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# Good Embed: How the White House and Pentagon improved favorability of coverage through embedding journalists

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## Abstract

The US Government's decision in 2003 to allow embedded journalists to cover the war in Iraq represented a significant change in the attitude of military commanders to their relationship with journalists. This marked the end of four decades of anti-media sentiment. The new relationship was predicated on the understanding that the media has the capacity to shape public attitudes towards the conflict. This paper explores whether the US military's strategy, which was underpinned by a desire that the media produce positive coverage, worked. It also explores whether objectivity, a journalistic staple, is a victim of such a policy.

# Introduction

In March 2003, U.S. and allied military forces invaded Iraq with the expressed purpose of deposing its president, Saddam Hussein, and liberating the Iraqi people from his tyrannical rule. The impetus for such actions was framed in terms of the ongoing United States' war on terrorism, begun after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon by Al-Qaeda terrorists. At the time, the United States government argued that there were links between Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and that President Hussein possessed a significant and threatening stockpile of weapons of mass destruction that he could use to attack the United States within a moment's notice.

This war is significant for a number of structural and doctrinal changes that took place with it. First, President Bush employed a new U.S. foreign policy doctrine, known as the Bush Doctrine, that allowed the president, "to describe its decision to attack first, without an overt act of…provocation" in cases where there are perceived direct threats to the United States (Rampton and Sauber, 2003: 126). This war also saw an important structural change in the relationship between military and media, called embedded journalism, described as "military jargon for a reporter who is to be stationed with a 'unit'" (Gay, 2003: A16).

Throughout the formal period of war, beginning in early March 2003, and to a lesser extent after the formal war was concluded several weeks later, certain journalists were allowed to travel with military units and to independently publish their work with minimal military or government censorship and scrutiny. Recent technological advancements that made reporting from the field possible in desert conditions were partly responsible for this newly conceived access, but perhaps more importantly, according to Rampton and Stauber, it resulted from the realisation of tension between military and media, and the idea that "media coverage of any…operation will, to a large extent, shape public perception" (p. 185). Such realisations substantially altered "nearly four decades of anti-media sentiment" within the military establishment, motivating the Department of Defense to put forth this savvier doctrine (Gay, 2003: 16).

Verne Gay (2003) writes that "embeds potentially could give millions of viewers a front-row seat to the war, live and uncut…you need only consult your…history book to know that nothing like this has ever happened" (p. 16). In practice embedded journalists produced dramatic news and imagery consisting of first-hand accounts of battles, explosions, human suffering, military success and defeat. Embedded journalists interviewed soldiers and commanders about ongoing battles and situations and reported observations about the war, Iraqi civilians and military personnel. Here were reporters with very limited contact and information about the larger war going on around them. They reported what they saw and felt. Embedded journalists were tied to their sources –– the U.S. military commanders and personnel with whom they were embedded. Though they produced interesting, dramatic and exciting coverage, the merit and long-term implications of embedding journalists are still to be established.

In light of this new form of war journalism, it is important to understand how embedding journalists alters the way that a conflict is covered as news, and the impact that such coverage can have on news consumers. This study will attempt to explore answers to the first of these two questions. According to media scholar Marvin Kalb, embedding journalists was an attempt by the Department of Defense to ensure "proud,

positive, patriotic coverage" of the war (p. 34). It is worth testing whether the DoD's plan played out.

## Literature Review

Previous attempts to analyse the military/media relationship have been numerous and diversity exists in both methodology and conclusions. One factor contributing to this diversity is the shifting character of the relationship between the media and the military over time. The long relationship between military and media has led to frustration on both sides, as well as among the public. According to Greg McLaughlin:

> One of the most enduring myths in the recent history of war reporting is the 'Vietnam Syndrome,' the widespread belief that the mainstream American media were opposed to the Vietnam War and openly hostile to the US military and its South Vietnamese clients; and that as a result of their critical coverage they lost the war for the U.S. (p. 73).

