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Embedding Journalists in Military Combat Units:

During the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

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Abstract

This study examines broadcast news coverage of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) to assess differences between embedded television reporters and non-embedded reporters. A variety of communication theories are presented that posit that embedded journalists will produce more positive coverage of the military and its personnel, that these journalists will develop increased organizational commitment, that their coverage will be more episodic, and have increased levels of affect and positive relational messages. Thirty days of OIF television news coverage from four major news networks were evaluated using content analysis. The results indicate embedded television reporters produce stories that are more positive and use more episodic framing in their coverage compared to non-embedded reporters. Insufficient data is present to determine if stories produced by embedded reporters produced more positive relational messages. The results only partially support the hypotheses that interviews of military personnel conducted by embedded reporters elicit more positive affect. Finally, two additional research questions found that the tone of coverage differs between the invasion and occupation, and that there is a difference in several dependent variables across network newscasts.

Embedding Journalists in Military Combat Units:
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The relationship between the military and the news media has seen many seasons; some dry and some fruitful. Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) began a productive season in the long history of embedded journalists. The 2003 invasion of Iraq gave embedded journalists unprecedented access to relatively unrestricted front-line coverage. More than 600 U.S. and foreign journalists embedded with military units and have reported from aircraft carriers, Special Forces units and infantry and Marine divisions (McLane, 2004). Before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), journalists had never “worked alongside U.S. military units...in such numbers [or] in such an organized fashion” (Knickmeyer, 2003).

The Pentagon’s aggressive and ambitious embedding program was directed by Victoria Clark, a senior spokesperson for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the outset of OIF. She defined the process as, “living, eating, moving, in combat with the unit that [the journalist is] attached to” (DoD News Transcript, 2003). The Department of Defense’s motives for embedding journalists are not clear. There has been much speculation, however. Possible reasons range from using the media as a tool against propaganda to reducing the impact of casualties to ensure public support for the war (Brightman, 2003; Miskin, Rayner, & Lalic, 2003).

Other speculation has been that the Department of Defense knew the effects or influence that embedded reporting has on news coverage. Britain’s experience with embedding during the Falkland’s War against Argentina indicated that journalists develop “feelings of camaraderie that may affect [their] ability to be independent and objective” (Miskin et al., 2003, p.2). The “Stockholm Syndrome,” is the influence on reporters work due to a close relationship with their units (McClane, 2004). Many journalists wrote about their fear of succumbing to this syndrome.

“While this closeness did not necessarily prevent them from objective or critical reporting, journalists worried about losing their impartiality” (p. 81).

Although there is speculation of the influence of embedded journalism, the Department of Defense’s support of embedding was most likely motivated by a genuine desire to “facilitate maximum, in-depth coverage of U.S. forces in combat and related operations” as well as giving this access to national and international media (Secretary of Defense, 2003). In an interview with Dick Gordon, from NPR’s *The Connection*, Brian Whitman, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, stated that the Department of Defense was working to close the gap between reporters and the media. He said, “an embedded reporter is going to see the good, the bad, and the ugly” (DoD News Transcript, 2003).

This study sought to determine whether embedding journalists with military units during combat produces different television news reports and, if so, the nature of such differences. In addition, this study investigates whether there are any differences in news stories during the initial invasion and reports more than a year later during the occupation. This study is a follow-up to a previous investigation conducted in early 2004.

Hypotheses

Tone of Coverage

Researchers anticipated that embedded coverage would produce news reports that are more favorable toward the military in general and, specifically, toward its personnel. This expectation stems from the fact that embedded journalists become a part of the unit they are reporting about and that, like employees of an organization, embedded reporters would develop a commitment to the military organization.

