount.net/>), estimates between 4,065 and 5,223 deaths. The *Associated Press* reports 2,100 to 2,600 civilian fatalities, while the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict (CIVIC) estimates the major combat period led to the loss of 5,000 to 10,000 lives.

Table 5 • Logistic Regressions of Variables Representing the Iraqi Perspective

Variable	Bombing		Property Damage		Civilian Fatalities		Iraqi Source		Iraqi Human Interest	
	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio	B	Odds Ratio
Baghdad-stationed	1.148***	3.152	.932***	2.540	1.720***	5.584	2.056***	7.813	2.036***	7.659
Independent	1.012***	2.751	.184	1.202	1.035***	2.815	2.128***	8.397	2.162***	8.690
Gender (m = 1)	.249	1.282	.058	1.059	.121	1.129	-.207	.812	-.399	.671
Foreign	.395	1.484	.132	1.142	.554*	1.740	.461*	1.586	-.250	.778
Early war period	1.713***	5.547	.013	1.013	.135	1.145	-.852***	0.426	-.697**	.498
Top 5 agency	.163	1.176	.306	1.358	.140	1.150	.193	1.213	.019	1.019
Article length	.001***	1.000	.001**	1.001	.001***	1.001	.001**	1.000	.000	1.000
Constant	-3.181***	.042	-1.405***	.352	-2.916***	.054	-1.264***	.282	-2.019***	.133
Pseudo R ²		.156		.044		.139		.229		.185

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed tests)

Longer articles were also significantly more likely to make use of a civilian source. Articles by reporters from foreign news agencies had 1.6 times the odds of articles from American news agencies of using Iraqi civilian sources. Vantage point, nationality, time period, and article length together account for 22.9 percent of the variance in the use of an Iraqi civilian source.

Finally, articles by independent and Baghdad-stationed reporters were far more likely than those by embedded reporters to cover Iraqi human-interest stories. This type of story appeared in 43.4 percent of articles by independent reporters and in 40.9 percent of articles by Baghdad-stationed. In contrast, as Table 4 shows, only 8.5 percent of embedded journalists wrote articles that included Iraqi human-interest coverage. In fact, articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters had 7.7 times the odds of those by embedded reporters of including this type of coverage, while independent reporters had 8.7 times the odds of embedded reporters of incorporating Iraqi human-interest stories. Controlling for the effect of vantage point on this type of coverage, Iraqi human-interest stories were also significantly less likely to appear in articles from the early war period ($p < .01$). Taken together, vantage point and period within the war account for 18.5 percent of the variance in coverage of Iraqi human-interest stories.

In sharp contrast to the results of the soldier's perspective findings, Baghdad-stationed reporters were most likely to cover the Iraqi experience of the war, while in every measure, articles by embedded reporters were significantly less likely to cover Iraqi stories. However, the independent reporters were as likely to cover the Iraqi experience as to report the soldier's experience. Though independent reporters did not cover Iraqi civilian casualties or property damage as frequently as Baghdad-stationed reporters, they were significantly more likely than embedded reporters to cover the Iraqi experience in all measures except for property damage. Thus, we find that while Baghdad-stationed reporters and embedded reporters each excelled at telling one side of the story, independent reporters managed to relatively successfully present both the Iraqi and the coalition soldier's experiences of the war.

Discussion

By conducting a content analysis of print news coverage, I have evaluated empirically the relationship between journalistic vantage point and the content of war coverage. The above analyses largely confirmed the basic hypotheses: embedded reporters were primarily successful in capturing the soldier's perspective, Baghdad-stationed reporters best captured the Iraqi experience, and independent reporters were uniquely able to report on both. However, despite having a less restrictive vantage point within the war, independent reporters were unable to cover certain dimensions of the soldier or the Iraqi experience of the war as extensively as were reporters from each of the two more narrowly channeled journalistic vantage points. While the independent journalists produced, on the whole, the most balanced reporting of the war, embedded reporting with its more limited view was the dominant journalistic vantage point in this war. With nearly two-thirds of the articles in the sample written by embeds (see Table A2 in the Appendix), the embedded vantage point, with a beat narrowly channeled toward the soldier's experience, had a major impact on the aggregate reporting of the war.