This type of thinking has prevailed within the military since the Vietnam War, contributing to public relations counter-campaigns such as those in which journalists "who questioned any aspect of official policy [were] [labelled] at best 'a liberal,' at worst a 'communist'"(p. 75). In subsequent military operations, the military has attempted to manage media access and content. In the 1983 invasion of Granada, for instance, "the military excluded the news media from their immediate area of operations," (p. 84) and, as Douglas Kellner writes, in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, "the Bush administration and the Pentagon produced a barrage of propaganda, disinformation, and outright lies that covered over the more unsavory aspects of the Gulf War and that legitimated U.S. policies" (p. 1). Meanwhile, journalists covering the Persian Gulf War were relegated to closely guarded press pools and allowed only limited access to military action.

The military's emphasis on secrecy, safety, and message management and its belief in the media's potential negative effect on war have tended to lead military leadership to look skeptically on the work of war reporters. Similarly, reporters' attempts to unearth sensational stories and their drive for better ratings and circulation have historically created negative sentiments in the military. Through embedding, this was all supposed to change. In February, 2003 Conor O'Clery, a journalist for the *Irish Times,* suggested that US military leadership "sees [embedding] as an improvement on the pool system used in the 1991 Gulf War, when a pool reporter would be taken to the 'front' and would share his material".

A central factor of many critiques of the media/military relationship is the question of objectivity. In war journalism, objectivity comes under increased pressure. According to Gregory McLaughlin (2002), journalistic coverage of war is limited by "military security, [and] standards of taste and decency with respect to pictures of dead and wounded," as well as the journalist's political and patriotic allegiances and personal feelings about a war's justification (p. 80). In extreme cases journalists have crossed the line and become combatants on one side or another of a conflict (p. 155).

Embedded journalists in Iraq were attacked along with their regiments: they were in harm's way. Kalb writes that embedded journalists "[were] on the firing line, facing

the same sandstorms, fearing chemical attacks from a desperate Saddam Hussein, experiencing many of the same dangers. They [had] been warned that their casualty rates may be higher than in earlier conflicts" (p. 34).    As suggested by *Newsweek* reporter Jonathan Alter (2003) before the war: "if [journalists] endanger the unit, they know they're endangering themselves."  He writes: "if you travel with a group over a period of weeks, especially one that is providing you protection from chemical or biological attack, you're more likely to stay loyal to the people you're with."  This feature of embedded journalism, in which journalists forge relationships of dependence and safety with the subjects of their stories, can significantly affect a journalist's objectivity.  Critics of journalistic objectivity/subjectivity during the war are supported by journalists' own accounts of self-censorship, friendly reporting, and complying with military wishes that they not report particular aspects of the conflict.

The theoretical bases for this study include those which pertain to the two related concepts of objectivity and patriotism.  Principal among these is Herman and Chomsky's (1988) notion of manufacturing consent, in which the authors contend that media content is influenced by five factors, including "reliance of the media on information provided by government… [and] 'anticommunism' as a national religion and control mechanism" (p. 2).  Because of the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, anticommunism is no longer the norm to which American political and social life subscribe.  I contend that the concept could easily be replaced with "antiterrorism," one of the strongest factors cited as contributing to the decision to proceed with this war.  Herman and Chomsky's concepts speak to the powerful influences that source, personal and political pressure can have on objectivity.

While Herman and Chomsky's theory is relevant to all journalism, a second theoretical question, the "fog of war," speaks more directly to the dilemma of embedded journalists.  Journalism scholar Greg McLaughlin argues that "objectivity is based on the assumption that a series of 'facts' or truth claims about the world can be validated by the rules and procedures of a professional community" (2002: 161).  In order to mitigate the effects of propaganda and bias, journalists "put the emphasis of coverage on reporting and gathering facts" (p. 158).  Against this, Brent MacGregor (1997) uses the term "fog of war" to describe a situation in which journalists covering a war zone "can be surprisingly isolated, having only their individual point of view on events which can in fact be limited by the very proximity and unique perspective which makes their reports valuable" (p. 55).