An explanation for the researchers reasoning is the social penetration theory. It asserts that as relationships develop, people's communication shift from superficial to deeply personal topics, slowly penetrating the communicators' public persona to reach their core personality or sense of self. According to the theory developed by Altman and Taylor (1973), persons allow other people to penetrate their public self when they disclose personal information. Disclosure is based on the perceived rewards the person will gain if he or she discloses information – the larger the reward, the more information is disclosed. To penetrate the military's public self, reporters embed themselves with the troops

Another reason why researchers believed that embedded coverage would produce more positive news coverage is because embedded reporters will engage in uncertainty reduction, thus biasing their reporting. In an effort to report an all-encompassing story, an embedded journalist will go through the uncertainty process hypothesized by Berger and Calbrese (1975). First, the reporter must engage in verbal communication while being aware of their nonverbal expressions, which can indicate positive or negative feelings towards the military members. The less a journalist is familiar with the military, the more uncertainty he or she will have when reporting. The more the reporter gets to know the service members he or she is embedded with, the more intimate the conversation will become. Conversely, if there is still uncertainty there will be greater reciprocity between journalists and service members. The uncertainty reduction process will allow a journalist to penetrate the military public self.

Further exploration of the uncertainty reduction theory spawned an extended theory of anxiety-uncertain management (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988), which also relates to the reporting relationship between the military and embedded journalists. This theory seeks to help explain and model the process of interpersonal interaction during the initial stage of relationship

development by examining anxiety as a variable. During the initial stage of interaction between the embedded reporters and the military, anxiety plays a key relational role in the desire and determination to reduce uncertainty among the two groups. This extended theory asserts that as the military and embed members become friends and acquaintances, both anxiety and uncertainty are reduced. Anxiety is incorporated as the affective equivalent of cognitive uncertainty, and as anxiety and uncertainty decrease, there is a correlated increase in affect, hence, the more positive news coverage by the embedded reporters (Gudykunst, Yang, & Nishida, 1985).

H1: Compared to non-embedded coverage, embedded journalists will produce television reports that are more positive about a) the military as a whole and b) its personnel.

According to Meyer and Allen (1997) there are three components of organizational commitment: affective, continuance, and normative. Affective commitment relates to an attitude or orientation toward the organization, which links or attaches the identity of the person to the organization (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Embedded reporters subjected to the same stresses associated with membership in the military may undergo the process by which the goals of the military and those of the reporter become increasingly integrated or congruent. However, it is almost impossible to say how this identification with or acceptance of organizational goals and objectives has changed as a result of the embedding process without also looking at that same reporter's attitudes prior to becoming embedded. In other words, while it appears that there may be several good reasons to suspect an increase in affective commitment, additional research is necessary to support it.

Similar to those employees with strong affective commitment, employees with strong continuance commitment are more likely to remain with an organization than those with a weak commitment. The reasons for their continued participation are different. Here the employee is looking at costs, and making “side bets” on alternatives or other options. Embedded reporters, except during actual conflict where the “cost” associated with leaving may include death, appear to exhibit no signs associated with continuance commitment. Specifically, negative correlations have been observed between continuance commitment and overall job performance, number of complaints against employees, and supervisor ratings (Allen, 2003). However, embedded reporters do not typically share these same characteristics. This suggests that continuance commitment does not explain why embedded reporters might be inclined to produce television reports that are more positive than those reports submitted by non-embedded reporters.

According to Allen (2003), only a few studies have examined in-role performance indicators to normative commitment. That is, there have been no significant relationships identified between normative commitment and independently rated performance indicators. This makes it hard to establish a link between embedded reporting and normative commitment. However, this area appears to have the most promise if any relationship between organizational commitment and favorable or positive television reports is to be established. This is because normative commitment deals with obligations, or feelings and attitudes that an individual “ought” have and to behave in a certain manner. Nevertheless, several competing interests, individuals, and organizations vie for a reporter’s notion of what they should or should not do or behave. Professional responsibility, commitment to their sponsoring news organizations, commitment to fellow members of a military unit, and even a belief that one needs to tell the

complete story as an American, all compete for the reporter's sense of what they should do and how they should report.

This investigation posits:

H2: Compared to non-embedded coverage, embedded journalists will produce television reports that depict stronger organizational commitment.

Nature of Coverage

Researchers expected that embedded television news reports would be structurally different. This expectation assumes that embedded reporters will frame their stories differently, resulting in more affect and positive relational messages.

