Embedded Journalism and American Media Coverage of Civilian Casualties in Iraq

By

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Declaration form

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed: *Amy LeBlanc*

Date: *May 20, 2013*

Acknowledgements

It is not lost on me that discussing casualties in a statistical context can appear to be a cold and heartless undertaking. Figures like 116,903 civilian casualties from the eight years of war in Iraq tend to dehumanize the irreparable loss of each death. It has been just over ten years since the invasion of Iraq and just over one and half years since the last U.S.-led coalition troops left Iraq but the lives claimed by this war and the spaces left in the families and communities are very real. This dissertation is dedicated to all the families and communities who were affected by the war in Iraq.

First and foremost I have to thank God for the many opportunities I have been given. There is no good reason why I am the beneficiary of such blessings. Secondly, I have to thank my family for their unfailing support. My mother, Linda, for instilling in me a passion for social justice, and my brother, Sean, who has always defended those who cannot defend themselves and, of course, for keeping me grounded in the way that only siblings can.

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Abstract

During the eight-year war in Iraq that lasted from March 2003 until December 2011, two kinds of journalists reported on the war, those who were with the military (embedded) and those who were not (unilateral). The embedding process, created by the Pentagon and implemented for the first time in Iraq, has been highly criticised and singled out as a key factor in the low American media coverage of civilian casualties compared to coverage of coalition casualties. This research paper seeks to use statistical data collected from the *New York Times'* coverage during the second week of the invasion of Iraq to evaluate the legitimacy of this criticism. This research will compare embedded and unilateral coverage by isolating those articles that include coverage of civilian casualties and coalition casualties. This study has practical implications for the embed/unilateral debate in the context of human rights discourse in the media.

Key words: Human Rights, Civilian Casualties, Journalism, Media Studies, Embedded Press System, *The New York Times*.

Glossary

Embedded reporter: A reporter who stays with a unit of the military during a war in order to report directly about the fighting.

Unilateral reporter: A reporter who does not embed with a military unit, typically entering conflict zones unaccompanied by security.

*Reporter classification grou*p: Throughout the data collection for this research paper, all articles were classified into four categories based on whether the reporter is embedded or unilateral in Iraq, or embedded or unilateral not in Iraq.

Casualty grouping: Throughout the data collection for this research paper, mentions of casualties were categorized into three casualty groupings: civilian, coalition and anti-occupation casualties.

Coalition forces: U.S.-led forces in Iraq during the invasion of Iraq including British, Australian, and Polish troops as well as Kurdish irregular fighters from Iraqi Kurdistan.

Anti-occupation forces/insurgents: This umbrella term refers to all armed resistance to coalition forces in Iraq including but not limited to the Iraqi Republican Guard, paramilitary troops loyal to Saddam Hussein including Ansar al Islam, al Quds volunteer brigades, Special Security Organisation, Fedayeen Saddam, and irregular fighters and armed opposition fighters not clearly recognisable as belonging to any specific organised group.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

The importance of human rights discourse in the media to the global realization of human rights is extensive. Coverage of human rights abuses and violations in conflict zones utilizes the watchdog role of the media concerning international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Specific language used by the media regarding the identification of rights holders and duty bearers is essential in shaping global awareness. The media has the potential to educate the public about their rights, empower victims, demand accountability and call for the international community to take action where necessary. Alternatively, irresponsible reporting (state-owned and operated media outlets, propaganda, censorship, journalistic biases, etc.) has significantly contributed to and perpetuated mass violations and genocide including the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide (Welch 1983; and Des Forges in Thompson 2007, p.41). While journalistic neutrality is central, ethical concerns also require the press to highlight human rights abuses (Shaw 2011, p.2). These two concepts are not incompatible. Identifying breaches of international human rights law and international humanitarian law remains a statement of fact. Objectivity is compromised when abuses by one party are highlighted while abuses by another party remain unreported or underreported.

1.1 The invasion of Iraq

On March 19, 2003, United States President George W. Bush launched an air strike on the Presidential Palace in Baghdad with the mission to defeat the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, in one swift assault. The mission failed and Hussein went into hiding. The next day, March 20, 2003, the Bush administration invaded Iraq with supporting troops from the United Kingdom, Australia, and Poland as well as Kurdish irregular forces in Iraqi Kurdistan (referred to as the 'coalition' or 'coalition forces' throughout the rest of this paper). The Bush administration highlighted three main motivations for going to war: (1) allegations of Saddam Hussein's connections to al Qaeda; (2) claims that he had weapons of mass destruction; and (3) that Washington had a duty to spread democracy to countries lead by dictators (Ehrenberg 2010, p.xxi).

In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States by al Qaeda, a global militant Islamist organization, the Bush administration vowed to fight a war against such terror. The Taliban, a fundamental Islamist group that controlled most of Afghanistan, was harbouring Osama bin Laden, the founder and leader of al Qaeda, and accused of directly supporting the terrorist organization. By November 2001, the military campaign had ousted the regime that supported al Qaeda and trapped bin Laden in the mountains of eastern Afghanistan (Ehrenberg 2010, p.53). Although President Bush had been openly critical of

Saddam Hussein before the September 11 attacks, his early motivations for a preemptive war against Iraq was vocalized with his "axis of evil" State of the Union address in January 2002 (Ehrenberg 2010, p.53). In his speech the administration's goal of retaliation against those involved in the September 11 terrorist attacks was extended to include targeting terrorist groups from acquiring "weapons of mass destruction" as well as those states who were funding such groups or may do so in the future (Ehrenberg 2010, p.53, 59). His speech specifically identified Iraq, North Korea, and Iran. At this time, the Bush administration's targeting of Iraq was not supported by facts as "neither the strategic situation in the Persian Gulf nor the behaviour of Saddam Hussein had worsened" (Ehrenberg 2010, p.54).

Following the 'axis of evil' speech, many critics spoke out against the Bush administration's position because, as political commentator Charles Krauthammer noted in 2002, "it established a new American foreign policy based on three distinctive principles: morality, preemption, and unilateralism" (Ehrenberg 2010, p.61). Such a policy suggested legitimacy for unprovoked attacks on the basis of unsubstantiated or perceived future threats. Senator Robert C. Byrd from West Virginia remarked to the senate on February 12, 2003, that such a policy also radically alters the traditional idea of self-defence as the impetus to military action (Ehrenberg 2010, p.103). The potential consequences of such a policy did not go unnoticed by other states that feared the implications of this new standard of preemption for their own sovereignty (Ehrenberg 2010, p.54) and indeed for the principles that are the foundation of the existing international political system. On March 7, 2003 Hans Blix, UN weapons inspector, briefed the United Nations Security Council on the progress of the weapons inspections in Iraq, concluding that the goals for Iraq's compliance with disarmament (Resolution 1441) could be achieved not in "years, nor weeks, but months" (Ehrenberg 2010, p.106). While it would seem that Hans Blix's report held the potential to dissuade the coalition forces from invading Iraq, on March 17, 2003, only ten days later, the Bush administration issued a unilateral ultimatum to the Iraqi government and two days later the initial phase of the invasion began (Ehrenberg 2010, p.110).

Although the invasion of Iraq was heavily criticised by the international community with large-scale protests breaking out across the world's major cities, at home in the United States, Bush had widespread support. According to a poll conducted by CBS News in March 2003, 45% of Americans polled believed that Saddam Hussein had a direct link to the September 11 terrorist attacks (2008). This figure rose to an all-time high of 53% in early April (CBS News Poll, 2008), just after the second week of the invasion, the time period isolated for analysis in this research paper.

It did not take long for the coalition forces to topple Saddam Hussein's authoritarian government but the invasion unleashed a massive sectarian civil war (Wong 2008). Ten years and countless casualties later, Iraq is still a highly volatile country. In retrospect, we now know from leaked documents such as the Downing Street Memo[1] that the reasons given by the Bush administration in support for the invasion of Iraq were unsubstantiated as the question of whether Iraq was an imminent threat or not was irrelevant as the discussion on whether to invade began eight months before the official announcement (Ehrenberg 2010, p.XXIII). To date, no evidence has proven initial claims that Saddam Hussein's government had weapons of mass destruction or that he had direct ties to al Qaeda (Wong 2008).

1.2 International humanitarian law in Iraq

According to a study conducted by two American professors of public health, Barry Levy and Victor Sidel, "by the time the last U.S. soldiers left in December 2011, at least 116,903 Iraqi non-combatants had been killed" (Blair 2013). These numbers are similar to another study by Iraq Body Count, a website that publically records the number of violent deaths in Iraq following the 2003 invasion which estimates between 111,687 and 122,108 civilian deaths (Blair 2013). Although most human rights declarations and conventions acknowledge certain rights as inviolable, during times of war some human rights may be suspended (Smith 2013, p.13). However, even with more complex human rights law in conflict zones, international humanitarian law, which strives to protect individuals in combat situations, takes precedence. Although both international human rights law and international humanitarian law share superficial similarities in establishing rights for individuals and obligations for states and/or individuals, international humanitarian law "applies where armed conflict exists" (Sriram 2010, p.48). During times of conflict, "international humanitarian law 'fills the gap' providing a minimum standard of treatment for all during hostilities" (Smith 2007, p.13-14). This law also seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict by protecting "persons who are not or no longer participating in hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare" (ICRC 2010). As a result, international humanitarian law is "human rights law for application in the most extreme situations" (Smith 2007, p.13-14). The field of international humanitarian law is complex and many debates concern issues such as international or non-international conflict and the involvement of non-state actors that pursue

[1] The Downing Street Memo was a top-secret document that detailed a meeting between the British Prime Minister's senior officials in July 2002 (eight months before the official invasion of Iraq in March 2003). One official who had recently returned from Washington revealed in the memo that "Bush wanted to remove Saddam, through military action, justified by the conjunction of terrorism and WMD [Weapons of Mass Destruction]" (Smith 2005).

largely political goals through armed force (Sriram 2010, p.57), but these debates will not be further discussed in this paper.

International humanitarian law was born from the Second World War in which civilians and military personnel were killed in equal numbers (Smith 2007, p.12). The Geneva Conventions of 1949, which have since been supplemented by two 1977 Protocols, outline the appropriate treatment of wounded and sick military personnel, prisoners of war, and the protection of civilians (Smith 2007, p.12). These conventions remain a cornerstone of international humanitarian law (Smith 2007, p.13).

Perhaps most importantly for the purposes of this research paper are the principles of this law which state that civilians not involved in hostilities be free from discrimination and not the subject of military attacks (Smith 2007, p.13). In Iraq, the number of civilian casualties from March 2003 until December 2011 as estimated by Iraq Body Count is approximately 25 times greater than coalition casualties during the same period and 70 times greater than coalition casualties during the second week of the invasion (March 26 until April 2, 2003), the time period that has been identified for further study in this research paper.

1.3 The embedded press system

In the wake of the war in Iraq, review of the American media's coverage has generated criticism for their emphasis on military strategy and lack of focus on civilian casualties in comparison to coverage of U.S. solider casualties (Dadge 2006; Entman 2003; Rutherford 2004; Tumber 2004). As a result, some large news corporations have arguably lost credibility with audiences, facing widespread accusations that their failure to challenge the assertions of the Bush Administration and the actions of the U.S. military was a gross ethical oversight. Questions about the journalistic integrity of the American media in Iraq are fueled by the Pentagon's embedding scheme, which was implemented for the first time in Iraq as a strategic media management tool.