According to the fog of war thesis, combat reporters, isolated and dependent on limited resources, will sometimes report skewed and inconsistent information.  A corollary argument is made by McLaughlin, who questions journalists' capacity for objectivity related to "propaganda from…their own side: their unwillingness to challenge reporting restrictions, their enjoyment of the razzmatazz of the briefings and their susceptibility to disinformation and dissemblage, and their failure to corroborate source information against alternative material" (p. 101).  Though written before the Iraq war, McLaughlin's and MacGregor's ideas are relevant to the current study: objectivity can be further challenged by embedding U.S. journalists with U.S. military units because of their limited vision in the war zone and their propensity to accept statements made by representatives of their own side.

The embedded journalist is therefore a potential victim of subjectivity from within and without. Their personal proclivity to support their side in times of war combined

with their limited vision trends their coverage toward subjective, pro-U.S. accounts of the war. Added to these are the organisational factors cited by Herman and Chomsky and, as suggested by such journalism critics as Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber (2003), the tendency of U.S. news organisations since September 11, 2001, to take on a more patriotic tone (p. 171). Finally, the structural factors that influence all journalism should play a role in the embedded journalists' coverage of the war, which means it will tend toward sensationalism and reinforce dominant American themes (pro-democracy, pro-western).

# Methodology

This quantitative research was intended as a preliminary and exploratory study, aimed at discerning if there are quantifiable differences in war coverage, depending on the location of the reporter, and the reporter's relation to the military (i.e. embedded or not). This study was limited to the analysis of embedded journalists writing for the *Washington Post*, a well-respected newspaper that is known for journalistic quality and its nationwide appeal. The *Washington Post* was an ideal choice for this project because in addition to its 11 embedded journalists, the *Washington Post* covered the war from a variety of other locations around the globe, including inside Iraq (non-embedded). The *Washington Post* is distributed both nationally and internationally, so its opportunity for influence is significant.

The project's sample was developed randomly from the entire body of *Washington Post* articles published during the period of formal war, between the period of 20 March and 1 May 2003. From this date-range, 10 days were randomly selected and every non-editorial *Washington Post* article that mentioned the term "Iraq" within its text was collected, for a total of 395 articles.

The content of the articles was analysed in conjunction with data pertaining to the journalist's physical location to determine whether differences in coverage biases were evident between journalists in different geographic locations and situations. However, because the concepts of patriotism and objectivity are somewhat amorphous and without clear operational capacity, it was necessary to define these terms through the analysis of related concepts and through assessment of the author's tone.

Operational definitions were developed to quantify journalists' presentation of concepts related to the war. The following represents these definitions:

1.  **President George Bush and Cabinet** – Includes Mr. Bush, his closest advisors and aides.
2.  **U.S. Military Administration and Operation** – References to large-scale troop deployments, movements and successes. This category also includes references to how the military was prepared for warfare, and its treatment of Iraqi civilians.
3.  **U.S. Military Soldiers** –This category included small groups of soldiers, individual soldiers and relations between soldiers and civilians.
4.  **President Saddam Hussein** – All references to the deposed Iraqi leader.
5.  **Iraqi Governmental and Military Administration and Operation** – Unlike the U.S. government, where there are clear distinctions between governmental and military leadership, this distinction was difficult to make

regarding the Iraqi leadership. I therefore included all Iraqi leadership (excluding Hussein) in this category. This also included references to Iraq's war effort, various military organisations, large troop deployments, and atrocities that were attributed to the military or governmental organisations.

6.   **Iraqi Military Soldiers** – Any reference to Iraqi soldiers and their activity (not including official/administrative activity). Refers mostly to day-to-day interaction with Iraqis in battle.

**Other categories**:  Osama bin Laden/Al Qaeda, President Chirac/France, U.S. government leadership, post-war planning and events, American public, Iraqi public, war protesters, and mass media.