Iyengar (1991) defines framing as the “subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems” (p. 11). Framing is the way a journalist chooses to tell a story, and ultimately results in the way the audience views an issue. Entman (1991) states that “frames reside in the specific properties of the news narrative that encourage those perceiving and thinking about events to develop particular understandings of them. News frames are constructed from and embodied in keywords, metaphors, concepts, symbols, and visual images emphasized in a news narrative” (p. 7).

Iyengar (1991) posits that all television news stories can be classified as either episodic or thematic based on their presentation. The episodic news frame entails a case study or event-oriented report. These are reported in terms of concrete instances. The thematic news frames uses a more general or abstract context. The report is directed at general outcomes or conditions. These frames are not used exclusive but one is usually predominant. Because television news is limited by time, an episodic report is usually preferred over a thematic report. An episodic report

is usually visually compelling and covers the hard facts, while a thematic report requires a more in-depth, interpretive analysis which requires more time.

Iyengar (1991) states that the dominance of episodic framing in television news has been established in a number of studies. An example he gives is “television news coverage of mass-protest movements generally focuses more closely on specific acts of protest than on the issues that gave rise to the protests” (pp. 14-15). Another important factor highlighted by research is that episodic and thematic framing affect how individuals assign responsibility for political issues. According to Iyengar, “episodic framing tends to elicit individualistic rather than societal attributions of responsibility, while thematic framing has the opposite effect” (pp. 15-16). Cappella and Jamieson (1997) state that “the effects of episodic framing on attributions of responsibility occur through a process of automatic trait attribution implying personal rather than situational responsibility and not a process of retrieval of concrete, specific behaviors portrayed in the news” (p. 84). Hence, this investigation posits that:

H3: Compared to non-embedded coverage, embedded journalists will produce television news stories about the military that are more episodic in nature.

Relational Communication/Affect

This study also posits that embedded news reports will convey more affect and positive relational communication. Relational communication concerns “how two or more people regard each other, regard their relationship, or regard themselves within the context of the relationship” (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, p. 193). Relational communication is an intrinsic facet of all communication, but is more pronounced whenever the communication form makes possible either real (e.g., interpersonal exchanges) or perceived (e.g., television viewing) contact between

communicator and receiver (Burgoon, 1980; Burgoon & Hale, 1987). In other words, relational communication is privileged whenever a communication form stresses the visual channel and, in particular, close personal access to a source's facial cues. Relational messages can be expressed verbally, but are more often communicated nonverbally (Dillard, Solomon, & Palmer, 1999). Relational communication embodies soft dimensions of persona, including: similarity/depth, consisting of perceptions of similarity, friendliness and caring; receptivity/trust, involving perceptions of sincerity, honesty, an interest in communicating, and a willingness to listen; immediacy/affection, comprising perceptions of warmth, involvement, enthusiasm, and interest; in addition to lesser dimensions (Burgoon & Hale, 1987).

More emphasis on individual service members, including one-on-one interaction with the troops, facilitates perceptions of intimacy, embodying many of the relational message themes described above (e.g., similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, and immediacy/affection). Research indicates that relational communication is more influential in television communication compared to other communication forms (e.g., print, radio, etc.) (Pfau, 1990), and the relational message dimensions of similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, and immediacy/affection exert the greatest influence (Pfau, 1990; Pfau & Kang, 1991; Pfau & Kang, 1993). Therefore, compared to non-embedded news reports, embedded television news stories convey more positive relational communication, that is, more immediacy/affection, receptivity/trust, and similarity/depth.

Because television is the more episodic medium, it should elicit more emotion. As mentioned previously, Iyengar (1991) has found that television news coverage elicits more emotion than print coverage because of its power to draw personal assertions from viewers. Television may be more episodically framed than other media forms by creating emotional accessibility with the viewer. This emotional accessibility may be due to parasocial interactions

between television viewers and the subjects of episodically-framed stories, or between the viewers and the reporters. Iyengar (1991) said television is capitalizing on this possibility and that “the dominance of the episodic frame in television news has been established in a number of studies” (p. 14).