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English defines an 'Embedded Journalist or Reporter' as, "a journalist who stays with a unit of the armed forces during a war in order to report directly about the fighting" (2012). Simply put, embedded journalists ate, slept, and witnessed life with a specific unit of the military while unilateral journalists did not. The concept of embedding reporters with military units was not new, as reporters had worked along side military personnel in many conflict zones prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq but the process was implemented for the first time in Iraq as an official accreditation process managed by the Pentagon. In the months that followed the initial invasion of Iraq in March

2003, the Pentagon issued 2,700 media credentials to journalists and photographers (Katovsky 2003, p.VII). More than 600 of these journalists were embedded with a range of American military units, "nearly 400 journalists were embedded in the Army, 18 in the Air Force, about 150 in the Marines, and 141 in the Navy" (Paul 2004, p.54). The implications of the embedding process with respect to coverage of civilian casualties in Iraq will be explored further throughout this research paper.

1.4 Research question and hypothesis

How did the embedding scheme created by the Pentagon and implemented for the first time in Iraq affect coverage of civilian casualties during the initial invasion?

Human rights abuses and violations in conflict zones are often vast as they can be both the cause and the result of conflict (Sriram 2010, p.4-5). As a result, this research focuses on civilian casualties in Iraq. This research paper will seek to analyse how the embedding scheme affected specific coverage of civilian casualties in comparison to coverage of coalition casualties in one American newspaper, *The New York Times*.

Due to similar challenges that both embedded and unilateral reports faced in Iraq in accessing civilian populations, the hypothesis of this research paper assumes that the embedded press system did not significantly affect the amount of coverage on civilian casualties compared to unilateral reporters.

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

This chapter will explore some of the existing literature that supports the motivation and significance of this research project within a broader theoretical context. This chapter does not pretend to parade itself as an exhaustive list of the body of work that frames my research including countless theories on mass media, communication, discourse, linguistics, semiotics, rhetoric, power, and persuasion but does offer an underpinning for the relevance of the research enquiry undertaken below.

Most academic analysis of the media coverage in Iraq is embedded in communications studies and public opinion. A large amount of work that has focused on public opinion and the role of the media in shaping perceptions of the war in Iraq use various discourse analyses to deconstruct the rhetoric surrounding the war including identifying key words such as 'terrorism'. This chapter will explore specific research carried out on the embedding process, first detailing the arguments from those academics and media critics who support its use and, secondly those that criticize it with arguments mostly highlighting problems of access and bias. This chapter will then look at the broader implications of this debate by exploring theories of the media's ability to influence audiences as a powerful and authoritative actor. Lastly, this chapter will explore the challenges of foreign correspondence using theories on semiotics and the construction of meaning.

2.1 The case for embedding

The use of the embedding process was highly praised by journalists and media critics alike and both the press and government officials have shown interest in using the process again (Schechter 2003, p.33-34). However, the historical context from which the process began is highly emphasized in much of the literature that commends it (for example, Paul 2004). To frame the events that led to the emergence of the embedding process we must begin with the Vietnam War (U.S. involvement from 1954-1975), the first television war, which proved to be a public relations disaster for the U.S. military. New technology and unlimited access to battlefields birthed a new kind of war reporting that became known as "bang-bang" coverage. This first 'Living Room War,' as it has been nicknamed, relentlessly aired in-depth, gory coverage from Vietnam, leading to social divisions and bolstering antiwar sentiment at home. The fragile relationship between the military and the press reached a breaking point when, in 1968, Water Cronkite famously told *CBS Evening News* viewers that the Vietnam War was unwinnable (Katovsky 2003, p.VIII). Following this conflict, the mistrust between the two factions continued for the next thirty years. In order to avoid a repeat of Vietnam,

during the invasion of Grenada (1983), invasion of Panama (1989-1990), and the first Gulf War (1990-1991) journalists were unceremoniously denied access throughout most of the fighting (Katovsky 2003, p.VIII; Paul, 2004, p.III). This pattern continued during the first few years of the war in Afghanistan (2001-present), leaving a frustrated press desperate for more access (Katovsky 2003, p.VIII).

Poor relations with the military were not the only concerns of the press in the years prior to the invasion of Iraq. While foreign correspondence in conflict zones and areas of unrest has always been perilous, al Qaeda's emergence as a global militant Islamist organization in the late 1980's created even more dangers. A non-state actor that does not comply with conventions regarding rules of engagement or targeting of civilians, al Qaeda has intentionally targeted attacks against western journalists. The validity of death threats and bounties offered by al Qaeda for the heads of western journalists was confirmed in early 2002 by the highly publicized beheading of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan. By the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the increased security threats for journalists, not only by al Qaeda but also from other pan-Islamist paramilitary groups, became a significant consideration in the decision to embed or go unilateral. During the second week of the war journalists were warned, "Iraqis were told that they would get to keep the cars of American journalists they killed" (Santora and Smith 2003). In retrospect, author Bill Katovsky determined, "Statistically, journalists in Iraq were ten times more likely to die than the 250,000 American and British soldiers during the invasion phase" (2003, p.VII). The war in Iraq has ultimately become the most dangerous place for media workers with 231 violent deaths confirmed in the eight-year war compared to 65 deaths in the 13 years of U.S. involvement in Vietnam and Cambodia, 4 deaths in the first Gulf War and 13 deaths in the second Gulf War (CPJ 2012). As most foreign correspondents considered going unilateral equivalent to a suicide mission, the gamble was the potential loss of objectivity by embedding, or potential loss of life by going unilateral (Katovsky 2003, p.IX). The reality was that even though the number of unilateral journalists in Iraq outnumbered the embedded journalists four to one, road blocks and impediments created by both the coalition and anti-occupation forces reduced many of these journalists to reporting from neighboring countries, nearby cities, or hotel rooms, isolated from the front lines.

In a dramatic shift from the previous dismissal of the press by the Pentagon, in October 2002, five months before the invasion of Iraq, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld met with the media to notify them that if there was a war with Iraq journalists would be with the troops (Katovsky 2003, p.VIII). At the news of the Pentagon's plans for an

embedding scheme in Iraq, the press waited anxiously for what they believed would be a level of access to a U.S. war not seen since Vietnam. The official embedded press system dictated that while direct censorship was not invoked, a certain amount of journalistic freedom was sacrificed for access. Details of tactical deployments, locations, and the specific number of troops as well as identification of coalition casualties before the next-of-kin had been informed were just some of the things that embeds could not report on (Katovsky 2003, p.XV). Reports from embedded journalists were also subject to security reviews at the discretion of military unit commanders to ensure that reports produced were in compliance with military regulations, though qualitative interviews conducted with embedded journalists revealed that most did not feel that they were being censored by these security reviews, which were rare in most circumstances (Middleton 2006, p.73). Though these restrictions were not desirable for reporters, the conditions were accepted in order to gain access to military operations or facilities (Middleton 2006, p.73).

As the embedded press system was created by the Pentagon, it naturally intended to benefit U.S. military operations, though despite the criticism of these restrictions, the U.S. Department of Defense did not control all aspects of the coverage as they could not always manage what the embedded reporters were exposed to (Paul 2004, p.55). In his book, "Reporters on the Battlefield: The Embedded Press System in Historical Context", Christopher Paul concludes from qualitative interviews conducted with embedded journalists, that although there were some individual complaints by journalists who were embedded with rear echelon units[2], overall, "there were far fewer complaints during this war than seen in the previous major conventional operations, such as in Grenada, Panama and the First Gulf War" (2004, p.81). Paul systematically evaluates the embedded press system within the broader context of historical press-military relations. His conclusion states, "the embedded press system is, in general, likely to produce the greatest number of the most positive outcomes for press-military relations" (2004, p.108). The unprecedented access that the media had to military units and operations with little restriction on what they could write meant that generally, embedded reporters were satisfied with the embedding process

2.2 Criticisms of the embedded press system

While it is true that the embedded press system improved access to U.S. troops in comparison to the most recent wars, the system has also generated widespread criticism.

[2] Interviews conducted by Christopher Paul revealed that al Jazeera's embedded reporters were attached to "rear area" units, which were assigned to (and never left) Kuwait (Paul, 2004, p.54).

> "Embedded reporting has been widely criticized by journalists and scholars alike as biased, as military propaganda, as lacking in objectivity and context, as narrow in perspective and scope, and as undermining to the international reputation of the United States. (Casper in Haridakis (ed). 2009, p.207)

In addition, the technical advancements of modern warfare and use of long-range artillery (such as howitzers) strategically minimized the number of troops in direct combat in the early days of the invasion of Iraq. As a result, many embedded journalists were left reporting on the soldiers in their company or as Chris Ayres put it, describing how loud the guns were (Ayres 2005, p.258). One reporter, interviewed by Jack Shafer estimated that only 50-70% of the embedded reporters actually saw "interesting combat during the conflict" (Shafer 2003), and so coverage from embedded journalists was reduced to a focus on *strategy* (Katovsky 2003, p.XV; Schechter 2003, p.20; Ayres, 2003). Nightly news was dominated by recreations of defensive and offensive strategy like a football game, "The war had its official statisticians just as sporting events do" (Schechter 2003, p.9). The Pentagon encouraged the press to use helmet-mounted lipstick cameras in their coverage simulating a video game viewpoint of warfare (Katovsky 2003, p. XV). Former Pentagon Press Chief Kenneth Bacon, speaking on embedded reporters, told the Wall Street Journal, "they couldn't hire actors to do as good a job as they have done for the military" (quoted by Schechter 2003, p.20).

Meanwhile, coverage of civilian casualties was grossly missing in the western media (Schechter 2003, p.9). *The Project on Excellence in Journalism* studied some of the early coverage and found that "half the embedded journalists showed combat action but not a single story depicted people hit by weapons. There were no reporters embedded with Iraqi families" (Schechter 2003, p.20). In stark contrast to western coverage, the Arab media, such as al Jazeera, was particularly concentrated on civilian casualties (Katovsky 2003, p.XVII). This polarity of coverage provided Western and Arab audiences with widely different perspectives on the same war. It is precisely the issue of perspective that critics of the embedding process tend to pinpoint as a threat to fully reporting the context of events. The most widespread criticism of the embedded press system is concerned with the risks it presented to journalistic objectivity. Journalists spent every day with the same soldiers. They ate together, slept together, drove together and the troops kept the reporters from harm on a daily basis. The troops were, as *ABC News*' John Donvan put it, "my protectors" (Katovsky 2003, p.XVI). In the heat of armed conflict reporters often "crossed the line of sacred objectivity and grabbed

hand grenades, pointed out snipers, wore guns, or hired armed security"[3] (Katovsky 2003, p.XIX).