The categories were analysed in each paragraph of every article, to determine if the author's reference to each was favorable, neutral, or unfavorable (using a 3 point scale in which 1=unfavorable, 2=neutral and 3=favorable). The average score of each article containing a reference to a concept was then calculated and recorded. Intercoder reliability was achieved with the help of a colleague at the University of Colorado at Boulder, using Scott's Pi formulation. The average Scott's Pi score was .88 and ranged between .64 for Iraqi Soldiers, and 1 for Osama Bin Laden, Iraqi Military, Post-War Planning, the US Public and Protesters.

Based on the concepts indicated above, the research was directed toward elucidating the following hypotheses about journalists' coverage of the war:

### Hypotheses:

H1:  U.S. embedded journalists' coverage of U.S. military soldiers and leadership will tend to be more favorable than the coverage of those U.S. journalists who are not embedded.

H2:  U.S. embedded journalists' coverage of Iraqi soldiers will be less favorable than the coverage of those U.S. journalists who are not embedded.

H3:  U.S. embedded journalists' coverage will be less favorable toward President Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi military establishment than the coverage of non-embedded U.S. journalists.

H4:  Due to proximity, U.S. embedded journalists will portray the U.S. government's actions and decision-making less favorably than the coverage of non-embedded U.S. journalists. Note: I expect H4 to prove a null hypothesis:

If the first hypothesis is correct, articles by embedded journalists will have relatively higher levels of favorability for the U.S. military. Similarly, if hypotheses 2 and 3 are correct, articles by embedded journalists should display relatively unfavorably accounts of Iraqi leadership, military and soldiers.  Finally, if null-hypothesis 4 is correct, all articles written within the period, regardless of where the journalist was stationed, should display similarly high favorability for support of the war and the U.S. government.

The relative levels of favorability for each category should clearly indicate the degree to which each article is biased toward U.S. patriotism. This information, when combined with data about the author's location, should indicate whether their locations or their embeddness played a role in the way that reporter portrayed the war.

# Results

The data display a general trend toward neutrality in all *Washington Post* articles related to the Iraq War during the period of formal warfare. In nearly all categories, favorability hovered around neutral, with the most favorable coverage concerning the U.S. soldiers (2.29), and the least favorable for Osama bin Laden (1.37). Within this overall neutrality, there were statistically significant differences between embedded and non-embedded journalists for several variables tested in this project. Additional differences were observable between journalists, depending on their regional locations.

Of the articles in the sample, 51 (12.9%) were written by embedded journalists. This represents the largest proportion of articles written outside of the United States. Of the remaining 344, 276 were written within the United States, 15 were written in Europe, 14 in the Middle East, and 39 by journalists in Iraq who were not embedded.

### Hypothesis 1

Observations were made about the differences between embedded and non-embedded journalists' presentations in two categories; the U.S. military leadership and operation, and U.S. soldiers. The sample revealed 250 stories dealing with the U.S. military (46 embedded, and 204 non-embedded) and 174 stories about U.S. soldiers (39 embedded, 135 non-embedded). Using a T-test, significant differences were found between embedded and non-embedded journalists covering the first category: U.S. military and operation (Table 1). Coverage of the U.S. military among embedded reporters was 2.28, while non-embedded reporters' portrayal was 1.98 (.35 less). Embedded journalists tended to cover the U.S. military leadership and operation more favorably than non-embedded journalists. The rationale for this relationship became clearer when journalist's specific locations (embedded, in Iraq but not embedded, in the Middle East, in Europe, and in the United States) were compared. While the most favorable coverage of the U.S. military and operation came from embedded journalists, a statistically significant relationship to embedded journalists was with journalists in Iraq who were not embedded. Where embedded journalists covered U.S. military leadership with average 2.28 favorability, non-embedded journalists in Iraq expressed favorability of 1.83, a difference of .45.