Television’s ability to utilize parasocial interactions with its viewers results in its great popularity today. “We Americans trust television news; we see it as authoritative (perhaps because we see it); we have welcomed Huntley, Cronkite, Brokaw and others into our living rooms gladly” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p.1). In addition, television is considered to be America’s single most important source of information about political affairs, and therefore, the public’s perception of political life is mainly what it sees on television (Iyengar, 1991).

Media, particularly television, is a very powerful persuasive tool, and their many forms can have significant impacts on one’s emotional state. In a review of the existing literature about media affects, Zillman (1991) stated that media can help us to unwind or produce excitement. Zillman and colleagues have produced significant and influential research in the field of media affects, specifically, excitation transfer theory and empathy.

Excitation transfer theory begins with the idea of arousal, a feeling that is neither positive nor negative that energizes one’s behavior. Arousal, according to Hebb (1955), does not steer human behavior, whereas, affect has guided human behavior since our inception. Zillman (1971) believes that because arousal is a state of excitement without direction, that a feeling of excitement can be transferred to another stimulus-producing event which does not have to be emotionally related to the initial arousing stimuli. An important finding of Zillman’s work is that the affects of arousal are not long lived. In fact, Zillman (1991) stated that, “residual arousal is likely to dissipate within several minutes after exposure” (p.118).

Thus, this investigation posits that:

H4: Compared to non-embedded journalists, embedded reporters will produce stories that are a) more affective and b) manifest more positive relational cues.

Researchers also investigated the differences between news coverage during the invasion of Iraq and the occupation of the country. The theories examined in the paper do not provide any reasoning to believe that any such difference may exist. However, the authors believed that real-time events and the on-going coverage of the war may influence the nature of the news coverage. The authors also wonder if there are any major differences among the major television networks and their war coverage.

Therefore, this investigation seeks to answer the following:

RQ1: Does embedding during invasion versus occupation produce more episodic, empathetic, and sympathetic reports?

RQ2: Is there a difference among the major television networks regarding the depiction of tone, episodic framing, and organizational commitment during times of occupation or invasion?

Method

A content analysis was conducted of network television newscasts during the first three weeks, excluding weekends, of the invasion phase of OIF and three weeks, excluding weekends, during what has turned into an occupation phase of OIF. The analysis focuses on ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN news segments relating to military operations. The news reports were provided by Vanderbilt University. The entire 30-minute (for consistency, only the first 30-minutes of CNN) news broadcasts were analyzed in the 5:30 to 6:00 PM (CST) time slot. The dates chosen for the invasion phase were (weekdays only) March 20 to April 9, 2003, and (again, weekdays

only) November 1 to 19, 2004, for the occupation phase. The 2003 dates selected marked the beginning of the invasion into Iraq up until April 9, when journalists coined “The Fall of Baghdad,” which was symbolized by the fall of the statue of Saddam Hussein and considered as the end of the invasion phase of the war. Since the invasion phase ran the course of 15 days, the same number of days was selected for the analysis of the occupation phase to provide an equivalent comparison between the invasion and occupation phases. Later dates were chosen based upon embedded numbers attained from the Department of Defense (DoD). The numbers had increased to 96, which was the highest number of embeds since the invasion.

The unit of analysis was each single report by a broadcast journalist about a person, unit, or event with a clear beginning, middle, and end. A unit of analysis commenced with the anchor introducing a story and then either turning to an embedded or non-embedded correspondent, or showing video of OIF while the anchor reported in support of the video. The ending of each unit of analysis was defined as when an embedded or non-embedded journalist “signed off” (“John Smith, CNN, Fullujah”) or the anchor clearly displayed that the story was over.

Five DoD public affairs personnel and one Department of Defense officers serving in managerial positions, who were all enrolled in the Joint Communication Course at the University of Oklahoma, conducted the content analysis. Coding norms were established during supervised training sessions conducted using network newscasts about combat operations outside of the two 15-day windows of the study. The coders established a high degree of standardization to the coding process resulting in preliminary values of inter-coder reliability greater than .95. To avoid difficulty in determining the start and end of many segments, coders worked together to make this determination. This eliminated errors in judgment and ensured coders were aware of the exact length of each segment measured. Then, coders worked separately. Coders are veteran

media analysts with a combined experience of more than 90 years working in the public relations and broadcast media field. The effective inter-coder reliability ratings (Rosenthal, 1984, 1987) are reported below, following descriptions of each dependent variable.