In addition to the criticisms focused on the potential of the embedded press system to create bias, two restrictions laid out by the Pentagon sparked concerns about mobility. One of these concerned transportation while the other dealt with the issue of leaving one's assigned unit. The U.S. Department of Defense's guidelines on embedding stated, "embedded media are not authorized to use their own vehicles while traveling in an embedded status" (U.S. DoD 2003, 2.C.1). This simple restriction to access of vehicles reduced embedded reporters to traveling only with military units potentially restricting all independent excursions. These rules became more lenient as the war progressed and reporters revealed that they jumped around to different units and some prominent journalists did, in fact, have access to their own vehicles, but for the most part, during the initial phase of the invasion embedded reporters were tied to their units. The second restriction was called the 'embed for life' clause which dictated that if embedded reporters were to leave their assigned units they may not be permitted to rejoin them again (Paul 2004, p.66). These two restrictions on mobility essentially gave the military and the U.S. Department of Defense the authority to place reporters wherever they liked.

Considering the poor history of military-media relations already discussed, one might understand why journalists accepted these restrictions to access without a fight (Schechter 2003, p.19). Although reporters would prefer to work without such restrictions, it is arguable that the historical context of past media access to conflicts has set a power imbalance that makes journalists and media producers hesitant to push their boundaries, not wanting to lose the little access they have been given by the embedded press system. As Jack Shafer described in *Slate* magazine only a month and a half after the initial invasion,

> "The Pentagon officer who conceived and advanced the embedded journalist program should step forward and demand a fourth star for his epaulets. By prepping reporters in boot camps and then throwing them in harm's way with the invading force, the U.S. military has generated a bounty of positive coverage of the Iraq invasion, one the decades of spinning, bobbing and weaving at rear-echelon briefings could never achieve" (Shafer 2003).

Christopher Paul's study on the embedded press is rooted in the historical context and compares the system to previous press systems used by the military rather than comparing embedded reports to unilateral reports in the same conflict. Ultimately, the Pentagon's

[3] It is important to stress the ethical conflict with these kinds of behaviors not only for the quality of news produced but also for the suspicions and dangers they create for other western unilateral journalists operating in the same (and future) contexts.

embedding program was created to allow the U.S. military to control as much of the media coverage as possible by controlling access rather than content. In doing so, the embedded system, as a media management tool, arguably avoids accusation of direct censorship.

2.3 Media as power and authority

The debate on whether to embed or not has postured itself at the forefront of human rights discourse in the media, particularly concerning civilian casualties in conflict zones. State adherence to international humanitarian law is a fragile concept in war, one that the media monitors as a watchdog. This position gives the media significant power to influence the way human rights are understood globally.

It is an ever-present reality that we are inundated daily with information from the mass media in increasing quantities. This wide-reaching mass media has become a driving force in society (Gaines 2010, p.5), particularly in how we understand the world around us. "What we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through the mass media" (Niklas Luhmann quoted by Döveling 2011, p.2). This has driven many critical discourse analysts to develop theories that systematically demonstrate how the media is deeply related to the construction and perpetuation of power and ideology (Johnson 2010, p.5).

Voltaire once said, "Power consists in making others act as I choose," (Arendt,1969, p.236) and many theoretical notions of power and authority closely follow his assertions. The annual list of "The World's Most Powerful People" as published by *Forbes* magazine, measure an individual's power along four dimensions: (1) the number of people they have power over; (2) financial resources including control of valuable natural resources; (3) their power in multiple spheres such as business, politics, and philanthropy; and (4) the active demonstration of their power in use (Ewalt 2012). These criteria, if extended beyond individuals, also characterise the immense power held by institutions such as the government, the church, and the media. As an institution, the media demonstrates power through its ability to greatly influence social discourse about current issues (Gaines 2010, p.1). What an individual knows or assumes to know and understand about the world is through the media, whether they are aware of it or not (Gaines 2010, p.61).

While power over others via institutions can be demonstrated through dominance and militant force, this paper is concerned primarily with an ability to influence others by consent. In this way, "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert," Hannah Arendt notes, it is "never the property of an individual; it belongs to a group" (1969,

p.239). Similarly, where an individual, office, or institution is in a position of authority over others, Arendt asserts that such a position is only feasible because they have literally been *empowered* by the group. In this sense, the media derives its power and authority by social consent. Unlike a political office, reporters have not been democratically elected to their positions, but a certain amount of generally agreed upon trust within a society has been assigned to these individuals to report accurately and ethically and even act as proxies or substitutes who symbolically represent audiences' beliefs and attitudes (Gaines 2010, p.59). Typically, the position of power by consent is recognized unquestioningly by subordinates and seen as natural, however, authority can only remain if the group respects the individual, office or institution (Arendt 1969, p.239). This form of power by consent, as opposed to power through dominance has contributed to increasing scholarship on how powerful groups use media to exercise control over subordinate groups (Simpson 2010, p.2).

The Marxist approach to a discussion of media tends to either focus on state-controlled media outlets (a dominant display of power) or views media a tool for a hegemonic control by the dominant class over ideology, beliefs, and values. This notion assumes that producers of the news media prepare information with the intention of affecting their audience in specific ways, carefully coding their ideas using subtle methods including building and promoting shared symbols to deliver a specific message (Gaines 2010, p.4). Motivations for utilizing symbols to communicate an intended meaning from global events in the media can range from a desire to increase revenue or spread a specific cultural ideology. This cultural hegemony is evident even at the most basic level by what events reporters and news producers deem to be newsworthy. In this way the producers of media have an "extraordinary power to shape images and ideas that dominate social discourse", informing and influencing attitudes, beliefs, and practices (Gaines 2010, p.59).

The media's power by consent is characterized by *empowerment* by audiences (as discussed by Arendt). In other words, if every person in the world decided to turn off their televisions and radios or refuse to buy newspapers, the news media would theoretically lose all power over their audience. Some theorists, such as Louis Althusser, seek to understand why audiences actively participate in seeking to identify themselves within the structures of society (Gaines 2010, p.71). Althusser's concept of interpellation indicates that people understand themselves according to the cultural narratives in the media that are guided by the values and beliefs of the dominant ideology (Gaines 2010, p.71). In addition to identifying themselves personally though media messages, research has shown that audiences continue to expose themselves to news media because it offers them a form of gratification (Döveling

2011, p.134). Even in media that depicts tragic or uncomfortable content, audiences find some form of gratification that comes from a belief that they have been exposed to content that is meaningful (Döveling 2011, p.134), highlighting the media's role in the cyclical process of communication and the construction of meaning. The pursuit of personal gratification and identification from the symbols used by the mass media serves to increase the influencing power of the media.

2.4 The semiotic sign and the construction of meaning

The media's power to influence audiences directly affects its crucial role in the audience's construction of meaning. C.S. Peirce's three-sided model of the semiotic sign consists of: (1) the sign or representational expression; (2) the thing referred to; and (3) the understanding or decoding of the sign which creates the potential to generate a new sign in the mind of an interpreter (Gaines 2010, p.69). Peirce's theory argues that objects have no meaning in and of themselves "unless the sign is being interpreted from a practical context in someone's mind" (Gaines 2010, p.39). However, because of the individual nature in the reception of new information, new contexts are created that "can potentially alter interpretation of the intended meaning" (Gaines 2010, p.39). All of us innately have the capabilities to perceive and interpret signs and *semiotics* is simply a study of these signs, the exploration of their significance and what they represent and convey (Gaines 2010, p.7). Simply, the triadic sign dictates, "communication is a continuous process of representation, perception and interpretation" (Gaines 2010, p.9). In this sense, semiotics is significant to an analysis of media discourse because it "encourages a systematic awareness of how meanings are expressed and interpreted" and how signs work to produce meaning (Gaines 2010, p.7). Because of the potential to alter interpretation of the intended meaning (part three of the triadic sign), "communication is necessarily ambiguous because there are many potential interpretations possible from a variety of perspectives" (Gaines 2010, p.39). This ambiguity is an uncomfortable reality for reporters and media producers who wish to portray their articles as truth, when really their articles are, at best, only a version of reality. Peirce draws a distinction in his theory between that which is true and that which is real. An example of this is the use of symbols for specific groups or subcultures. The meaning of a symbol or an emblem becomes representative for something to a particular group so while "the meaning of a symbol may be real to those who understand it, it may not actually represent something that is true to others" (Gaines 2010, p.40).

The representation, perception, and interpretation of that which is 'real' and 'true' continuously create problems within the field of photojournalism where abstract concepts are

assigned to images and made concrete. The famous Pulitzer Prize winning photograph "Saigon Execution" which was taken by Edward Adams during the Vietnam War is a perfect example of this (see Figure 1). The photograph was taken on February 1, 1968 and depicts Brig. Gen. Nguyen Ngoc Loan, chief of the South Vietnamese national police executing a handcuffed Vietcong prisoner, Nguyen Van Lem. The image, while a version of real events, failed to explain the true context, which was that Loan had reason to believe Nguyen Van Lem had just murdered one of Loan's senior officers along with his entire family. The image was circulated worldwide and was adopted by the peace movement as a symbol of the war's brutality (Newseum 2013). Loan faced a sea of international criticism for his conduct but Adams, who stayed in touch with Loan, said that the photo "wrongly stereotyped the man" and Adams expressed much guilt throughout his life for the interpretations of his photograph (Newseum 2013). This gap between the 'real' and the 'true' is a particular problem for reporters and media producers in conflict zones as context is critical and often difficult to convey to audiences who are removed from the daily struggles of survival in war.

Figure 1: "Saigon Execution" taken by Edward Adams, 1968

While this problem is common in the field of photojournalism, the same complications of ambiguity also arise with written text. News articles often fail to grasp the greater context due to real or perceived barriers including problems of physical access to elements of the news story, personal biases in framing the event, or internal and external pressures tied to nationalism or patriotism. Individual journalists report not only from their physical orientation within a conflict but from their own moral, social, political, and religious orientations, evidenced simply by what events they deem to be newsworthy or appropriate for audiences.

In an interview published in Bill Katovsky's book "Embedded: The media at war in Iraq," columnist Gordon Dillow addresses how simple word choice can impact audience perceptions of a story. Dillow, who was an embedded reporter with the Marines for the Orange County Register during the war in Iraq, explained that while writing for a family newspaper he censored the language used in his interviews. "When you take out the word "fuck" from the Marine lexicon, you're reducing the words by like thirty percent," he said, and as a result, "you tend to make them sound more like choirboys than they really are" (2003, p.49). In "cleaning up" the language used by the Marines, Dillow was aware that he was distorting the true reality of Marine culture.

Even though these examples demonstrate the problems with ambiguous interpretation, perception and interpretation of signs by reporters or media producers, generally, society attempts to create stable relationships between words and meanings, dictionaries are a systematic example of this (Gaines 2010, p.41). Language is typically used with the arrogant assumption that symbols represent meanings that are understood as the speaker or writer intended. For all our efforts to stabilize meaning, languages remain fluid and "continuously change through perpetual use, modification, and adaptation to new contexts" (Gaines 2010, p.41). In this way, media has incredible power to influence the creation of new signs through representation of events using newly created symbols developed through repeated use and a shared perspective and/or interpretation. An example of this is the use of key words that framed the invasion of Iraq such as "terrorism." Additional complications arise when audiences interpret or decode these messages or news stories according to their *own* individual perceptions and contexts. In this sense, the power of the media in the construction of meaning should not be reduced only to the content of the mediated text but also in the variability in the audience's reception of the text (Johnson 2010, p.5). While this issue is one that will not be further explored in this paper, it is important to note the consistent challenges that arise from the cyclical process of representation, perception, and interpretation in the construction of meaning.