Independent Reporters

Independent reporters produced, by far, the most balanced coverage of the major war development measures in this study. The independent reporters were as effective in covering most of the events of the war—combat, military movement, and bombings—as either of the more narrowly channeled vantage points. While independent journalists were unable report

soldier or civilian deaths as well as the embedded reporters or Baghdad-stationed reporters respectively, they covered civilian casualties significantly more frequently than embedded reporters and reported soldier deaths at an only slightly—albeit statistically significantly—lower rate than the embeds.

Independent journalists also used more varied sources than either embeds or Baghdad-stationed reporters. While embedded reporters relied on soldiers as sources (speaking to Iraqis in only 22.3 percent of articles, as shown in Table 4) and Baghdad-stationed reporters spoke primarily to Iraqi civilians (using soldiers in only 24.4 percent of articles, as shown in Table 2), articles by independent reporters regularly used both Iraqi and coalition sources. Though independent journalists used Iraqi sources more frequently, they were able to cite military sources in over 40 percent of the articles.

By interacting with Iraqi and U.S. military sources, independent reporters were able to cover the challenges facing both soldiers and Iraqi civilians. This freedom to draw a more complete picture can be seen in C. J. Chivers's work as an independent reporter for the *New York Times*. Covering Tikrit following the U.S. occupation, Chivers (2003) spoke to both Iraqis and coalition soldiers:

Iraqis returned to the city throughout the afternoon and seemed to be amazed by what they saw. Once, these civilians said, the Baath Party defined civic life. Now Baathists had vanished. Everywhere, it seemed, was an American with a rifle; they were even more abundant than the murals and statues of Mr. Hussein that looked down on the streets. Marines lounged in broken storefronts, wandered through opulent presidential palaces and screened civilians, one by one, as they walked across the bridge over the Tigris. Pfc. Shea Joswick said it was difficult to sort out the people who needed to be in the city from the gawkers, looters, or potential combatants who all mingled together, pleading for access to the city.

Unrestricted by military chaperones, Iraqi government minders, or city limits, Chivers was able to successfully capture both sides of the nervous excitement in Tikrit.

Nonetheless, while independent reporters successfully used both Iraqis and coalition troops as sources, in reporting humanistic stories, they tended to focus on the Iraqi experience. Independents were *more* likely than Baghdad-stationed reporters to cover Iraqi human-interest stories, but articles by embedded reporters had 33 times the odds of reporting soldier human-interest stories.¹⁵ Likewise, though independent reporters were successful in frequently using military sources, they more commonly used Iraqi sources.

Yet, we must not be tempted to view this tendency of independent reporters to place a slightly greater emphasis on Iraqis as the product of a pro-Iraqi or anti-war sentiment so much as the direct result of the embedding program. Though independent reporting most closely resembles Vietnam-era war reporting in its freedom of movement and access to civilians and soldiers alike, journalists in that conflict could expect a certain degree of cooperation from the military. That cooperation often included provision of the supplies and transportation as well as supported access to the frontlines and the troops. By contrast, during Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Pentagon was openly hostile to these reporters who they referred to as “rogues,” “cowboys,” and “unilaterals” (Paul and Kim 2004:xvi). Rather than offer support and access, Pentagon officials actively discouraged and publicly criticized independent journalists. Based on their relative success in reporting the military experience despite resistance from the Pentagon, I would expect that with greater cooperation from the military, independent journalists could provide even more thorough coverage of both the factual and humanistic aspects of the military experience of future conflicts.

15. In Table 3, the odds of an article by an independent journalist including a soldier human-interest story are .03. An article by an embedded reporter having 33 times the odds of including a soldier human-interest story is simply the reciprocal.

Baghdad-Stationed Reporters

In comparison to independent journalists, Baghdad-stationed reporters' ability to report on the military experience of the war was limited by their physical and social location. Just as embedded reporters were unable to interact with civilians, Baghdad-stationed reporters had extremely limited exposure to coalition troops until the final weeks of the major combat operations. But even when controlling for time period, articles by embeds had 45 times the odds of using a military source than those by Baghdad-stationed reporters. Baghdad-stationed reporters also trailed behind the other two vantage points in providing coverage of combat, military movement, and soldier human-interest stories. For these reporters, until the invading forces arrived in Baghdad, this type of coverage was all but impossible to provide. Most spent their days reporting the bombing raids they could see from their hotel balconies and taking day excursions with Iraqi government minders to interview civilians on the outskirts of Baghdad.