The independent variable featured in the investigation was news correspondent status, which was coded based on information provided about unit as embedded, non-embedded (termed “unilateral” during OIF), or unknown. An embedded reporter is defined in the literature as a media representative remaining with a unit on an extended basis (SECDEF, 2003). Coders distinguished between embedded and non-embedded correspondents based on information that was provided by the news anchor. In some instances, it was unclear whether the correspondent was embedded or non-embedded, in which case they were coded as unknown.

The investigation featured six dependent variables. Overall tone of coverage toward the military was assessed with a global attitude measure adapted from Burgoon, Cohen, Miller, and Montgomery (1978). It consisted of six 7-interval scales, including: good/bad, positive/negative, wise/foolish, valuable/worthless, favorable/unfavorable, and acceptable/unacceptable. The inter-coder reliability rating of this measure was .?? ($\alpha=???$). Depiction of the trustworthiness of the troops covered in news reports was assessed using the Individualized Trust Scale (ITS), which was initially developed by Wheelus and Grotz (1977) based on four 5-interval scales. The ITS was adapted to 7-interval scales for this investigation. Specific items included: honest/dishonest, trusting/untrusting, candid/deceptive, and sincere/insincere. Inter-coder reliability was .?? ($\alpha=???$).

The extent to which each unit employed framing was measured with a single 7-interval scale: episodic/thematic. The scale used previously was Pfau, Haigh, Gettle, Donnelly, Scott,

Warr and Wittenberg. (2004). The measure achieved an inter-coder reliability rating of ?? ($\alpha=???$).

Affect conveyed in each story unit was measured using eight 7-interval items developed by Dillard and colleagues to assess the affective dimensions of happiness and contentment (Dillard, Solomon and Samp, 1996). The 0-6-interval scales measured the extent to which a unit of analysis conveyed happiness (happy, cheerful, elated, and joyful) and contentment (mellow, tranquil, peaceful, and contented). Inter-coder reliability ratings were: happiness, .?? ($\alpha=???$), and contentment, .?? ($\alpha=???$).

The extent to which military members depicted in story units conveyed positive relational communication was assessed using 7-interval scales developed by Burgoon and Hale (1987). Dimensions and scale items employed in this investigation were: immediacy/affection (expression of enthusiasm, involvement, and warmth), similarity/depth (expression of similarity, friendliness, and caring), and receptivity/trust (expression of interest, receptiveness, sincerity, and honesty) (Burgoon & Hale, 1987). When no military member was shown, coders reported a score of “undetermined,” thus resulting in a much smaller α for the relational communication measures. Inter-coder reliability ratings for relational communication were: immediacy/affection, .?? ($\alpha=???$); similarity/depth, .?? ($\alpha=???$); and receptivity/trust, .?? ($\alpha=???$).

Finally, the organization commitment of the journalists to the military was measured using a modified version of the 7-interval scale of an eight-item index developed by O’Reilly and Chatman (1986) as cited in Fields (2002). It uses 12 items to describe three dimensions of organizational commitment: (1) internalization, defined as an employee adopting the organization’s mission as the employee’s own; (2) identification, defined as the employee’s belief that the organization’s values are similar to the employee’s; and (3) compliance, defined as

continuing to remain an organization member because costs of changing are too high. The modified scale used a three-item index for this investigation and only looked at identification and internalization of the organizational commitment by the journalists. The modified scale measured the extent of agreement/disagreement among coders as to: what the military stands for is important to the journalist; the journalist talks up the military as a great organization; since becoming embedded; and the journalists feel a sense of involvement with the military rather than that of an outsider. Responses are obtained on a 7-point Likert-type scale where 1=*strongly disagree* and 7=*strongly agree*.

Results

This study sought to determine whether embedding journalists with military units during combat produces different television news reports and, if so, the nature of such differences. In addition, this study investigates whether there are any differences in news stories during the initial invasion and reports more than a year later during the occupation. This study is a follow up to a previous study conducted in early 2004.

