From Simulation to Iconification: Portrayals of the Self and the Other in News Media Photographs from the 2003 War in Iraq.

by

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Supervisory Committee

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The evidential quality of photographs has grown out of their early uses in tourism, colonialism, social control and media, and their often unconscious perception makes them not only susceptible to manipulation but also gives them the power to impart messages beyond those consciously considered by the viewer. This thesis explores seemingly innocuous photographs of the 2003 war in Iraq from the BBC and The New York Times online as published evidence that moves beyond simple coverage of the war by using subtle visual cues that speak to historically rooted power relationships between the Western ‘self’ and the Muslim ‘other’. Further, using Baudrillard’s understanding of simulation and dissimulation as a guide, this thesis introduces the notion of iconification and reveals how these images portrayed consistent themes thereby rendering the photographs icons for abstract concepts such as terrorism, oppression, and liberation.
# Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee ............................................................................................................. ii
Abstract .................................................................................................................................. iii
Table of Contents ....................................................................................................................... iv
Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 1
Chapter 1 - Photography History, Evidence and Reality ................................................................. 6
  History of Photography ............................................................................................................ 7
  Truth, Evidence, and Reality .................................................................................................. 14
  Signification and simulation ................................................................................................. 25
Chapter 2 – News Media, War, Representation and Power ............................................................ 36
  News Media, Objectivity, War and Propaganda ................................................................... 37
  Media Perspectives of The 2003 Iraq War .......................................................................... 43
  Representations of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ ...................................................................... 48
  Visual Representations of Power ......................................................................................... 53
Chapter 3- Methodology ............................................................................................................... 59
  Analysis ................................................................................................................................. 60
  Research and the Internet .................................................................................................... 65
  Sample Images ..................................................................................................................... 67
Chapter 4- Images of War and Iconification ............................................................................... 70
  First Images of War ............................................................................................................... 71
    The ‘Self’ .......................................................................................................................... 71
    The ‘Other’ ...................................................................................................................... 74
    The ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ .............................................................................................. 78
  Seven Years On .................................................................................................................... 85
    The ‘Self’ .......................................................................................................................... 86
    The ‘Other’ ...................................................................................................................... 87
    The ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ .............................................................................................. 89
    From Simulation to Iconification ................................................................................... 94
Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 101
References ................................................................................................................................. 105
Appendix A – Visual Cues in Sample Images ......................................................................... 113
Introduction

A lot of people have seen photographs that have, whether they know it or not, changed their consciousness. (Susan Sontag 2004)

Daguerre could not have imagined that his development of the first fixed images in 1839 would have led to such a reliance on photography in much of the contemporary world. From those used in advertising, news and entertainment directed at the public, to personal image production made possible by increasingly affordable camera and software technologies, the ubiquity of images and their permeation of modern life is an undeniable sign of the times. With all the technological advancements that have occurred in the last century and a half, however, the notion that photographic images represent truth or capture reality has remained largely unchanged.

While contemporary audiences are aware of the possibility and means of manipulating images, and those which have obvious symptoms of tampering are generally denounced as fakes, there remains a prevailing sense that ‘seeing is believing’. As such, photographs and other images continue to be relied upon in courts of law as evidence, to determine winners of sports, and to relay information through news media. That they continue to be presented and largely perceived as providing truth and access to reality can be said to give visual images their power, and their role in communication and the production and dissemination of knowledge cannot be understated.

It is with this in mind that the following thesis explores mainstream news media photographs from the war in Iraq that were published as evidence of the war but appear to have said more about those involved than about the war itself. The images considered
here are not those through which the war has since become remembered, such as those depicting the torture of Iraqis in Abu Ghraib or the removal of a statue of Saddam Hussein by coalition troops, but the seemingly innocuous photographs which accompanied articles or were contained in photo galleries and not intended to be symbolic of the war. Specifically, this thesis analyses photographs produced and published in this climate of war by two mainstream news media websites from the United States and the United Kingdom with respect to their capacity to use subtle visual cues to speak to historically rooted power relationships between the Western ‘self’ and the Muslim ‘other’ that move beyond simple coverage of the war. Additionally, this thesis considers the possibility that repetitive portrayals of particular individuals or groups render images, and by extension their subjects, icons for larger abstract concepts that become adopted into the visual social fabric as normalized, essentialized truth; much like images of starving Biafrans in the 20th century came to be icons for famine and Africa more generally. To be clear, the intention here is not to determine how Western media viewers perceived images of the war or the intentions of the photographers who made them, but to call attention to unconsciously perceived visual cues present in some news media images from the most recent Iraq war and to highlight how these subtly spoke to power relations and contributed to the reduction of the historical, political and social contexts underlying the war and the iconification of terms such as terrorism, oppression and liberation.