2.5 Conclusion

The power of the media to influence global human rights discourse reiterates the significance of the embed/unilateral debate. While many authors acknowledge that unilateral journalists faced a myriad of problems accessing the civilian population in Iraq, the embedded press system continues to be a point of contention with media critics and academics alike. However, existing research related to the embedding system typically takes a qualitative approach with interviews or surveys conducted with journalists and the audiences. There is a

dearth of research that attempt to enlighten the embedded/unilateral debate by using a quantitative approach to compare and highlight coverage of a specific human rights phenomenon such as civilian casualties; this research paper attempts to remedy that. Building on previous work related to criticisms of the embedded press system and challenges unilateral journalists faced in Iraq, this research paper questions the legitimacy of the criticisms of the embedding process as the cause for a lack of focus on civilian casualties, while also exploring the media's role in the construction of meaning.

CHAPTER THREE: Theoretical and practical methodology

3.1 The deductive approach

This research took a deductive approach as a hypothesis had already been formed from the previous qualitative research that fills much of the literature on the embed and unilateral debate. As already explored in the literature review, the general criticisms of the embedding process are grounded in concerns related to access and bias while the concerns of unilateral coverage were for access due to logistical struggles and safety concerns. My hypothesis then assumed that as both embedded and unilateral reporters faced challenges related to access, the embedding process might not actually have had an impact on the overall coverage of civilian casualties during the initial invasion of Iraq. With this in mind, I then undertook quantitative data collection with the intention of comparing my data pool to determine the accuracy of my hypothesis.

3.2 Purposive sampling

Due to the potential scope of my research question, purposive sampling was applied for the selection of the newspaper and dates to be analysed. Sampling is one of the key ways that quantitative research is undertaken due to its goal to represent reality (Greener 2010, p.62). Sampling from the mass of 'American media' during the Iraq war, *The New York Times* newspaper was selected due to its high circulation numbers. *The New York Times* is the second highest circulated newspaper in the United States following *The Wall Street Journal* (Lee 2013). Of these two newspapers, *The New York Times* was selected for the sampling of this research because of its unique position as a liberal newspaper that failed to sufficiently question the Bush administration's claims of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction in the lead up to the war. In retrospect, *The New York Times* has issued a public apology, acknowledging that its coverage had been "insufficiently qualified" and allowed the Bush administrations assertions to "stand unchallenged" (Greenwald 2007).

This research also sampled from the large amount of *The New York Times'* coverage of the initial phase of the invasion of Iraq (March 19 until May 1, 2003). Although the invasion of Iraq took place on March 19, 2003, the *New York Times* coverage in the early days of the war was not consolidated into the "Nation at War" section. As my data was collected by reading through each article to identify the coverage of civilian casualties, it would have been too time consuming to review an entire *New York Times* newspaper for the first seven days of the war. As a result, the data collected for this analysis ranges from March 26 until April 2, 2003, covering the second week of the invasion. This week was also selected

based on the high number of civilian casualties documented during this week, 2,447 according to Iraq Body Count (IBC 2012). Though there were spikes of violence and the total civilian casualties totaled higher annually in 2005, 2006, and 2007, the week of March 26 until April 2, 2003 week set the record for the highest civilian body count in all of the war (IBC 2012).

The research and data collection in this process did not include photographs, editorials and/or letters to the editor. My data collection from *The New York Times* was isolated to the front page and the "Nation at War" section of the newspaper and concerned only those articles discussing the Iraq War, all other articles in this section were omitted (for example those discussing Afghanistan or North Korea). The "Nation at War" section was typically 15 to 20 pages long with approximately 30 articles not including the 6-8 front-page articles that also concerned the invasion of Iraq.

3.3 Variable-oriented comparative research

This research undertook a comparative approach to analyse the differences or similarities in coverage of civilian casualties by both unilateral and embedded journalists. In the broadest sense, the comparative method has been defined as research that compares at least two different kinds of data. In this research project though there was only meant to be two kinds of data, unilateral and embedded, the data categories were expanded to include unilateral and embedded reporters who were not based in Iraq. The comparative method was employed for it's usefulness in identifying similarities and differences in each kind of data to determine casual variables of a common phenomenon, in this case the reporting of civilian casualties (Flick 2004, p.147). Comparative research has greater potential in explaining phenomenon than a single case study, as it produces "limited generalizations concerning the causes of theoretically defined categories of empirical phenomena […] common to a set of cases" (Ragin 1987, p.35). Such research can be useful in identifying causal patterns of a specific phenomenon (Ragin 1987, p.35). Although the variable-oriented comparative approach is considered superior in identifying causal patterns, "statistical methods assume that causal relationships are at best probabilistic" (Ragin 1987, p.58). A limitation in using statistics is the problem of ecological fallacy, the error of making assumptions about individuals or causation from findings based on a large pool of statistics (Corbetta 2003, p.208; Bryman 2012, p.711). While the research question and hypothesis of this paper are based on much of the research conclusions made from other qualitative studies, in an effort to reduce this potential of ecological fallacy, this study does not seek to pinpoint causation of a phenomenon (the reporting or underreporting of civilian casualties), but rather question the

validity of other critics that isolate the embedding process as the reason (or cause) for a lack of American media coverage on civilian casualties in comparison to coalition casualties.

Unlike other approaches to comparative research such as case studies, variable-oriented comparative research allows "comparative social scientists to study more than a handful of cases at a time" (Ragin 1987, p.57). This scope allows the researcher to identify patterns of a particular phenomenon within a sample of data, in this case, the phenomenon being the reporting of civilian casualties. Variable-oriented comparative research does not require researchers to be familiar with each case, allowing the researchers to further cover more cases and make their results more accessible to non-experts of a particular field (Ragin 1987, p.58). This lack of familiarity with individual cases can cause potential problems related to context and interpretation of data. While it is true that, "statistics are limited to factual variables […] the whole subjective sphere of opinions, attitudes and motivations is therefore excluded" (Corbetta 2003, p.208), as already discussed in the literature review chapter, most of the work already done in relation to the embedded process takes a qualitative approach with interviews revealing a wide variety of perspectives on the embedding process even by those who were embedded. There is not a lack of subjective opinions, attitudes and motivations published with respect to the embedding process, but this research seeks to enlighten the debate with statistical evidence. This project also attempts to reduce the margin of error regarding context and interpretation of data by dealing solely with primary data. Every case was carefully weighed so that the context of the phenomenon in question, the reporting of civilian casualties, would not be mistaken.

3.4 Reporter classification

Perhaps the most important data collected was the reporter classification, the determination if an article was written by a reporter who was embedded with a military unit or not. The official terms 'embed' and 'unilateral' as a classification system for journalists was determined by the credentials issued by the Pentagon and was not a term used by journalists prior to the war in Iraq. Although a formal request to obtain the list of media credentials, approximately 2,700 in total, issued by the Pentagon in March 2003 was submitted to the U.S. Department of Defense, the inquiry has not yet been answered. Alternatively, classification was applied during the data collection process, documenting the author and the location identified. Typically, articles by embedded reporters listed the military unit instead of the location as revealing specific locations was against the rules imposed on embedded journalists by the Pentagon (U.S. DoD 2003). For example, embedded *New York Times* reporter Jim Dwyer's location was typically listed as 101st Airborne Division, while his general location,

such as northern Iraq, was identified within the article (Dwyer, 2003). Even where some articles did not specify whether the reporters were embedded or unilateral, these labels were useful in quickly identifying reporters who were cited as embedded in other articles. The conclusion that these reporters were consistently embedded in articles that did not cite their military units is consistent with the Pentagon's "embed for life" rule that was previously discussed (Paul 2004, p.66). Though these rules became more flexible a few years later in 2008 and 2009, most embedded reporters stayed with their military units in the early stages of the war (Paul 2004, p.66). Articles by unilateral reporters on the other hand did not clarify official non-military status so for additional credibility of the data in this research paper all unilateral reporters were contacted individually to confirm their official status from March 26 until April 2, 2003[4]. Two additional categories were added to classify reporters who were not based in Iraq. Due to the information gleaned from qualitative literature consulted before undertaking this research project, it is clear that many reporters who were based in neighbouring countries were not satisfied with the quantity or quality of the information they were receiving. The BBC's Peter Hunt who was based at Central Command in Qatar, "complained in BBC World that he was getting so little official information that he "might as well be on the moon"." (Rutenberg and Carter, 2003). Unilateral reporters who were not in Iraq (referred to simply as unilateral non-Iraq) included reporters in Kuwait or Central Command in Qatar as well as U.S. and European-based reporters. For the purposes of this research paper, the 'unilateral non-Iraq' classification was assigned liberally to all those reporters not embedded with the military. This includes articles writing on the Iraq war from the United States and official transcripts from public statements (such as the Federal Document Clearing House). For clarity in the analysis of these data classifications, this dissertation will explore not only embedded and unilateral reports from journalists in Iraq but also embedded and unilateral reports from journalists not in Iraq.

3.5 Recording casualties

Three key data points were collected based on the classification of casualties in an article: (1) civilian, (2) coalition, and (3) anti-occupation casualties. Like the umbrella category of 'coalition forces,' which includes American, British, Australian, and Polish troops as well as irregular Kurdish forces, 'anti-occupation forces' is an umbrella category for all armed resistance to coalition forces which included (but was not limited to) Iraqi Republican

[4] A few reporters could not be contacted and their statuses were subsequently determined deductively through interviews, books they authored, and the content of their articles including their locations (Neela Banerjee, unilateral; Patrick E. Tyler, unilateral; Craig S. Smith, unilateral; Charlie Le Duff, unilateral; Dexter Filkins, embedded).

Guard casualties, paramilitary troops loyal to Saddam Hussein including Ansar al-Islam, al Quds volunteer brigades, Special Security Organization, Fedayeen Saddam, and irregular fighters or armed opposition fighters who were not clearly recognizable as belonging to any one opposition group. In addition to armed paramilitary troops, the anti-occupation classification grouping also included members of the Baath Party as coalition forces regarded them as combatants, even if they had not taken up arms. Due to the confusing amount of groups that opposed coalition forces, "even soldiers had given up on labels, calling them simply "bad guys" or "military aged males" over the combat radio" (Wilson 2003). For the purposes of this research paper suicides were not recorded as casualties for any of the casualty classification groups as the analysis of this research paper. As a result, suicide bombers were not recorded as casualties but were recorded as the responsible party any subsequent deaths as a result of the blast.