Though both independents and Baghdad-stationed reporters were nearly identical in their ability to cover much of the Iraqi experience of the war, the Baghdad-stationed reporters did emerge as unique in their ability to report on civilian fatalities and property damage. While both embeds and independents reported on property damage in less than 50 percent of articles, as seen in Table 5, the Baghdad-stationed reporters, who could see the destruction before their eyes, covered it in far more frequently. Likewise, Baghdad-stationed reporters far exceeded the other vantage points in covering civilian casualties (though they still reported Iraqi deaths in less than half of all articles).

Once again, we must not interpret these differences as the result of a particular attitudinal predisposition to covering the Iraqi angle. Rather, the nature of the Baghdad-stationed vantage point channeled the reporters to particular content. This is evident in Jon Lee Anderson's (2003) account in *The New Yorker* of the initial bombing raids:

The morning the first cruise missiles hit Baghdad, on March 20th, I was in a suite at the Al Rashid hotel, in a room facing south, which provided good reception for satellite phones and a panoramic view of some primary targets: the telecommunications tower; several grand domed palaces; and the headquarters of the Mukhabarat, the secret police. I was awake around five-thirty and heard a big, muted *whooping* noise (p. 80; emphasis in original).

Like most reporters in this vantage point, simply by being confined to a city under attack from bombs drew Anderson's attention to the most common subjects for Baghdad-stationed journalists: bombings and civilian suffering. In an article typical of Baghdad-stationed reporting, John Daniszewski (2003) of the *Los Angeles Times* wrote:

Omar Haider crouched inconsolably next to the makeshift graves, about half of which had already been opened, mourning his brother Khaled, a Baghdad University student killed in the bombing. Asked who he blamed for the death of his brother, Haider said, "I blame the war. I blame the Americans." Then, as a reporter started to turn away, he added, in a soft voice: "I blame Saddam."

Daniszewski's reporting succeeds in depicting the Iraqi experience of the war by covering the types of content dominant in his vantage point: bombing, civilian fatalities, and Iraqi human-interest stories. However, unlike most independent reporters, the Baghdad-stationed vantage point clearly channeled him away from portraying the military experience of the war.

Embedded Reporters

The current study finds strong evidence that the embedded vantage point strongly limited opportunities to cover the Iraqi experience of the war. Less than a quarter of the articles by embedded reporters mentioned bombings or made use of an Iraqi source. Moreover, only 11.5 percent of the articles by embedded reporters mentioned any of the at least 2,100 civilian deaths (Ford 2003), in contrast to nearly 30 percent among independents and nearly 50 percent of articles by Baghdad-stationed reporter.

To “blame” the embedded reporters for being too narrowly focused on the soldiers or insensitive to the plight of innocent Iraqis is to deny the more structural nature of the vantage point. The embedding program maximizes the reporter’s opportunities to interact with troops, while minimizing their ability to roam and see beyond the rank-and-file perspective. As Pentagon officials have claimed, embedding offers incredible detail into the military experience of the war. Indeed, the level of access embedded reporters had to the daily experiences as well as the personal reflections of soldiers was unprecedented. Over 90 percent of articles by embeds used a soldier as a source and nearly 40 percent described the histories or feelings of these soldiers. This type of information was captivating to media consumers precisely because never before had the public been so widely able to learn about this perspective of the war while it was in progress.

Just as Baghdad-stationed journalists highlighted the impact of the invasion on the civilian population, embedded reporters were all too aware of the challenges facing the soldiers. Like many embedded reporters, Tom Sawyer (2003) of the *Engineering News-Record*, who was embedded with the Bravo Company of the 11th Engineer Battalion, Third Infantry Division, focused particularly on the human toll of combat. He wrote: “stretching from Kuwait to Baghdad and beyond, the engineers worked . . . heroically, enduring ambushes and attacks from rear supply to skirmish line as they labored to keep the river of ammunition and supplies flowing. It has been hard and dangerous work. Engineers have been hurt and have died.” While Sawyer’s coverage of the soldier’s experience seems rich with detail about military movement, combat, and soldier fatalities, clearly lacking is any coverage of the effects of the invasion on the Iraqi population.