The initial two chapters draw together literature on photography, (news) media, the Iraq war, visual perception and representation to form the basis for the final analysis and discussion of sample images from Iraq.
The first chapter begins with a history of photography that emphasizes its development and emergence during the Industrial Revolution, and its rapid rise in popularity among the upper classes followed by the growing middle class. The early uses of photography in relation to tourism, colonialism, social control, and media are also considered for their role in setting the stage for contemporary representations and exertion of power over the ‘other’. With the historical background set, a discussion of images in contemporary society follows, in which the relationship of photographs to reality is called into question with specific reference to the differences between vision and the camera’s eye, the context in which images are used, the unconscious and emotional perception of images, and the existence of manipulated or fake news photographs. Finally, the chapter closes with a more theoretical look at the relationship of images to reality according to Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard, with specific attention paid to the latter’s understanding of simulation, dissimulation, and hyperreality, which will ultimately guide the notion of iconification as it pertains to images from the Iraq war.

The chapter that follows begins with a look at mainly American media, which is thought to guide many Western news sources, before moving to the way in which media relates to objectivity, war, and propaganda in general as well as during the Iraq war particularly. Perspectives on the war are considered, beginning with the historically based views put forth in Middle Eastern news sources, followed by Western (particularly American and British) interpretations based mainly on current events. Indeed, as an English-speaking Canadian with no knowledge of languages that could facilitate research of Middle Eastern sources myself, the discussion of perspectives put forth in that region
relies completely on the work of others. Because my concern here is with Western media, however, this is more unfortunate than critical to the arguments put forth in the final chapter. The discussion of media and the Iraq war also encompasses the representations put forth by Western media related to the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ in light of discussions from the first chapter. Finally, this chapter outlines the ways messages about power relations between subjects in a photo, and also those between the subject and the viewer, can be contained and perceived from both subtle and overt visual cues in the image.

The third chapter is devoted to outlining the methodology used for sampling and analysis of the collected images and also addresses some of the difficulties of visual research generally as well as Internet research, which as a new technology and research tool poses unique problems for scholars of visual media. Additionally, the sample of images is discussed with regard to the way in which they were organised and prepared for analysis, with particular attention paid to the influence of the prior two chapters in this process.

In the final chapter a small sub-sample of twelve images chosen from a larger sample of 120 images is analysed according to the understandings put forth in the first three chapters. The analysis itself is organized according to the sample year, which is then subcategorized as either discussing images of the ‘self’, the ‘other’, or those depicting both. Thus the analysis begins with the sub-sample of images from 2003 and discusses the portrayals according to the subcategories before broadening to compare the two sources and to address these images in relation to the larger sample. The sample from 2010 is analyzed in a similar fashion and in relation to those from 2003 before the chapter concludes by drawing together the findings with a discussion of Baudrillard’s notion of
simulation and the way in which these images can be interpreted as having moved into an iconic status.

The ubiquity of images and increasing reliance on mass media in contemporary society signals the need for heightened critical literacy with regard to images that has heretofore been reserved for spoken or text-based communication. It is hoped that this thesis can shed light on the need for critical engagement by highlighting the way in which authoritative institutions such as news media publish images that, while seemingly innocuous, carry unconsciously perceived messages about people and events that go beyond what is depicted within the frame.
Chapter 1 - Photography History, Evidence and Reality

Photography as such has no identity. Its status as a technology varies with the power relations which invest it. Its nature as a practice depends on the institutions and agents which define it and set it to work. Its function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they have. Its history has no unity. It is a flickering across a field of institutional spaces [Tagg 1993:63]

To delve into a discussion of contemporary media images without addressing the historical context in which modern photography emerged would neglect the technological developments in image making, the role of institutions and individuals in its promotion and use, and the social implications of early mechanical image production. For if, as John Tagg (1993) argues, photography’s history is a complex agglomeration of those histories belonging to the institutions that employ it, then current media photographs are the progeny of those histories as much as they are the result of the contemporary conditions in which they are produced.