Regarding favorability toward U.S. soldiers, there were no statistically significant relationships, regardless of whether journalists were embedded or not, or related to their location. Embedded journalists' average coverage tended to be slightly more favorable than others, but not statistically significantly so. Journalists in all locations presented U.S. soldiers favorably (mean = 2.29).

Hypothesis 1, regarding the question of whether embeddedness affects coverage of the U.S. military leadership and operation, and of soldiers, was only partially supported. While coverage did differ for half the operational categories (U.S. military leadership operation), coverage of U.S. soldiers was constant and favorable, regardless of the journalist's location or embeddedness.

### Hypothesis 2

There were 94 articles containing references to Iraqi soldiers. Thirty were written by embedded journalists, 64 by non-embedded journalists. Coverage of Iraqi

soldiers during the war was generally negative, averaging 1.70 overall. Using T-tests, a statistically significant difference was discovered between embedded and non-embedded journalists covering Iraqi soldiers (Table 2). Embedded journalists averaged slightly less favorable coverage (1.52) than non-embedded journalists (1.80). Between locations, the most favorable coverage came from those in Europe, but none were more favorable than neutral (2.00).

Hypothesis 2 is therefore verified by the data. Embeddedness apparently did affect journalists' relative levels of favorability with regard to Iraqi soldiers. As hypothesised, embedded journalists depicted Iraqi soldiers less favorably than those who were not embedded, though all journalists portrayed Iraqi soldiers unfavorably.

## Hypothesis 3

Coverage of Iraq's disposed president, Saddam Hussein, was generally negative, regardless of the journalist's location. Of 171 articles in which Mr. Hussein was mentioned, 27 were by embedded journalists, and 144 were not. Average level of favorability was 1.41, and there were no statistically significant differences between embedded and non-embedded journalists' coverage of Mr. Hussein. There were no statistically significant differences depending on the journalist's location, though the most favorable coverage (1.63) came from journalists in the Middle East, and journalists in Europe covered Mr. Hussein least favorably (1.25).

Of the 118 articles that mentioned the Iraqi military establishment, 29 were by embedded journalists, and 89 were written by others. The difference between embedded and non-embedded journalists covering the Iraqi military establishment was statistically significant. Embedded journalists tended to cover the Iraqi military less favorably (1.36) than non-embedded journalists (1.64) (Table 3). This relationship also was observable using a T-test to compare the means of embedded and non-embedded journalists in Iraq. Between these groups, there was a difference in means of .30 (p<.05). Embedded journalists covered the Iraq military with an average favorability of 1.36. Non-embedded journalists in Iraq covered them at 1.66 favorability.

Hypothesis 3, like Hypothesis 1, proved to be only partially supported. Within the hypothesis, one of two questions proved true. Coverage of President Hussein, regardless of the journalist's location, was negative. Embeddedness did prove to be a factor in favorability of the Iraqi military establishment. As hypothesised, embedded journalists depicted the Iraqi military less favorably than those not embedded.

## Hypothesis 4

As mentioned previously, Hypothesis 4 was expected to test null. Given the theoretical bases for this project, American journalists should express similarly favorable portrayals of U.S. governmental leadership and decision-making. As expected, embedded and non-embedded journalists covering this topic did not display statistically significant differences in their coverage of either President Bush or the U.S. government. There were significant differences in the quantity of coverage for both factors (for President Bush, embedded journalists produced 17 of 230 articles, and for the U.S. government, embedded journalists produced 2 of 77). Coverage among both embedded and non-embedded journalists expressed similar favorability however, in both categories.

For President Bush, average favorability was 1.74. Although embedded versus non-embedded journalists' coverage was not significantly different, there was a statistically significant difference in coverage of President Bush based on location. The most favorable coverage of President Bush was written by embedded journalists (1.85) and the least favorable by those in Europe (1.42) (Graph 1). Mean favorability for the U.S. government was 2.00. Though not significantly so, like President Bush, the U.S. government enjoyed the most favorability from embedded journalists (2.3). The least favorable coverage came from journalists in the Middle East (1.66).