The embedded vantage point, by its very design, at once provides nearly unrestricted opportunities to report on the military experience, while limiting possibilities for coverage of the Iraqi experience. Despite offering a far less balanced view of the war than independent reporting, embedded reporting, with its narrow channeling toward the military experience, was both the officially sanctioned and most highly visible vantage point for covering Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Embedding in the Spotlight

By placing all articles on equal footing (i.e., sampling an equal number of articles by each journalist and assigning the same weight to each article), the current research creates the artificial sense that independent, Baghdad-stationed, and embedded reporting were all equally prominent and available to the public. In fact, the embedded vantage point was the dominant and officially sanctioned mode of reporting. Of the 742 articles within the sample, 63.3 percent were written by journalists embedded with troops.¹⁶ Furthermore, not only did embedded reporting represent a majority of the total *available* press, it dominated public attention. Because embedded reporting was both more affordable to news agencies and more heavily hyped for its novelty, this vantage point dramatically overshadowed the others, capturing a vast majority of high profile coverage.

16. In an analysis reweighted to the actual number of articles produced by each journalist in the population, only 54.5 percent of all articles were produced by embedded reporters. Thus, although 64 percent of the reporters were embedded, in the total population of 3,096 articles, we would expect about 55 percent to be produced by embedded journalists.

However, this is largely an artifact of two phenomena: (a) nonembedded reporters were able to file more articles than embeds, and (b) newswire reporters, among whom there is a much higher rate of nonembedded reporting, were far more prolific than the average newspaper reporter (e.g., AP writer Hamza Hendawi produced 70 articles in less than 45 days). In a regression analysis, all things being equal, on average, Baghdad-stationed reporters wrote 9.9 more articles and independent reporters wrote 4.6 more articles than embedded reporters. Likewise, on average, newswire reporters wrote 16.28 more articles than nonwire reporters, with being employed by a newswire service explaining 22 percent of the variation in the number of articles produced. Complete analyses available from the author upon request.

Table 6 • Distribution of Vantage Point among News Sources

	Vantage Point			
	Baghdad-Stationed	Independent	Embedded	Total
<i>USA Today</i>	0 0%	0 0%	17 100%	17 100%
<i>New York Times</i>	6 12%	27 52%	19 37%	52 100%
<i>LA Times</i>	10 40%	0 0%	15 60%	25 100%
<i>Washington Post</i>	10 15%	19 29%	36 55%	65 100%
<i>Chicago Tribune</i>	1 3%	12 33%	23 64%	36 100%
Reuters	26 34%	20 26%	30 40%	76 100%
Associated Press	5 14%	5 14%	25 71%	35 100%
All other sources	70 17%	74 20%	328 63%	472 100%

For smaller news agencies, the only way to support a reporter in the region was to use the embedding program. According to *Time* Editor Jim Kelly, supporting “a couple dozen” reporters in the Middle East would cost “tens of thousands [of dollars] a month” (Fine 2003:4). *US News & World Report* publisher William Holiber expected his ten reporters and photographers to incur costs in the “hundreds of thousands of dollars” (Fine 2003). Naturally, costs were higher still for television news and daily newspapers, which required more extensive equipment and larger staffs. To support an independent crew required the news agency to hire transportation, a security detail, protective gear and equipment, as well as the cost of survival training for uninitiated war reporters. Even Baghdad-stationed journalists had high costs, with hotels charging between \$200 and \$600 per night (Yon 2005). By contrast, an embedded reporter, under the protective wing of the military, incurred a fraction of the cost to her/his news organization.

The novelty and free publicity surrounding the embedding program was also appealing to news outlets. Its originality was extensively hyped in the media and made some of the best television. Even in print, the human qualities of embedding and its details on the culture of military made it eminently readable.