Thus, this chapter begins with a look at the history of photography, including its emergence during the Industrial Revolution and the way in which images subsequently became tied to truth, evidence, and reality in the media in addition to being used as tools of power and control. This is used as the basis for the succeeding discussion of how these beginnings contributed to contemporary notions of the relationship of images to reality as well as the contexts in which they continue to be presented as evidence, despite developments in the means of manipulating or creating fraudulent images. Additionally, attention is given in this section to the perception of images on largely unconscious levels that target emotion before reason and can lead to the formation or reproduction of meanings that shape viewers’ beliefs. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of
the theoretical understandings of Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard related to the relationship of images to reality, which will guide the analysis of images from the Iraq war in the final chapter.

**History of Photography**

That the history of photography is a compilation of other histories becomes evident when attempting to pinpoint its ‘beginning’, or the particular point of invention. Its development was a fragmented process, consisting of many individuals’ contributions over the centuries with regard to art, light, vision, mechanics, and chemistry. Here, the birth of photography will refer to the point in the early to mid 19th century when the first image was permanently fixed by chemical means to the surface on which it was projected, however tenuously in the beginning. The ability to fix a projected image facilitated two-dimensional renderings of scenes with a realism that had been previously unattainable, in that lines, shadows and highlights more closely resembled the living referent than those in painted counterparts. An implication of this development was that the traditional portrait and landscape paintings, and therefore the painters as well, became threatened commodities in the face of this emergent technology. Thus, the historical context of photography begins in the period just preceding the first fixed image, in which the common method of producing images was artists’ renderings.

Prior to the development of photography in France in the early to mid 19th century (Gernsheim 1965; Tagg 1993), the responsibility of creating images had fallen to highly trained artists, who were commissioned to paint the likenesses of royalty and other individuals, religiously based images, as well as scenes from daily life. Those commissioning the works were often the powerful individuals and institutions in society
(Stokstad 2004), and the resulting images depicted those specific visual histories. However, social changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution saw the rise of the middle class and its increasing appropriation of the “artistic conceptions and forms of representation from the displaced nobility”, and some artists responded to this new clientele by producing smaller painted portraits, or miniatures (Tagg 1993:38). Commissioning the small portraits came into fashion in the late 18th century among these rising classes, as they viewed the miniatures as a means of displaying their newfound wealth, since it was akin to the higher classes’ penchant for large painted portraits (Tagg 1993). As the trend for portrait miniatures increased, so did the public’s desire for the faithful representation of those depicted, so while miniatures were generally painted by hand, mechanically produced portrait engravings increasingly became popular, possibly as a result of the pressure on producers to hasten their productivity, in addition to the accuracy of the images. The Physionotrace, invented in 1786 in France, engraved clients’ profiles on miniature copper plates and whet the public’s appetite for inexpensive and increasingly accurate representations of reality:

The value and fascination of such mechanically produced portraits seemed to lie in their unprecedented accuracy. The mechanisation of production guaranteed not only their cheapness and ready availability, but also, so it seemed, their authenticity. In this sense, although it was an apparatus which could not be developed further, the Physionotrace was the precursor not only of the potential of photography as a system of multiple reproduction, but also of its claims to offer a mechanically transcribed truth. (Tagg 1993:39)

The camera obscura, arguably the most important contribution to the development of photography, would eventually assist in supplanting the Physionotrace. Consisting of a darkened room (or later, a box), it projected the scene existing exterior to it onto one of its interior walls via a small hole allowing light to enter. Also called a ‘pinhole camera’, the camera obscura had been used for centuries, its basic principles tracing back to
Aristotle and being preserved and elaborated upon by Arab scholars in succeeding centuries (Gernsheim 1965; Lindberg 1968; Smith 1992). While the *camera obscura* produced exceedingly realistic images, it was unlike the Physionotrace in that it did not compete in the emerging middle-class consumer market that focused upon mechanized image manufacture, because in spite of its enduring role as an artist’s tool, thoughts of permanently fixing its projected image had only begun to surface late in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century (Gernsheim 1986; Tagg 1993; Batchen 1997).