In several articles, the wording used to describe hostile encounters with anti-occupation forces indicated that conflict occurred but did not explicitly note any deaths, which was problematic for data collection purposes. For example, the data collected from an article by James Dao, "Allied Air and Ground Units Try to Weaken Baath Party's Grip", (2003) indicates that no anti-occupation casualties were reported, however the article clearly states that American fighter jets bombed an office building "during a meeting on Friday night attended by 200 Baath Party officials". One can reasonably assume that some or all of these officials were killed, but this research explores only the information that was reported at the time and not the true reality of the events. As this article did not explicitly state that any of these officials died in the attack, the data indicates that no anti-occupation casualties were mentioned in this specific article. Likewise, an article titled, "Wounded American Soldiers Recall Ambushes by Iraqi Troops in Civilian Garb" (Landler 2003) cites military personnel discussing shooing Iraqi soldiers who were dressed as civilians, but does not explicitly mention if they were killed and so was not recorded as a mention of anti-occupation casualties in the final data collection.

The analysis of data in this paper does not explore the total number of casualties reported in *The New York Times* but rather, the total number of articles that mentioned casualties. Individual articles were recorded as having reference to casualties and what kinds of casualties were mentioned including civilian, coalition or anti-occupation. So, in some cases articles can fall into several casualty classification groups. While this research did not tally the explicit number of uniquely individual cases of casualties, it does tally articles according to their content in terms of casualty classification. For example, three references to

three different and unique cases of civilian casualties in one article were not counted as three civilian casualties but rather one article that referenced civilian casualties. In fact, it was common that multiple articles in the same day or week addressed the same event, for example a marketplace explosion in Baghdad, though the observation was not explored further in this research.

In addition to categorizing the type of casualties, the data collected also identified whether each mention of casualties was a direct, abstract, or secondary mention. Abstract mentions of civilian casualties did not refer to a specific event, for example, France's statement that they hope the war ends with "few casualties" (Cowell (2) 2003). Secondary mentions were those that emphasized the secondary nature of civilian casualties, for example in a *New York Times* article published on March 27, 2003, Alan Cowell indicates that civilian casualties from previous conflicts were being exploited by Iraqi propaganda to bolster anti-American sentiment (Cowell (1) 2003). Although mentions of coalition and anti-occupation casualties were recorded for initial comparative purposes against the mentions of civilian casualties, a number of additional data points were collected only if the article mentioned a civilian casualty to explore any potential differences between embed and unilateral reports.

3.6 Evaluating coverage of civilian casualties

Additional data collected for articles dealing with civilian casualties included the prominence of the mention of civilian casualties in the article, prominence of the article in the newspaper, nationalities of the deceased, whether or not a responsible party was identified, whether or not specific names of victims were included, and whether or not quotes from civilians such as witnesses, or friends or family of the deceased were included.

3.6.1 Evaluating prominence

All articles were recorded with their page numbers in their respective newspapers for comparative purposes. However, articles discussing civilian casualties also recorded the prominence of the mention within the article. A labelling system was created to easily distinguish the prominence of a civilian casualty mention in an article as "High", "Medium," or "Low". In order to be recorded as highly prominent the article must have mentioned the casualties either in the title or in the opening paragraphs of an article. Medium prominence was recorded where mentions dominated a significant portion of the article (at least a paragraph), or more than one low prominence mentions of casualties throughout the article. Low prominence was recorded as anything less than medium or high prominence mentions.

These were typically only one or two sentences long and often buried in the article or attached onto the end in the final paragraph.

3.6.2 Recording responsible parties

Many articles did not identify a responsible party for civilian casualties, as both the Iraqi government and the coalition governments blamed the other side. In these cases, the responsible party is recorded as "Unclear". Even though accusations are sometimes recorded, if the journalist did not identify a responsible party and neither party has taken responsibility for the casualty in question, despite implications, the responsible party of these casualties were recorded as officially "Unclear." For example, in an article published March 30, 2003, John F. Burns, a unilateral reporter working in Baghdad, describes the scene after an explosion at a Baghdad market killed 52 people (Burns (2) 2003). In the article, Iraqi officials blamed the U.S. while U.S. officials said that the incident was still under investigation neither denying nor accepting responsibility for the explosion. As a result, the duty bearer for the incident is recorded as "Unclear" for the purposes of this research paper.

3.7 Conclusion

Quantitative comparative research on human rights discourse in the media can shed light on whether embedded or unilateral reporting affected coverage of civilian casualties in Iraq. It is true that qualitative analysis can explore the key motivations in further detail (David 2004, p.57), but a statistical analysis can give these subjective arguments more credibility, or alternatively, give cause to question the conclusions made by these arguments. In the case of the coverage of civilian casualties, statistics can shed light on whether more or less coverage came from embedded or unilateral reporters while qualitative research can further explore the casual factors for differences or similarities in coverage by both kinds of reporters, filling the gaps left by statistical analysis. However, the existing research is heavily concentrated on qualitative research, as discussed in the literature review chapter. As a result, this research paper uses the quantitative comparative approach to shed light on the embed/unilateral debate as it relates to human rights discourse in the media.

CHAPTER FOUR: Findings and analysis

4.1 Comparing mentions of all casualties

The two most important variables in this research project were identifying the reporter classification of each article (embed or unilateral) and recording any mentions of casualties in the content of the report. The total sum of the data on mentions of casualties collected and the averages of the data collected in each reporter classification grouping tell two very interesting and connected stories about the reporting of casualties in Iraq. A total of 265 articles from the front page and the "Nation at War" section of *The New York Times* discussed the invasion of Iraq from March 26 until April 2, 2003. Each of these articles were classified by reporter grouping: embedded or unilateral reporters in Iraq, or alternatively, embedded or unilateral reporters not in Iraq.

As Figure 2 shows, 73% of all articles on the invasion of Iraq came from unilateral reporters who were not in Iraq, 12% came from embedded reporters, 9% came from unilateral reporters and only 6% came from embedded reporters who were not based in Iraq. It is worth noting that while the official number of unilateral reporters operating in Iraq at this time outnumbered embedded reporters nearly four to one (Katovsky 2003, p.VII), this is not reflected in the *New York Times'* coverage during the second week of the war with embedded reports making up 3% more articles than unilateral reports. However, this study cannot confirm the total number of *New York Times* reporters working in an embedded or unilateral capacity in Iraq during this week, as it is possible that some reporters did not publish any articles during this time.

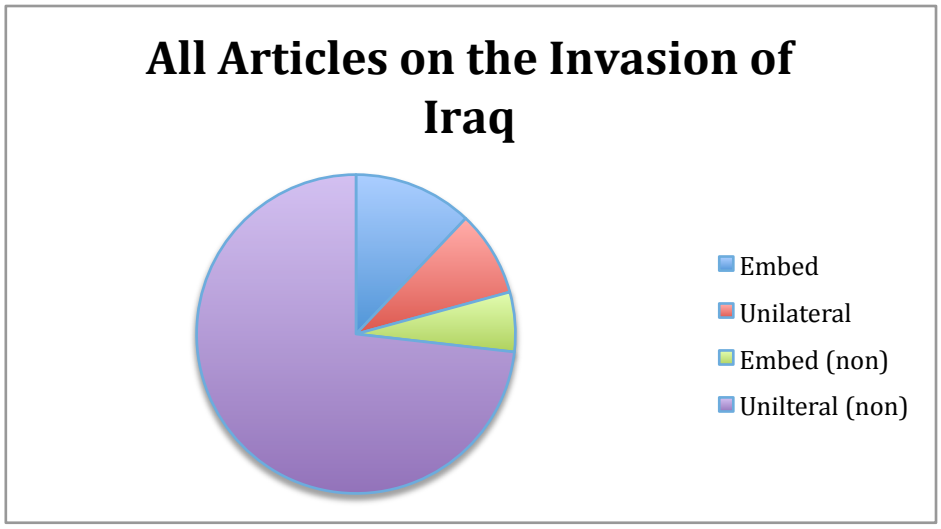

Figure 2. This table shows the total articles on the invasion of Iraq by reporter classification grouping

This data clearly shows that the vast majority of the articles written on the invasion of Iraq during the second week of the war came from reporters who were not experiencing the war from within the borders of Iraq. Figure 3 shows that of all these articles published on the invasion of Iraq, 49% did not make any mentions of any casualties at all, 36% had at least one mention of a coalition casualty, 25% had at least one mention of a civilian casualty, and 15% had at least one mention of an anti-occupation casualty. Articles that mentioned more than one casualty classification group were counted more than once for this specific evaluation. The largest portion of articles, those that did not mention any casualties, mostly discussed political speeches, strategy, equipment, public opinion, and international relations.

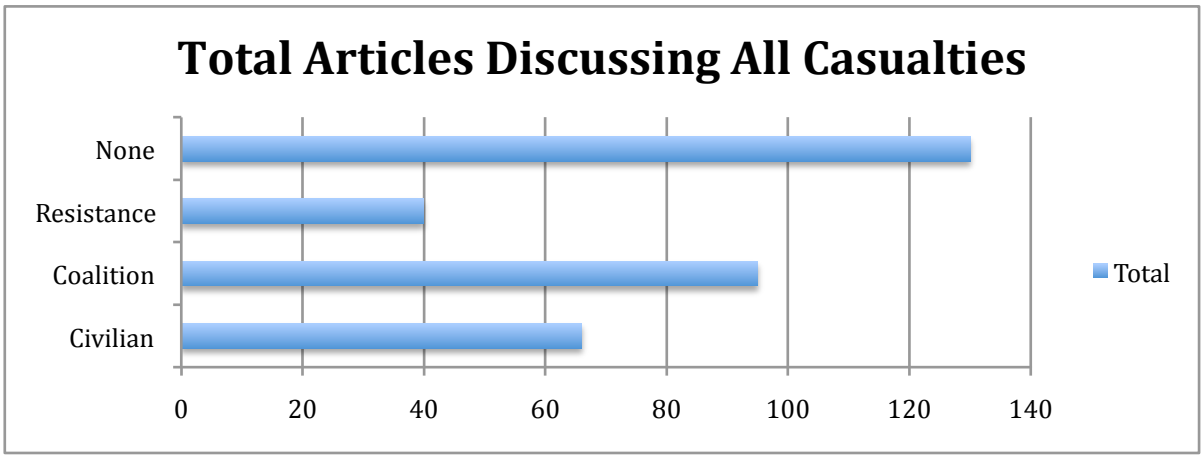

Figure 3. This table shows from the total number of articles on the invasion of Iraq how many mentioned by casualty classification group as well as how many articles did not mention any casualties.