Hypotheses 1 through 4 addressed differences of depiction in tone, trustworthiness, framing, organizational commitment, happiness, and contentment. To assess this study's predictions, a one-way MANOVA was computed for journalist status (embed/non-embed) on all dependent variables, which included: global tone toward military, trustworthiness of individual troops, episodic versus thematic framing, organizational commitment, and the emotions happiness and contentment. Significant differences were found across dependent variables. Wilks' $\lambda F_{6,272} = 50.41, p < .001$.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that non-embed coverage would be less positive about the military and its personnel. The univariate tests indicated significant main effects on the

dependent measures of global tone toward military, $F(1, 277)=103.16, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 .27$, and trustworthiness of individual troops, $F(1, 277)=112.89, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 .29$. (Refer to Table 1).

As Table 1 reveals, the pattern of means indicated that embedded reports were more positive about the military and its personnel. Therefore Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted embedded journalists will produce television reports that depict stronger organizational commitment. The one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for reporter status on organizational commitment, $F(1, 277)=133.59, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 .325$. Table 1 illustrates that embedded stories revealed stronger organizational commitment, thus supporting Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that embedded journalists would produce more episodic stories than non-embedded journalists. The results supported this prediction. The one-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for reporter status on episodic framing $F(1, 277)=194.07, p<.001$, partial $\eta^2 .41$. Embedded reports contained more episodic frames than non-embedded reports.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that embedded reporters would produce more affective stories, as well as stories that demonstrated more positive relational cues. Hypothesis 4 was partially supported. The only significant difference was found on the emotion of happiness, ($F(1, 277)=6.76, p<.01$, partial $\eta^2 .02$); results were marginally significant for contentment ($F(1, 277)=2.83, p<.10$, partial $\eta^2 .01$). The pattern of means indicated that embedded reports embodied more positive emotional content, thus supporting Hypothesis 4.

An additional omnibus test, a one-way MANOVA, was computed for journalist status on relational communication variables (separate analysis was required because relational cues were only assessed in reports in which military personnel were interviewed). This was designed to test the prediction that embedded reporters would produce stories with more positive relational cues.

This prediction fell short of statistical significance: Wilks' $\lambda F_{3,76} = 1.23, p > .10$. Furthermore, there were no significant univariate differences involving the dependent variables of immediacy, similarity, and receptivity. These results failed to support Hypothesis 1.

Research question 1 asks if there were differences between embed reporting at the time of occupation and invasion. A one-way MANOVA was computed for stage of conflict (invasion/occupation) on the dependent variables: global tone toward military, trustworthiness of individual troops, episodic versus thematic framing, and the emotion contentment to determine if there was any difference in reporting. Significant differences were found across dependent variables: Wilks' $\lambda F_{6,272} = 10.30, p < .001$. Subsequent univariate tests indicated a significant difference on the dependent variables of tone (attitude) $F_{1,277} = 8.65, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 .03$; framing, $F_{1,277} = 11.02, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 .04$; and contentment $F_{1,277} = 16.05, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 .06$. The pattern of means depicted in Table 2 indicate that reporting of the invasion phase revealed more positive tone, more organizational commitment, and more use of episodic frames than reporting of the occupation phase.

Research question 2 asks if there were any differences among network newscasts on the dependent variables. Another one-way MANOVA was computed for network (ABC, CBS, NBC, and CNN) on the dependent variables: global tone toward military, trustworthiness of individual troops, episodic versus thematic framing, and organizational commitment. Significant differences were found on each dependent variable. Wilks' $\lambda F_{12,719} = 2.46, p < .01$. Subsequent univariable tests indicated a significant difference on the dependent variable of tone (attitude) $F_{3,275} = 3.89, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 .04$; trustworthiness of troops $F_{3,275} = 7.56, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 .08$; framing, $F_{1,277} = 4.05, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 .04$; and organizational commitment $F_{1,277} = 16.05, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 .06$. Subsequent Scheffe post-hoc tests were computed to examine the

patterns of means. They revealed significant differences between CBS and CNN. CBS coverage depicted a more favorable tone toward the military, $t_{140} = 6.79, p < .01$; more trustworthiness in troops, $t_{140} = 9.47, p < .01$; was more episodic, $t_{140} = 6.90, p < .01$; and displayed higher levels of organizational commitment, $t_{140} = 7.36, p < .01$. There was also a significant difference in the coverage of CBS and ABC on the dependent variable organizational commitment, $t_{140} = 6.60, p < .01$. CBS reports displayed stronger organizational commitment.