In 1839 Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre announced the first method to ‘develop’ or draw out latent images using salt, which he called the *Daguerréotypie* or the *daguerreotype*. This process was soon made public by the French government with the belief that doing so would enable the technology to prosper with the input of others (Gernsheim 1986). Having already been exposed and accustomed to the mechanization of art and the accuracy of representation that it provided, much of French society was ready to receive a new image-making technology, and Daguerre claimed his invention would reach a wide audience, as it could be used by anyone to reproduce scenes in nature (Tagg 1993). The ability to closely reproduce reality while lacking traditional artistic training and skill indeed proved to be its major point of interest while simultaneously posing a threat to artists who had previously been employed to take up such tasks. Nonetheless, a tendency towards “factual accuracy” in art also became more refined after photography came into common practice, with the art movement Realism (or Naturalism) gaining predominance in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (Stokstad 2004).

Proponents of the new medium thought it represented reality marvellously and was in fact better than the human eye, in that a photograph could “fix and reveal movement
with a precision and a richness of detail that naturally eluded the eye” (Virilio 1994: 21).

Photographic technology and the public’s interest in photography quickly gained force and a fondness for photographic portraits swept through the upper classes, much as painted portraits had less than a century previous. As with portrait miniatures, which had enabled the middle class to display their wealth and mimic their social superiors, the potential market they represented ensured that photographs were soon made affordable as well. Small portrait photographs similar to today’s postcards became especially popular and images of celebrities, family and friends began to be collected and displayed in albums for the first time (Gernsheim 1986). These images, which were inexpensive and easy to produce also enabled photography to contribute to the concurrent colonialism of the time, in addition to tourism and other institutions such as education, the media, and the penal system (Gernsheim 1986; Graham-Brown 1988; Tagg 1993).

Wealthy travellers began to produce photographs from foreign lands, among the first of these being Egypt and Palestine in the mid-1800s, thereby verifying not only the experience of having travelled, but also the ‘uncivilized nature’ of the people in the photos (Graham-Brown 1988). Of particular interest to this thesis was the tendency for photographs of the time to emphasize aspects of Muslim societies which European photographers found both oppressive and exotic. For instance, the latticed windows found on some houses, which protected women from the gazes of passers-by while still allowing them to see the outdoors, were occasionally used as props to give the appearance of women being kept inside. In one case, a photographer even claimed that the woman in his photo, whose head emerged from the open lattice-work, had been
trapped inside the small room by her father, though it was later discovered that the photo was taken in a studio setting (Graham-Brown 1988).

The most common visual expression of oppression, however, was the veil, though this notion was occasionally suspended when it was depicted as lending an air of mystique or exoticism to the woman it covered\(^1\). As Graham-Brown (1988) attests, this ultimately gave rise to images in which women were photographed ‘unveiled’ against their will, in revealing clothing and in poses reminiscent of European Renaissance paintings. That women were photographed in clothes and positions that compromised their requisite modesty demonstrates the power wielded by the usually male, European photographer: “in cultures where the regulation of women’s visibility was an important aspect of patriarchal control, photography might suggest not only an assertion of the photographer’s power over the subject, but a loss of male control over women” (Graham-Brown 1988:61). Thus, to the European viewer these types of images may have appeared to ‘free’ the women from oppression, but in reality this simply represented their subjugation at the hands of European men while simultaneously emasculating local men who were unable to come to their defence. In addition to photography resulting from tourism, early anthropologists made use of photographs to document physical differences between culture groups, the production of which often conflicted with the beliefs and wishes of the depicted individuals and cultures. In some of these situations the access afforded to European women was capitalized upon, with at least one case whereby a male photographer secured the help of his wife to obtain anthropometric photographs of Middle Eastern women, which necessitated removing the veil (Graham-Brown 1988).

\(^1\) The eroticization of the veil is a Western construction that defiles its actual function as a method of remaining modest.
Back in Europe, photographs were also being used to document and exert power over individuals in ways that were new at the time, but continue today as a matter of routine procedure. For instance, images came to be produced of prisoners in an effort by administrators to maintain institutional control, and the mentally ill and others under medical supervision were photographed for purposes of documentation and the education of medical students (Tagg 1993). Even war reporters began to employ photography, with the first extensive photographic coverage coming from the Crimean War and other images produced during American Civil War, the Franco-Prussian War, and the Boer War, among others (Gernsheim 1986).