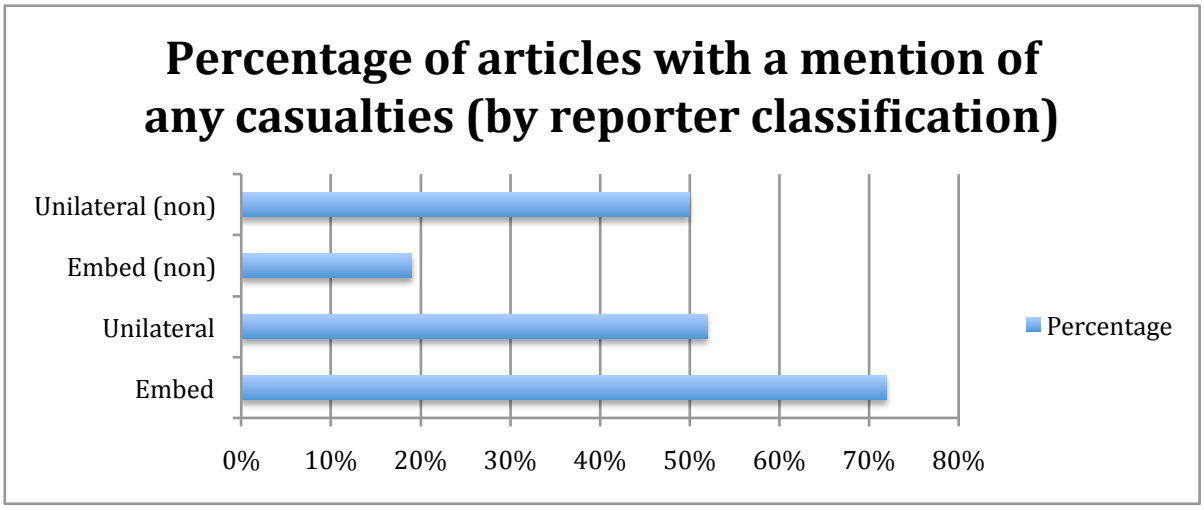

Figure 4. This table shows the percentage of each reporter classification grouping that makes mention of any casualties.

Due to the disparity of articles published by each reporter classification (Figure 2), in order to accurately explore the content of these articles in comparison to each other, average coverage by each reporter classification group was analysed. Figure 3 shows that although a large portion of articles did not make mention of any casualties at all, of the articles that did

report a casualty, it was likely that it was a coalition casualty. As Figure 4 demonstrates, although embedded reports only made for 12% of the total articles on the invasion of Iraq, 72% of all embed reports mention a casualty (civilian, coalition or anti-occupation).

Of the total number of unilateral reporters not operating in Iraq, 66% were based in the United States while the remaining 34% were based typically in a European state, Kuwait, or Qatar. These unilateral non-Iraq articles were significantly more concerned with coalition casualties than civilian or anti-occupation casualties, with 38% of unilateral non-Iraq articles mentioning coalition casualties, 25% mentioning civilian casualties, and only 10% mentioning anti-occupation casualties. Considering the large portion of unilateral non-Iraq articles compared to all other reporter classification group, the implications of a preferred focus on coalition casualties in this grouping can significantly alter the total amount of casualty grouping that readers are exposed to (see Figure 3).

4.2 The case for unilateral coverage of civilian casualties

Borrowing from the data shown in Figure 3, this chapter will focus specifically on the 66 articles that mention civilian casualties, or 25% of all the articles on the invasion of Iraq. Across all the reporter classification groups at least 80% of articles discussing civilian casualties identified the nationalities of the deceased as Iraqi. Figures 5 and 6 show the total articles that mention civilian casualties of the 265 articles recorded, and the average coverage of civilian casualties in articles by reporter classification, respectively. The primary goal of this research paper was to identify whether the embedded press system affected the reporting of civilian casualties. As Figure 5 shows, 9 of the total articles that mention civilian casualties came from embedded reporters in Iraq, 6 came from unilateral reporters in Iraq, and 2 came from embedded reporters who were not in Iraq. The remaining 49 articles came from unilateral reporters who were not in Iraq.

Of the 66 articles that mention civilian casualties, Figure 5 shows their reporter classification grouping. At first glance it would seem to show that reporters who were not in Iraq reported the most on civilian casualties (49 articles from the total 66 articles that mention civilian casualties). However, the averages of each reporter classification group tell a different story (see Figure 6). Figure 6 highlights the average number of articles that discuss civilian casualties within their respective reporter classification groups. This data shows that the average coverage of civilian casualties mentioned by embedded, unilateral and unilateral non-Iraq reporters were very similar, 28%, 26%, and 25%, respectively. The data collected on the remaining reporter classification group, embedded non-Iraq reporters, showed an irregular

pattern of coverage in most circumstances. This classification group also had the least total articles in *The New York Times* compared to all other groups with only 16 articles, or 6% of all articles on the invasion of Iraq.

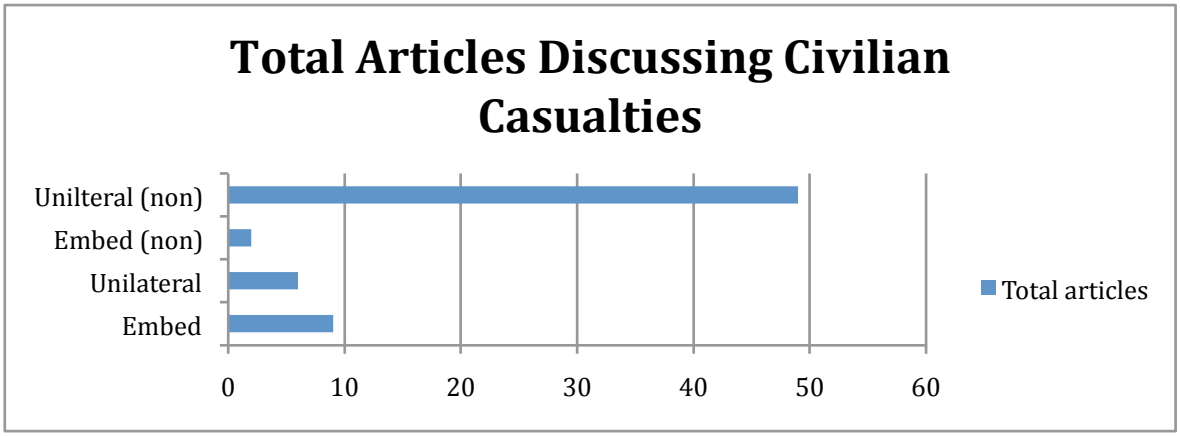

Figure 5. This chart shows the total number of articles (66) from March 26-April 2, 2003 that reported civilian casualties, as broken down into reporter classification.

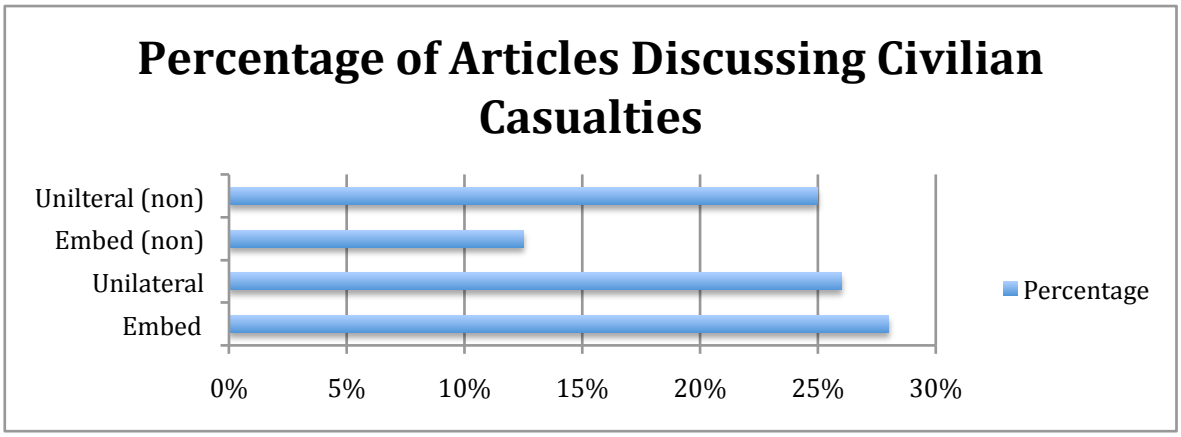

Figure 6. This chart shows the percentage of articles that mention civilian casualties in each reporter classification group.

While much of the criticisms related to the underreporting of civilian casualties by the American media focus on the embedded press system, at first glance these findings appear to suggest that there is not a significant difference between the embedded and unilateral coverage of civilian casualties in terms of the average amount of articles that mention civilian casualties in each reporter classification grouping. This would suggest that the embedded press system did not affect the total number of articles that mentioned civilian casualties in *The New York Times*, confirming the initial hypothesis of this research paper. However, the additional data on the specific content in each mention of civilian casualties in these articles reveal a different story.

4.2.1 Abstract and secondary mentions of civilian casualties

During the data collection process, each mention of a civilian casualty in an article was also categorized as either a direct, abstract, or secondary mention. As already discussed in the methodology chapter, abstract or secondary mentions either do not refer to a specific event or the article makes a point of indicating that the information regarding a civilian casualty is from a secondary source. Figure 7 is the same as Figure 6 but the Figure 7 highlights articles with mentions of civilian casualties that are abstract or secondary. The data shows that just over half, or 56%, of the articles with mentions of civilian casualties reported by embedded journalists in Iraq were only secondary or abstract mentions. Alternatively, 100% of the articles by unilateral reporters in Iraq with mentions of civilian casualties were direct mentions of a specific event. In fact, this data shows that unilateral reporters in Iraq were the only reporter classification group that did not make any abstract or secondary mentions of civilian casualties.

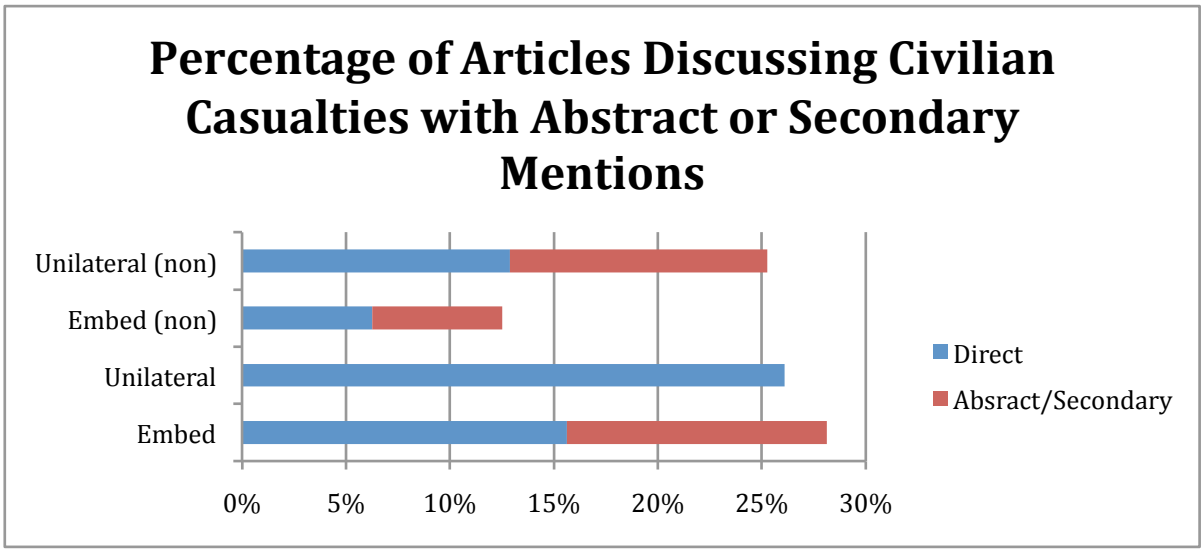

Figure 7. This chart shows the percentage of articles that mention civilian casualties in each reporter classification group with articles that mention abstract or secondary references to civilian casualties highlighted.