As expected, hypothesis 4 proved to be null. Coverage of both President Bush and the U.S. government between embedded and non-embedded journalists proved to be similar, though Mr. Bush's favorability was significantly different based on author location. Interestingly, coverage of Mr. Bush did not adhere to the theoretical conceptions for this paper, and was overall negative.

In addition to those categories that I used to directly test the hypotheses, I developed a number of secondary categories to test for factors surrounding the war and related to patriotism that were not hypothesised. One question, for instance, was whether coverage would be different depending on the article's placement within the newspaper. I therefore tested whether being on the front page, a section front, or in another location would make significant differences in coverage. With the exception of Iraqi soldiers, who were portrayed more favorably on section fronts (2.33) than in other places in the newspaper (1.61), the results of this query were not significant.

Because during this war the lines were sometimes blurred between Iraqi soldiers and Iraqi civilians, I also tested journalists' favorability toward Iraqi citizens. Between embedded and non-embedded journalists, and between journalists in different locations, no significant relationships were discovered. Average coverage tended to be neutral/favorable (2.09), with the most favorable coverage coming from those journalists in Europe (2.33), and the least favorable coverage coming from journalists in Iraq but not embedded (1.95).

Another interesting topic during this war was the role of dissenters and protesters. These include protesters within and outside the United States, as well as some prominent statesmen, including French President Jacques Chirac. In order to gauge how such factors were portrayed in *Washington Post* coverage, I included operational categories for Mr. Chirac and war protesters. War protesters were treated consistently negative by journalists regardless of their location. Journalists in Iraq and embedded journalists tended to express more favorable impressions of protesters, but these only represented three of 54 total articles on the topic. Average favorability for war protesters was 1.87.

President Jacques Chirac was only portrayed by journalists in the United States and in Europe. There was a statistically significant relationship between these two groups' portrayals of Mr. Chirac, with journalists in Europe portraying him more favorably than those in the United States by a margin of .64. European journalists portrayed the French president with a favorability of 2.31. It is worth noting that only 20 articles portrayed the French president at all, and only 4 of those were written in Europe. The remaining 16 were written in the United States, with an average favorability of 1.67.

Many of the journalists covering the war, perhaps because they were aware of the changes that were supposedly taking place in the military-media relationship, also mentioned mass media itself in their coverage.  I therefore endeavored to quantify this portrayal, to examine the way that media represented itself.  Non-embedded journalists covered media more often than embedded journalists at a rate of 7:1.  Coverage, however, was not significantly different depending on embeddedness.  Average coverage of media was 1.87, slightly less than favorable.

# Conclusions/Discussion

Evidence presented in this study indicates that the embedded journalism project was a good decision on the part of the U.S. government and military.  Overall, in categories that would indicate support for the conflict and support for participants on the side of the United States, favorability was higher among embedded journalists than among those who were not.  When looking at journalists with regards to their locations, it is clear that journalists in the United States and journalists who were embedded presented the most favorable coverage.  In terms of improving the favorability of coverage from journalists who were in and around the war, the embedded journalism project was a success.

Despite the evidence that supports the assertion that *Washington Post* journalists who were embedded produced more favorable coverage of the war than others, another trend is revealed in the data: that coverage of the war, in general, and even among embedded journalists, was not particularly favorable.  The most striking example is favorability toward President Bush.  Total mean favorability for Mr. Bush was only 1.73 (Table 5).  Journalists who were embedded favored Mr. Bush at a rate of 1.85, and non-embedded journalists' favorability was only 1.72.  There were no locations tested in this project in which Mr. Bush received average favorable coverage.  There are a number of possible explanations for this trend including the media's perceived watchdog role, and the possibility that U.S. military leadership is correct in its assertion that journalistic coverage of war tends to be negative.