The increased ease of access and affordability of photographs also prompted newspapers to begin publishing images as accompaniments to stories, and as advertisements to promote products, so that by the turn of the century media consumers had begun to expect images in their news (Tagg 1993). Interestingly, despite the heightened attention to visual accuracy that had begun more than a century before with painting, the public complained of the “photographic distortion” they experienced when the use of photographs first became commonplace in the media (Novitz 1977:110). The distortion was attributed to the lens revealing a perspective that human vision was thought to ignore, though it seems more likely that people were simply used to seeing paintings, which can simultaneously account for varying perspectives much like human vision. That is, a painter or sculptor renders two dimensional the perspectives experienced in the three dimensional environment, but unlike a camera lens the artist can take liberties to simultaneously incorporate into one work of art several different perspectives afforded to our eyes via stereoscopic human vision. In contrast, the
camera’s lens can only ‘see’ and render a two dimensional image using the single perspective resulting from its one ‘eye’ and requires the viewer to perceive the image as representing three dimensions. Despite these initial disagreements concerning the role and capabilities of photography, and the amount of distortion caused by the camera lens, people eventually began to “see photographically” and came to view photographs as “the norm of truthfulness in representation” (Novitz 1977:110). That is, viewing photographic images as evidence came to be understood as a natural way of seeing rather than a socially constructed process.

It was this faith in the truthfulness of photographic representation that in 1877 led Eadweard Muybridge to use photography in order to prove that a horse’s four hooves are simultaneously raised for an instant when galloping (Snyder and Allen 1975). Once able to verify the hypothesis, by capturing sequences of time through a succession of photographs, the visual results “were met with dismay by artists, photographers, and the general public alike as being ‘unnatural’ and ‘untrue’” (Snyder and Allen 1975: 156). Though images at that time were generally thought to provide evidence, since the onlookers were unable to validate the truth of what was shown in the images with their own eyes, they were hesitant to accept the findings, as this form of representation was unfamiliar and likely somewhat difficult to comprehend. However, despite their incredulity, they had no recourse but to accept the results since they had no means of challenging or invalidating the claims made by the images. This difficulty in refuting the image has continued and is bound up with the notions of truth and evidence even in contemporary photography.
**Truth, Evidence, and Reality**

Generally speaking, the notion that truth is represented through photographs has persisted to the present day, in that “something we hear about, but doubt, seems proven when we’re shown a photograph of it” (Sontag 1978: 5). This proof, according to some, is a consequence of the viewer feeling they have acquired first hand knowledge after having seen the image (and therefore the subject) ‘in person’ (Barthes 1977; Joffe 2008). In keeping with the popular notion that ‘seeing is believing’\(^2\), which emphasises the authenticity of personal experience over secondary accounts for the confirmation of occurrences in reality, this interpretation highlights the photograph’s apparent ability to replicate experience, enabling the viewer to share that of the photographer as if it were their own. Others add that viewers are not generally encouraged to critically engage with images to the same degree as verbal or textual material, suggesting a kind of socially condoned lack of criticality toward images, which aids in the implicit understanding of photographs as bearers of truth (Joffe 2008; Jackson 2010). The underlying conviction that photographs are reproductions of reality and therefore messengers of truth is even confirmed in our linguistic terms. Photographers ‘take’ pictures, or ‘capture’ moments, whereas painters ‘create’ or ‘make’ art. This choice of words reveals the general assumption that photographs are “experiences captured”, that is, moments stolen from reality in replicated form, captured and made visually permanent rather than created or constructed (Sontag 1978:3).

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\(^2\) The concept that “seeing is believing” predates photography by more than two centuries, with the proverb itself making its first appearance in early 17\(^{th}\) century England (Knowles 2009). It appears to reflect the importance of vision and observation in early science, which became central to later empiricism and remained influential during the Enlightenment when photography itself was preparing for its emergence. As such, it also seems to contrast to the tenets of Christianity, which emphasises belief in the form of (“blind”) faith.
However, anyone who has used a camera knows the difficulty of accurately portraying in an image the reality one perceives, and that what is captured is not a replica of visual reality but an impression that sometimes looks better, sometimes worse, than expected. Photographs that appear to mirror reality usually require knowledge and creativity to produce, and even then are not exact replicas, due to the inherent differences in the mechanics of the human eye and the camera lens, which ‘see’ differently. What our pupils do automatically in cases of bright or diminished light must be manually controlled when using a camera and lens, and as such photography is not a passive act, but a series of deliberate calculations to ‘photo-graph’ or ‘write light’ onto the film or sensor with a particular intensity and focus to produce the intended outcome. Even an experienced photographer must consciously attend to the ‘exposure’ or light setting, and finding an appropriate exposure does not necessarily mean the image will be an exact replica of the scene in front of the lens.