4.2.2 Names, nationalities and civilian quotes

Additional data from these articles were collected to assess the level of detail given to mentions of civilian casualties. No classification grouping of reporters provided any names of civilian casualties except for unilateral reporters in Iraq. The data shows that 17% of unilateral articles that mention civilian casualties provided at least one name for a civilian victim[5]. Quotes from civilian sources such as witnesses, friends or family of the deceased were singled out from official sources, such as political or military figures, for their potential

[5] In reality, however, this 17% makes up only one article that included the name of one victim, a six-year-old girl named Iman Fadil who was killed in a marketplace bombing in Baghdad (Burns (2) 2003).

to shed light on the civilian experience of the war. No articles by embedded reporters (in or out of Iraq) that mentioned civilian casualties produced any quotes from civilians on the casualty reported. Unilateral reporters once again produced the highest average in reporter their classification grouping with 9% of unilateral articles that mention civilian casualties also providing quotes from other civilians[6]. The only other reporter classification grouping that provided any quotes from civilians on civilian casualties were unilateral non-Iraq reporters with only 1% of articles that mention civilian casualties by unilateral non-Iraq reporters.

While it would seem from the increased details in unilateral articles discussing civilian casualties such as a preferred emphasis on specific events rather than abstract or secondary mentions, the inclusion of victims' names, and quotes from civilian witnesses, family members or friends of the deceased, that unilateral reporting supports a greater human rights discourse in coverage than embedded reporting. However, an additional variable was recorded during the data collection process that would suggest an important role for embedded reporters in identifying coalition forces as the responsible party in the deaths of some civilian casualties.

4.2.3 Prominence and the coverage of civilian casualties

In addition to the detailed data collected on the content of each embedded and unilateral article that mentions civilian casualties, the prominence of those mentions within their respective articles as well as the prominence of those articles within their respective newspapers was also evaluated against each other. As Figure 8 shows, mentions of civilian casualties in unilateral articles, on average, had higher prominence in their articles, 50% of all civilian casualties in unilateral articles, than embedded articles as only one article, or 11% of embedded articles with civilian casualty mentions, were given high prominence[7]. In fact, embedded reports that mention civilian casualties mostly qualified as low prominence mentions (67%), as they were only given one or two sentences of the entire article and were often buried in the body of the article or attached onto the end in the final paragraph.

It is possible that the tendency towards low and medium mentions of civilian casualties in embedded reports were due to the abstract and secondary nature of 50% of the total civilian casualty mentions by embedded reporters as already discussed. The greater amount of detail given to each mention of civilian casualties in unilateral reports such as

[6] It is interesting to note that the same unilateral reporter, John F. Burns, wrote the singular article that mentioned the name of Iman Fadil as well as the only two unilateral articles that provided quotes from civilians on civilian casualties.

[7] The scheme created to identify each mention as a high, medium, or low prominence mention is explained in the methodology chapter of this research paper.

references to specific events, names of the deceased, and quotes by other civilians, typically made for more sentences in their respective articles, and therefore, an average higher prominence of civilian casualties in unilateral reports.

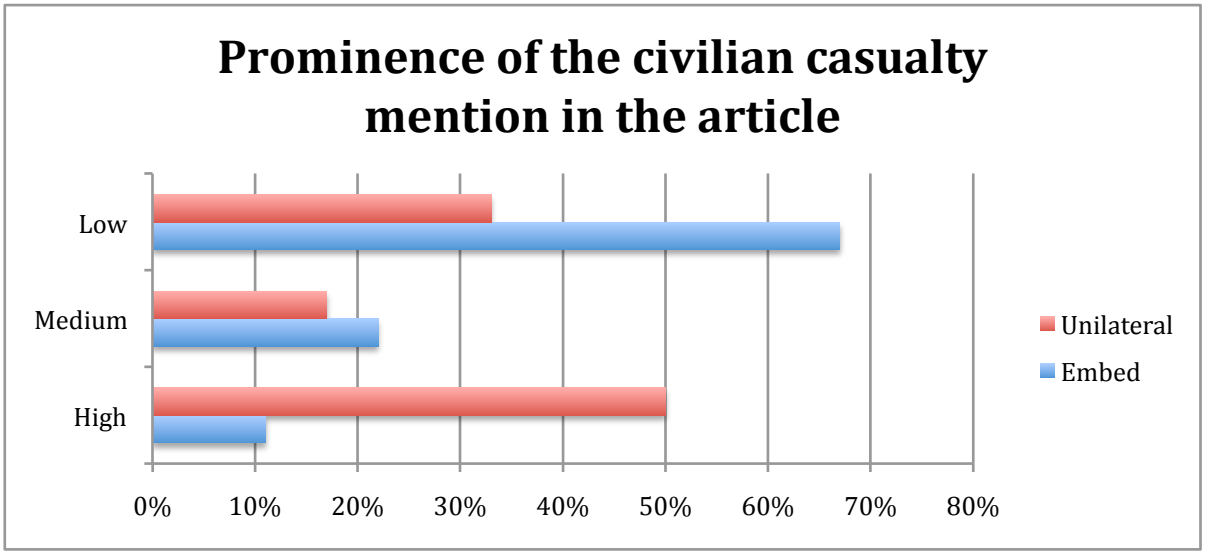

Figure 8. This chart shows the average prominence of a civilian casualty mention in an article

Analysis of the prominence of embedded and unilateral articles that mention civilian casualties in their respective newspapers tells a similar story. Impressively, 100% of all unilateral articles that mention civilian casualties appear on the front page of the *New York Times*. While only 44% of embedded articles that mention civilian casualties are highlighted on the front page, 75% of these include articles that have specific mentions of civilian casualties as well as the only embedded report that was recorded as having a high prominence mention of a civilian casualty. In addition, the remaining 56% of embedded articles that mention civilian casualties appeared in the first 50% of the "Nation at War" section, meaning that no articles from unilateral or embedded reporters that mention civilian casualties appear in the latter 50% of the "Nation at War" section of the *New York Times* during the week of March 26 until April 2, 2003. From these statistics, it is possible to speculate that the *New York Times* tried to account for the disparity of overall coverage by all reporter classification groups (see Figure 2) by giving embedded and unilateral on the invasion of Iraq high prominence in their respective newspapers.

4.3 The case for embedded coverage of civilian casualties

While articles by embedded reporters showed similar statistics as articles by unilateral reporters on the total number of articles that mention civilian casualties, they failed to provide as many mentions of specific events and details of the civilian victims. In failing to provide quotes from other civilians such as witnesses, family or friends of the deceased, embedded

reporters missed out on telling the civilian perspective on the war. Likewise, by not reporting the names of the civilian victims, the embedded reporters did not humanize these victims, as Stalin once said, "one death is a tragedy, a million deaths are a statistic" (Schechter 2003, p.51). These observations may lead one to conclude that unilateral reports from Iraq had more positive outcomes for human rights discourse in the *New York Times*. However, additional data was collected on whether the article identified a responsible party for each mention of a civilian casualty.

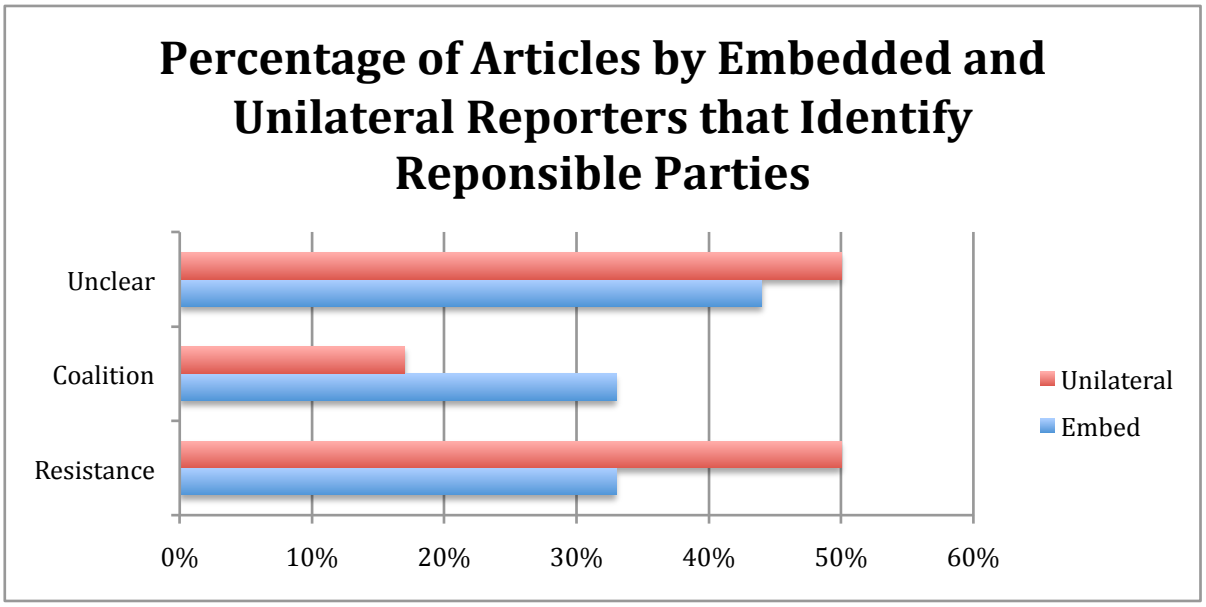

Figure 9. This chart shows the range of duty bearers identified by mentions in embedded and unilateral reporters in Iraq.

A significant portion of all embedded and unilateral articles from Iraq did not clarify which party was responsible for the civilian casualties mentioned. In many cases official announcements from either coalition or anti-occupation forces blamed the other side as the responsible party. In many of the reports that covered civilian casualties caused by air strikes, coalition authorities indicated that the situation was still under investigation (Burns (3) 2003), leaving the responsible party unclear. However, some of the articles that mention civilian casualties did identify a responsible party. Figure 9[8] shows that embedded reports identified an equal percentage of coalition and anti-occupation forces as the responsible parties for the civilian casualties mentioned (33% each) with the highest amount of articles not clearly identifying the responsible party (44%). Unilateral reports also had a high percentage of

[8] Please note: articles that mention more than one event for which multiple parties are responsible (for example, one event identified the coalition forces responsible while another identified anti-occupation forces responsible) were counted more than once, but articles with multiple mentions of civilian casualties with the same responsible party (for example, two events of civilian casualties were described in the same article but the same party, for example, anti-occupation forces were identified as responsible for both) were only counted as one article. As a result, the sum of the averages in this analysis will not equal 100% as these averages were gathered based on total number of articles, not total number of mentions.

articles that could not clearly identify a responsible party (50%) but in the articles that did, anti-occupation forces were cited as the responsible party for the mentions of civilian casualties more than coalition forces (50% and 17%, respectively).