For these reasons, embedded reporting became the preferred vantage point for most newspapers.¹⁷ This can be seen clearly in Table 6, which breaks down the number of articles at various news sources by vantage point. The newspaper with the largest daily circulation, *USA Today*, used *only* embedded reporters. With the exception of the *New York Times* and Reuters, all of the top news sources used embedded coverage in over half of all articles produced by their journalists in Iraq. In all other sources, embedded coverage represented 63 percent of the articles, with only a fifth produced by independent reporters. While a newspaper like the *LA Times* attempted balance by including Baghdad-stationed reporting in 40 percent of their coverage, embedded reporting still represented a majority of the content. Only the

17. The *Wall Street Journal*, which has the second largest daily circulation in the country, did not have any reporters in Iraq during the major combat period. While it did have embedded reporters in the Middle East, they relied on news-wires for coverage of the actual war. Nicholas Kulich, for example, was embedded for the *Wall Street Journal* in Kuwait.

Table 7 • Distribution of Vantage Point in Front Pages and Front Sections

	Vantage Point			Total
	Baghdad-Stationed	Independent	Embedded	
Front page	32	22	132	186
	17%	12%	71%	100%
Front section	68	71	311	450
	15%	16%	69%	100%

well-funded *New York Times* had more than half of the articles coming out of Iraq produced by an independent journalist.

During the coding process, when available, we coded the page and section information of the articles. Comparing front page and first section coverage of the three vantage points (see Table 7), newspapers clearly featured embedded reporting most prominently. While only 186 articles within the sample were recorded as appearing on the front page (news wire stories may have subsequently appeared only on front pages), of those, Baghdad-stationed and independent reporters accounted for less than a third of all articles combined. Likewise, of the 450 articles appearing in the front section of a newspaper, embedded reporters produced nearly seven out of ten.

Whether because of its marketability or the merit of its content, these results strongly suggest that articles by embedded reporters earned top billing in newspapers throughout the country. Based on the content of articles by embedded journalists and the overwhelming dominance of that vantage point, it seems clear that the majority of war coverage in print media heavily emphasized the soldier's experience of the war, while downplaying the effects of the invasion on the Iraqi people. Moreover, given the striking imbalance toward embedded reporting at some of the most widely read news sources, such as *USA Today* and the Associated Press, it seems likely that the most widely read news about the conflict heavily reflected the military experience. Though a responsible editor may have balanced an embedded article with an article by a Baghdad-stationed reporter on page one, in the aggregate, the majority of the articles are still enormously skewed toward the soldier's experience.

Though much research has documented the way that bureaucratically constructed constraints, such as routine and commercial interests, channel opportunities in the newsroom, few researchers have systematically examined constraints on news production within a war zone. This study represents one example of how government policies—here, the embedding program—can affect the nature of the war coverage that journalists produce. In the case of embedding, the Pentagon policy limited the war reporting opportunities available to journalists in all three of the vantage points.

Though the findings indicate that embedding program was successful in providing reporters with an insider's view of the military experience, it also essentially blocked them from providing much coverage of the Iraqi experience of the war. Despite hostility from the Pentagon, independent reporters successfully interviewed coalition soldiers and Iraqi civilians, covering both the major events of the war and the human-interest stories of civilians. By refusing to cooperate with independent journalists, the military officials only limited them from providing more coverage of the human side of the troops. To improve the balance of war coverage in future conflicts, the military should cooperate with journalists in a variety of vantage points. Likewise, the media must strive to provide space for a range of perspectives and information more equitably.

Even though this research represents a significant advance in understanding the effect of vantage point and, in particular, embedded reporting, on wartime news coverage, these

findings focus exclusively on print media. Because television was the preferred source of war news for most consumers, future research should attempt to replicate this study using electronic media. This will surely pose a variety of complex methodological questions. Not only is television coverage far more varied in form than print news, but it also requires analyses of video images and audio recordings that will certainly prove complex. Second, future researchers should attempt to develop a more comprehensive understanding of wartime media management methods (i.e., press restriction tactics) to determine if similar processes occur in different nations and/or time periods. Hallin (1997), for example, has called for content analyses of war reporting to compare coverage across conflicts.