Discussion

This investigation explored whether embedding journalists with military units in wartime produces television news reports that are different and, if so, how. Specifically, it investigated whether embedded television news reports were more positive in their depiction of the military and whether embedded reports were structurally different: employing more episodic news frames and, as a result, featuring more positive affect and, when troops were shown, more positive relational communication. To test our various hypotheses, a content analysis was conducted of network news reports during both the initial invasion and later occupation of OIF.

A variety of communication theories have been presented that suggest embedded journalists produce more positive coverage of the military and its personnel, that these journalists would have developed organizational commitment, that their coverage would be more episodic, and have increased levels of affect and positive relational messages. Results of this comprehensive content analysis show that embedded television reporters do indeed produce more positive-stories and used more episodic framing in their war coverage compared to non-embedded reporters. However, insufficient data was collected to determine if stories produced by embedded reporters produced more positive relational messages. Additionally, the results only partially supported the hypotheses that interviews of military personnel conducted by embedded

reporters elicited more positive affect. Finally, two additional research questions found that the tone of coverage differed between the invasion and occupation, and that there was a difference in several dependent variables across network newscasts.

The results indicated that, according to social penetration theory, embedded television news reporters were more favorable toward the military compared to non-embedded reporters, which is as expected since embedding inherently makes journalists members of the assigned military unit. Consequently, these journalists come to better know the troops they are covering and then develop a more favorable attitude toward the military generally and toward individual soldiers, especially those that she or he covers more specifically.

The unique aspects of military service, such as frequent relocations, temporary duty assignments (including deployments away from family members), and selflessness in the execution of often life-threatening duties, makes organizational commitment an extremely beneficial characteristic. The study shows that embedded reporters develop certain aspects of organizational commitment, while not incorporating others. Embedded reporters subjected to the same stresses associated with membership in the military, may undergo the process by which the goals of the military those of the reporter become increasingly integrated or congruent.

That is, there have been no significant relationships identified between commitment and independently observable variables other than performance indicators. This makes it hard to establish a link between embedded reporting and organization commitment. However, this area appears to have the most promise if we are to establish any relationship between organizational commitment and favorable or positive television reports. This is because normative commitment deals with obligations, or feelings and attitudes that an individual “ought” to behavior in a certain manner. But several competing interests, individuals, and organizations vie for a reporter’s

notion of what they should or should not do or behave. Here, professional responsibility, commitment to their sponsoring news organizations, commitment to fellow members of a military unit that often provide essential administrative and logistical support, and even an belief that one needs to tell the complete story as an American, all compete for the reporters sense of what they should do and how they should report.

Additionally, even though the study covered two separate phases, the results confirmed that embedded reporters package their stories more episodically. Episodic frames “focus more closely on specific acts” (Iyengar, 1991, p. 14). Because embedded reporters eat and sleep with service members, they are able to produce a more personal story. The episodic framing of embedded reporters suggests a structural difference from non-embedded reporters and the results support this conclusion.

While this investigation predicted that embedded reporters would produce more affective stories and stories that demonstrated more positive relational cues, the data only partially supported this hypothesis in that there was significant difference found on the emotion of happiness. Results for contentment showed only a marginal significance. This indicates embedded reports contained more positive emotional content.

Lastly, two research questions reveal that the differences between the variables under study themselves experience differences over time. That is to say, although embedded reports are different from non-embedded reports, these differences remained statistically significant when measured during the initial invasion and during later broadcasts during the occupation, and in many cases shown to increase over time. A second question also shows that these differences manifest themselves differently across the various networks evaluated. Specifically, CBS was

found to project a more positive tone and greater episodic framing than the others, while CNN, was the least positive among those networks evaluated.