This data presented about Mr. Bush suggests a question that is fundamental to this project: whether objectivity can be tested through analysis of journalists' favorability toward the war.  The data about President Bush can be interpreted in a number of ways, including as representing objectivity, but the relationship is not conclusive.  Embedded journalists' improved favorability toward the war and Mr. Bush may be a function of their relationships with their military units, as a reflection of improved access to the newsmakers or, just as justifiably, as a function of their lack of access to other aspects of the war.  While the research is suggestive of a relationship between objectivity and favorability, this relationship is indeterminable in the context of this study based solely on news content.

Having said that, the research does elucidate some interesting and important information about the embedded journalism project.  One could look to this study for information about the theories that underpin it.  The data provide support for Herman and Chomsky's theories about objectivity and corporate media/government/military ties.  Herman and Chomsky assert that journalists are more likely to favor official government sources than other sources.  As this study shows, more favorable coverage emerged from embedded journalists than from those who were not embedded.  Assuming that the government and military sources to which the embedded

journalists were assigned were favorably disposed toward themselves and their mission, the data indicate this theory holds true.

A second of Herman and Chomsky's theories that was adapted and used in this project was anticommunism, (which I turned into antiterrorism). Terrorism being a cultural enemy, the theory indicates that journalists will be predisposed toward antiterrorist themes in their coverage, and will disparage those who practice terrorism. This idea appeared to be supported by the data through the null hypothesis. Overall, coverage of Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein was negative, regardless of embeddedness or journalist location. While the concept does not fit into the hypothetical relationship between relative levels of favorability based on embeddedness, the data appear to reflect Herman and Chomsky's original conception, that American journalists would express unfavorability toward terrorist forces, groups, people and ideas in all cases, and support for those people and organisations that fight it.

Returning again to the question of objectivity, this project's data revealed more favorable coverage from embedded journalists than from others, bringing into question the theoretical conception of the fog of war. Accepting, for the moment, the correspondence between favorability and objectivity, it could be argued that the fog of war that has been used to criticise journalistic coverage of war was lifted by embedding journalism, simply because journalists now have more access to some types of information than they had before. This would be supported by findings that favorability was higher among embedded journalists than others. However, this data could equally appropriately describe the furthering of the fog of war as a function of journalists, physically and emotionally connected with their sources, reflecting their sources' feelings about the conflict in their coverage. The data could similarly support the conclusion that the difference in embedded journalists' coverage reflected a lack of access to types of information other than that provided by their military hosts. The second and third of these assertions are more strongly validated by the data than the first. If, for instance, embedded journalists' favorability had gone down or had oscillated more between variables, it would be more suggestive of the first assertion because it would indicate a counter-intuitive relationship in which the journalists could be shown to think and report more freely. However, the across-the-board more positive coverage appears symptomatic of the third assertion, which is most strongly related to the fog of war theory – that embedded journalists' coverage reflected limited perspective and information. However, the data could also suggest an equally strong validation of the second assertion – that embedded journalists' positive coverage reflected an emotional connection with the soldiers.

As noted previously, this project was conceived and pursued preliminarily. Foregoing comprehensiveness, the project aimed toward an initial exploration of embedded journalism – questioning whether or not the need exists for future study. It was therefore limited; first, although the embedded journalism project was intended at least in part for television journalism, this project looks only at those journalists writing for newspapers. This decision necessarily limits the scope of the project in that it excludes a significant segment of embedded journalists and, more importantly, the visual aspects of the embedded journalists' coverage. Second, the project was limited to the *Washington Post*, one of several national newspapers that participated in the embedded journalism project. Such a decision calls into question the differentiation that may have existed between journalists working for different media outlets. Finally,

as a consequence of the random sampling method, there were a smaller number of embedded articles than was desired. A different sampling method would provide more data for analysis, thus more firmly establishing the grounds for comparison. Future research in this area should therefore endeavor first to look into the question of objectivity and favorability from the perspective of television news. The added visual element may prove significant to coverage of the war. Second, as other news sources may have made entirely different editorial and programmatic choices that could have changed the journalists' portrayals; future research should be aimed toward analysis that occurs across media outlets. Third, research should work to compare embedded coverage across media platforms (comparing television and newspapers, for instance). Finally, other sampling methods should be explored to create appropriately large quantity of data from embedded sources.