Conclusion

During Operation Desert Storm, the first U.S.-led war in Iraq, the Pentagon effectively blocked most of the media from reporting free of military minders in Iraq, preferring to keep them in a press pool. Occasionally, carefully selected journalists would be taken on tours of the battlefield after the hostilities had ceased and the bodies were removed (McLane 2004). While there was no major public backlash to the press pools, news agencies and journalists were highly critical of the near-complete exclusion of the press and several Pentagon officials were disappointed that they had not “enlist[ed] the media’s vast resources” (Brightman 2003:13; Paul and Kim 2004; McLane 2004). Though the embedding program had been planned for quite some time, according to Dave Moniz of *USA Today*: “What is driving this [plan] is the fear that Iraq will win the propaganda war if reporters are not on the ground with troops” (quoted in Brightman 2003:13). Thus, out of a desire to communicate the military experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the embedding program was instituted.

Because of these widely known political motivations for the program, embedded reporters came under immediate attack for alleged lack of balance in reporting. This study has sought to investigate empirically the basis of these claims by examining the relationship between journalistic vantage points (particularly embedding) and news content. By recognizing how structural conditions channel journalists toward producing certain types of news content, we can better understand how reporters might be exploited by political and/or military elites to advance their agendas.

Prior to the current study, claims about the shortcomings of embedding have been leveled with nothing more than anecdotal evidence as support. The evidence presented here indicates that while some of the claims have been exaggerated, the critique that embedded reporters focused almost exclusively on the soldier’s experience of the war is well founded. Though often lumped together by the Pentagon as “unilaterals,” two distinct alternative journalistic vantage points existed: Baghdad-stationed and independent reporters. Reporting by journalists stationed in Baghdad, often acclaimed by critics of embedding for its coverage of civilian hardship, was as narrow as embedded reporting in its coverage of the Iraqi experience of the war. While the independent reporters were far more effective in presenting both sides of the conflict, they were prevented from providing better coverage of soldiers’ experiences by hostility from the Pentagon.

Each of these three journalistic vantage points within the war served as a social location with a set of expectations, rules, and relations, which channeled reporters toward certain content, while limiting opportunities for other types of content. For example, the independent vantage point offered journalists a much looser set of rules, but lacked the set of relations with soldiers that kept embedded journalists safe and provided them with opportunities for coverage of military life. Though this vantage point gave independent reporters much freedom to chose their stories, it also limited their opportunities to cover the soldiers’ day-to-day experience. For embedded reporters, there were very clear rules and expectations in the form of contracts, which essentially carved out a beat covering military operations and soldiers’ lives.

While the Pentagon certainly delivered on their promise to give journalists extensive access to the goings-on of a particular unit, they also successfully channeled reporters toward largely covering *only* a particular unit.

The real concern underlying much criticism of the embedding program is with the Pentagon's alleged eagerness to control the storyline of war (Brightman 2003). While the embedding program was in development long before the war was planned, the results of the current study attest to the effectiveness of the embedding program as a means of putting forward a military-focused depiction of the war. With upwards of ninety percent of all articles by embeds using soldiers as a source, as long as the soldiers stayed positive, the story stayed positive. Yet, the charge that embedded reporters simply told rosy stories about the troops is far from the truth. Less than 40 percent of stories focused on soldiers' thoughts, feelings, and histories, while about half reported the dark stories about combat and military movement. Nonetheless, the dark stories they recorded concerned the grim experiences of troops, not the death and destruction that befell many of the Iraqi civilians. While most of the embedded reporters did not shy away from describing the horrors of war, the structural conditions of the embedded vantage point kept them focused on the horrors facing the troops, rather than upon the thousands of Iraqis who died.

Appendix

Table A1 • Date Range

Median date	4/8/03
Period 1	03/19/2003–04/08/2003
Period 2	04/09/2003–05/01/2003

Table A2 • Vantage Point

Embedded	470	63.34%
Independent	145	19.54%
Baghdad-stationed	127	17.12%
Total	742	100%

Table A3 • Gender

Female	126	17%
Male	616	83%
Total	742	100%

Table A4 • Agency Nationality

Foreign	188	25.30%
U.S.	554	74.70%
Total	742	100%

Table A5 • Length of Articles (in words)

Range	8632
Mean	885.98
Median	776
Min	151
Max	8783

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