Hence, embedded television news reports were structurally different from non-embedded reports. The observable differences included a more positive tone, an increase in the depiction of trustworthiness, more episodic frames, slightly greater positive affect, and an increase in organizational commitment. Moreover, although the overall results of this study are promising, they reveal several deficiencies and disadvantages of the various scales used to measure the constructs identified by the dependent variables under study. For example, imperfect representation of affective and normative commitment results from simply a content analysis of news broadcasts – rather these constructs are typically measured using a self-reporting survey or questionnaire. Rather, the coders had to estimate the level of commitment of the various journalists based upon verbal and visual cues.

Limitations

During the occupation and invasion, non-embedded reporters filed reports from Baghdad, the Pentagon and other locations in Iraq and the United States using sound bites and video footage submitted by embedded reporters and videographers. This resulted in non-embed reports taking on characteristics of news stories filed by embedded reporters. Though the reporters were detached from the servicemen and women in their stories, the sound bites and video taken from embedded reporters and videographers made their stories seem more relational with the military. The results of all hypotheses four have been more significant if the stories by non-embedded reporters using segments from embedded reporters and videographers were separated from non-embedded reporters who did not use segments from embedded reporters and videographers.

Future studies should include a measure that examines the difference between news stories from non-embedded reporters with and without segments from embedded reporters and videographers.

Another limitation was coders being emotionally detached while viewing the stories, primarily because they were looking at the stories critically instead of viewing the stories as they were intended to be received. Stories were viewed back-to-back for many hours at a time and objectivity may have been lost due to the monotony. Positive emotions such as happiness and contentment were the only emotions associated with significant results. Future studies should include some negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and resentment on the coding instrument.

Because all coders are active duty military members, defensive feelings may have affected coding objectively. The study could benefit from research using non-military members to code news stories rather than those who are part of the organizational culture of the military.

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Table 1. Tendencies in Television Report Tone and Frames as a Function of Journalist Status

Table 1.	Journalist Status		
	<i>N</i>	Embedded	Non-Embedded
Dependent Variable			
Tone of coverage	132 (E) 147 (NE)	4.81 (<i>s.d.</i> .56)*	4.11 (<i>s.d.</i> .59)
Trustworthiness	132 (E) 147 (NE)	5.03 (<i>s.d.</i> .59)*	4.23 (<i>s.d.</i> .58)
Framing	132 (E) 147 (NE)	3.77 (<i>s.d.</i> 1.45)*	1.57 (<i>s.d.</i> 1.18)
Organizational Commitment	132 (E) 147 (NE)	4.50 (<i>s.d.</i> .52)*	3.76 (<i>s.d.</i> .54)
Happiness	132 (E) 147 (NE)	.05 (<i>s.d.</i> .15)*	.01 (<i>s.d.</i> .08)
Contentment	132 (E) 147 (NE)	.04 (<i>s.d.</i> .14)**	.02 (<i>s.d.</i> .08)

*Significant at $p < .01$

**Borderline significant at $p < .10$

Table 2. Differences in Television Reporting at the Time of Occupation and Invasion.

Table 2.	<i>N</i>	Time of Reporting	
		Invasion	Occupation
Dependent Variable			
Tone of coverage	196 (I) 84 (O)	4.52 (<i>s.d.</i> .62)*	4.26 (<i>s.d.</i> .76)
Trustworthiness	196 (I) 84 (O)	4.67 (<i>s.d.</i> .65)	4.57 (<i>s.d.</i> .79)
Framing	196 (I) 84 (O)	2.83 (<i>s.d.</i> 1.75)*	2.10 (<i>s.d.</i> 1.51)
Organizational Commitment	196 (I) 84 (O)	4.10 (<i>s.d.</i> .51)	4.13 (<i>s.d.</i> .89)
Happiness	196 (I) 84 (O)	.03 (<i>s.d.</i> .12)	.03 (<i>s.d.</i> .12)
Contentment	196 (I) 84 (O)	.01 (<i>s.d.</i> .05)	.07 (<i>s.d.</i> .18)*

*Significant at $p < .01$