During the initial phase of the invasion, most unilateral reporters were based in Kuwait or in Baghdad. Coalition troops were typically on the move, making their way to the capital. During the second week of the war, coalition forces did not yet have a presence in Baghdad. As such, unilateral reports that discuss civilian casualties often concerned bombings and air raids, not firefights where guns are used rather than bombs or other weapons (Burns (1) 2003; Burns (2) 2003; Burns (3) 2003), leaving unilateral reporters to describe the aftermath of each attack, the physical devastation as well as official responses from both coalition and anti-occupation representatives.

Alternatively, on occasion, embedded reporters witnessed some of the conflict in action. Even though many critics argue that the embedded press system limited access, as already discussed in the literature review chapter, it is clear that from the percentage of embed articles that identify coalition forces as the responsible party that embedded reporters played a key role as a watchdog to the actions of their assigned military units and the anti-occupation forces that they were fighting. Even though the guidelines laid down by the Pentagon for embedded reporters potentially allowed the U.S. Department of Defense to control much of their movements, they could not control everything. In this way, embedded reporters provided accounts of any breaches of Geneva Conventions such as the targeting of civilians (Dwyer (2) 2003) and the treatment of prisoners (Miller 2003).

Besides acting as a watchdog to the actions of coalition and anti-occupation forces, embedded reporters also provided audiences with a unique perspective on the warfare that unilateral reporters may not be exposed to, such as the nature of military culture in a human rights context. An example of this occurred when *New York Times* reporter Dexter Filkins quoted one marine sharpshooter describing an event in which an Iraqi soldier was standing among two or three civilians, “we dropped a few civilians,” he said, “I’m sorry, but the chick was in the way” (Filkins 2003). Bill Katovsky claims that this quote became perhaps on of the most unforgettable of the war (2003, p.XIX). Incidents like these proved that while the Pentagon may try to control their image after events such as these, embedded reports “defied whatever spin the Pentagon tried to achieve when lethal mistakes were made on the battlefield, because an embedded journalist was there taking notes. Nor could the military muzzle its soldiers who spoke openly around the embeds” (Katovsky 2003, p.XIX). In addition to recording perhaps the darker side of military culture, embedded reporters also

exposed some other interesting oddities of military activity. For example when Steven Lee Myers describes a "surreal moment when a medic shot an armed Iraqi fighter then bandaged him and put him in the back of an armoured ambulance" (Myers 2003). These peculiarities, which are actually quite typical of warfare, may have been overlooked without embedded reporters to provide the military context within the conflict.

4.4 Embedded and unilateral coverage and the construction of meaning

Besides the Jayson Blair scandal at *The New York Times* during this period[9], there is little reason to doubt the validity of the content of these articles and the conclusions of this research are based on the assumption that these reporters documented real events. However, the gap between the "real" and the "true" already discussed in the literature review chapter of this research paper presents itself in my data findings.

Conflict zones are complicated, an organized (or, not so organized) chaos. As a result, individuals that find themselves "on the ground" or in the midst of the conflict have only a very small scope of the reality of the war. As a result, context is necessarily lost:

> "While embedded TV journalists beamed back to the studio compelling footage of battlefield bang-bang, the networks failed to place the action in proper context. Exchanges of small-arms fire were inflated into major shootouts by television, and minor (though deadly) skirmishes became full-bore battles" (Shafer 2003)

The true number of civilian casualties from the more than eight years of war in Iraq will probably never be known. Perhaps a lesson learned from the Vietnam War, U.S. General Tommy Franks famously said, "we don't do body counts" (Blair 2013). Unfortunately, due to a broad range of estimates on anti-occupation and insurgent casualties, this study will only focus on civilian and coalition casualties. Many studies have tried to estimate the total number of civilian casualties during the war in Iraq (Lancet in Blair 2003; Levy and Sidel in Blair 2003; and IBC 2012). While there are a recorded number of 4,666 coalition troops killed in Iraq (Blair 2013), according two of these studies have estimated a total of 116,903 and between 111,687 and 122,108 Iraqi non-combatants, or civilians, killed (Levy and Sidel in Blair 2013; and IBC 2012, respectively). These numbers show that there were an estimated 25 times more civilian casualties than coalition casualties during the war in Iraq from March 2003 until December 2011 raising concerns about possible breaches of International Humanitarian Law which seeks to minimize civilian casualties in conflict zones.

[9] Jayson Blair, a reporter for The New York Times was fired in May 2003 when it was revealed that he had widely plagiarized and fabricated his articles. Only one of Blair's articles was documented in my data collection, (Blair 2003). This article was not omitted from my data findings as this research concerns itself solely with what was published, not what was factual. This article was classified as unilateral (non) from the U.S. and it made mention of coalition casualties but not civilian or resistance casualties.

During the second week of the invasion, March 26 until April 2, 2003 which has been isolated for the purposes of this study, the Iraq Body Count, an independent UK-based research group that publicly records the number of violent deaths in Iraq following the 2003 invasion (Blair 2013), estimates that there were 2,447 civilians killed. As already discussed in the methodology chapter, although there were spikes of mass violence later in the war and the total civilian casualties from 2005, 2006 and 2007 were higher than the total for 2003, no other week of the war suffered as high a civilian body count as the second week of the war (IBC 2012). Comparatively, 35 coalition casualties were reported during the same time period (CNN 2013). These numbers show that there were nearly 70 times more civilian casualties than coalition casualties during the second week of the invasion of Iraq.

Although the difference between civilian casualties compared to coalition casualties was massive, the number of articles that mention civilian casualties in the *New York Times* is less than those that mention coalition casualties. Of course, this data does not seek to tally the total number of individual casualties that were recorded in each article to compare against the estimated total of civilian casualties, but an analysis of the total articles that mention civilian casualties in comparison to coalition casualties can shed some light on the misrepresentation of the 'true' context by the 'real' events reported.

Likewise, the total number of articles that mention a civilian casualty and identify a responsible party fail to accurately reflect the true context of the situation during the second week of the invasion. While the data available on the true estimates of the parties responsible for the civilian casualties are not specific to the seven days identified for study in this paper, Iraq Body Count estimates, "Americans killed four times more civilians in the first two years of the war (thereby provoking armed resistance to the occupation) than al Qaeda-linked insurgents did, in spite of the media's emphasis on car bombs and suicide attacks" (Steele 2008). In addition, Iraq Body Count estimates that the first phase of the invasion from March 19 until April 9, 2003, saw approximately 6,716 civilian casualties, "nearly all attributable to U.S.-led coalition forces" (IBC 2012). Comparatively, the data in Figure 9 shows that anti-occupation forces are identified as the responsible party for mentions of civilian casualties in 13% more embedded and unilateral articles than articles that identify coalition forces as the responsible party (40% and 27%, respectively)[10].

[10] Again, this data counts articles that mention more than one event for which multiple parties are responsible more than once, but articles with multiple mentions of civilian casualties with the same responsible party were only counted as one article. As a result, the sum of the averages in this analysis will not equal 100% as these averages were gathered based on total number of articles, not total number of mentions.

CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The significance of the embed/unilateral debate for the understanding of global human rights issues is grounded in the power of the media to influence social discourse. Yet, the majority of literature that fuels this debate is concerned with qualitative interviews with audiences or reporters who worked in either capacity. This body of literature highlights the benefits and challenges of both embedded and unilateral reporting but at their core remain grounded in subjective opinions and individual assumptions. Those studies that seek to quantify these interviews only end up with a statistical display of personal judgments. While these are useful for evaluating public opinion of the media (for example, Paul 2004) or perceptions on the embedded press system inside the newsroom, they fail to compare the final products of the embedded and unilateral reporters, which are the articles themselves. Data collected from these articles for the purposes of this research paper provide statistical support in legitimising the arguments both for and against the embedded press system in the context of human rights discourse in the media.

This research project used a quantitative comparative approach to identify patterns in the data collected from a total of 265 articles on the invasion of Iraq in the *New York Times* from March 26 until April 2, 2003. From the data collected it is clear that the embedded press system did not affect the average number of articles that mentioned civilian casualties compared to articles by unilateral reporters in Iraq. That said, more than half of all these embedded articles only had abstract or secondary mentions of civilian casualties and did not explicitly mention a specific event. There was also a significant difference in the amount of detail included in the embedded articles compared to unilateral articles that mention civilian casualties. Details such as names of victims and the use of quotes from other civilians rather than official military or political sources were not present at all in any embedded articles that mentioned civilian casualties but were present in articles written by unilateral reporters.

Even though the embedded press system did not affect the average number of articles that mention civilian casualties compared to unilateral articles, the patterns in the data collected on the details of these mentions would seem to indicate that unilateral reporting provided more detail and prominence for civilian casualties and subsequently for human rights discourse in the media. However, data collected on the identification of a responsible party (coalition or anti-occupation) for these civilian casualties indicates that on average, embedded reporters successfully identified coalition forces as the responsible party for the deaths of civilians in 16% more articles than those by unilateral reporters. Possible reasons for

this difference may be due to complications arising from the type of warfare, such as suicide bombings and air raids, present in Baghdad where many unilateral reporters were based. Alternatively, while the embedded press system was criticised for a lack of access to much of the conflict due to either a strategic placement of reporters by the Pentagon in military units that did not see a lot of access or the use of long-range artillery, from the data collected it can be surmised that the party responsible for civilian casualties were more easily identifiable for embedded reporters who were witnessing the firefights for themselves. This data suggests that the embedded press system did offer a unique contribution to human rights discourse in the media due to the opportunity embedded reporters had to witness violations against civilians by both coalition and anti-occupation forces. This unique and hugely important position as a watchdog to the protection and violation of civilians in armed conflict cannot be understated.

Like many editors, journalists and media critics have argued from qualitative studies, the statistical analysis of this research paper concludes that a broad range of perspectives is preferable for responsible human rights media coverage in a context as chaotic as war. Both embedded and unilateral reporting provide different but mutually beneficial perspectives on human rights issues such as civilian casualties in conflict zones.

5.2 Recommendations

Throughout the data collection process two trends appeared in many articles, saviour stories and the reference to past atrocities by Saddam Hussein in the articles that also mention civilian casualties. The saviour story trend was the explicit mention of an event in which coalition forces either physically saved a civilian or engaged in humanitarian acts such as delivering aid to Iraqi civilians. The references to past atrocities committed by Saddam Hussein's government in years prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq also appeared in many articles that mentioned civilian casualties. In the same vein as the Bush administration's humanitarian motivations for the invasion of Iraq, it can be argued that both of these trends provided justification for coalition presence in Iraq. It would be beneficial for a media analysis project to explore whether these trends were more or less prominent in articles by embedded or unilateral reporters as well as in articles that discussed coalition or resistance casualties.

Like much of the literature on the embedded press system, this paper explores the advantages and disadvantages of the existing system of embedded and unilateral reporting in the context of human rights discourse in the media. However, this discussion could benefit from a research project that identifies the characteristics of the best possible environment for

accurate and contextual reporting of human rights in conflict zones and then seeks to formulate recommendations on the best practices in a press system based on these characteristics. Such a system may include elements of unique human rights based reporting (Shaw 2011) as well as practical tools such as the use of local journalists or bloggers such as Salam Pax (Pax 2003).

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