Finally, an important question that this project does not intend to address is the question of effects. We have seen how embedded journalists from the *Washington Post* covered the war differently than those who were not embedded. The next logical question is whether or not such differences had any influence on readers' perceptions of the war. True, the difference in coverage was minimal and tended in most cases toward neutrality, but some would argue that neutral coverage is tacit approval. In order to really understand whether or not the embedded journalism project was a success, it would be important to observe and consider how such differences played out in the hands and minds of the audiences.

## Tables/Graphs

### Hypothesis 1 – Portrayals of US Military and US Soldiers, embeds v. non–embeds

|  | Embedded? | N | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| US Military | Not Embedded | 204 | 1.98 |
|  | Embedded | 46 | 2.28 |
| US Soldiers | Not Embedded | 135 | 2.33 |
|  | Embedded | 39 | 2.19 |

**Table 1**      $p<.01$

### Hypothesis 2 – Favorability toward Iraqi Soldiers

|  | embedded? | N | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Iraqi Soldiers | Not Embedded | 64 | 1.8 |
|  | Embedded | 30 | 1.52 |

**Table 2**      $p<.05$

### Hypothesis 3 – Favorability toward President Hussein and Iraqi Military

|  | Embedded? | N | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Not Embedded | 144 | 1.42 |
| President Hussein | Embedded | 27 | 1.38 |
| Iraq Military | Not Embedded | 89 | 1.64 |
|  | Embedded | 29 | 1.36 |

**Table 3**      $p<.001$

**Hypothesis 4 – Favorability of President Jacques Chirac**

| | Location | N | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chirac | USA | 16 | 1.67 |
| | Europe | 4 | 2.31 |

**Table 4**      p<.05

**Graph 1**



**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics**
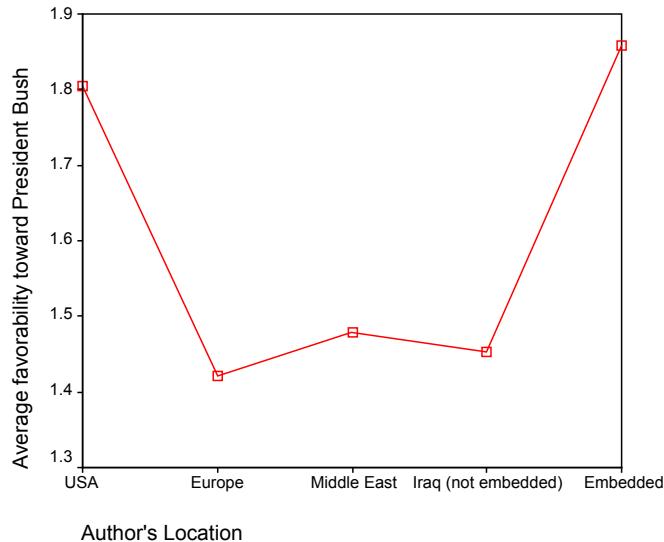
| | Number of stories | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bush | 230 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.7356 | .56497 |
| Hussein | 171 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.4080 | .49575 |
| bin Laden | 21 | 1.00 | 2.00 | 1.3767 | .46199 |
| Chirac | 20 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.8000 | .55370 |
| US government | 77 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.0036 | .63636 |
| US Military | 250 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.0318 | .61177 |
| Iraq Military | 118 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.5694 | .56626 |
| US Soldiers | 174 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.2947 | .59500 |
| Iraq Soldiers | 94 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.7096 | .59952 |
| Post–war plans | 75 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.1076 | .60566 |
| US Public | 81 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.2342 | .58173 |
| Iraq Public | 156 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 2.0917 | .59626 |
| Protesters | 54 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.8787 | .45005 |
| Media | 77 | 1.00 | 3.00 | 1.8658 | .49164 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 0 | | | | |

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