An additional distinction between the camera lens and human vision is that a photo must be composed within the boundaries of the frame, whereas vision is experienced as frameless. Though photographs can be interesting specifically because they are so limited in scope, this is also their limitation in replicating reality. Photographers occasionally attempt to perceptually eliminate the frame by connecting images to form a panorama, or use wide-angle lenses despite the distortion they cause. However, these methods also ultimately alter the representation of the original scene.

The final distinction to be discussed here refers to what cannot be seen. Although Sontag said that ‘photographs are experience captured’, the validity of that statement

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3 In film cameras, light enters the lens through the aperture and is focused upon the film, which reacts to the light. In digital cameras the light is picked up and read by a sensor, which translates it into digital information in the form of pixels of particular hues, saturation and contrast.
presupposes that experience is reliant on vision, but one could not tell a blind person that
they do not experience reality because they lack sight. Life experiences are mediated by
more than just vision, but photography is unable to reproduce the smells of a spice
market, the sound of the ocean, or the feeling of sun on skin. Instead, viewers rely on
experiential knowledge to conjure these other aspects of reality in their mind’s eye. Thus,
in sum, by virtue of the functional differences between human vision and a camera’s lens,
to say that photographs provide an exact replica of the reality is somewhat short-sighted.

The perception of images as truth or evidence may have less to do with the images
themselves than the way in which they are presented to audiences, that is, the context and
manner in which they are employed. Tagg (1993) notes that evidence and photography
were first ‘coupled’ in the second half of the 19th century at a time when new institutions
and new means of observation and record keeping were developing. These developments
began to incorporate photography, and since that time photographs as well as moving
images have continued to be tied to media, advertisements, tourism, the penal system, the
health system and education, albeit in increasing abundance and technological
sophistication. As such, the overarching notion of photographs as evidence is born out of
the development of institutions that specifically invoke images in order to prove or lend
weight to a case. For instance, that viewers will uncritically accept images as true is the
hope of advertisers who attempt to prove the efficacy of their product through ‘before and
after’ photographic evidence in an effort to gain customers. The ‘photofinish’, and now
its computerized descendant, is another instance in which an image is presented as
evidence when human vision falls short. However, perhaps the most conspicuous use of
images as evidence occurs when security camera images or other photographs are admitted into court as evidence of a crime.

The presentation of images in court is now commonplace in contemporary Western society, with crime scene photographers bound by strict formulas and protocols for the production of images as evidence. While few might dispute their use in courts of law, the presentation of images to jurors may actually affect their interpretation of the truth and result in increased guilty verdicts. Douglas, Lyon and Ogloff (1997) conducted a study of the sentences handed down by jurors who had seen images from a crime scene compared to those of a control group. Three groups of mock jurors were each given the same transcript from a murder trial, however, the first group was also provided colour photographs of the crime scene; the second, black and white photographs; and the third control group received no photographs. It was found that the juries who had seen the photographs had roughly twice the proportion of guilty verdicts than control groups, suggesting that photographs play a significant role in determining what is considered to be ‘true’ in the minds of jurors. Interestingly, all participants felt they had acted fairly, and most believed that the photographs had not affected their decisions, although the visual evidence of the murder displayed in the photographs had clearly been influential. These findings are disconcerting when one imagines how often crime scene photographs are bound to be used by the prosecution in murder trials.

Much like images presented in courts of law, though less explicitly, media images can evince an air of authority and truthfulness due to the context of their use. This is particularly true of news images, given the general expectation that news media will provide accurate ‘facts’ about local and world events. Photographs in newspapers or on
Internet news sites, as well as moving images on television, present images in conjunction with language-based spoken or written text that is understood to be the result of journalism, the point of which is to provide unbiased factual information about local, national, and world events. Thus, it follows that images published by news sources are themselves likely to be perceived as providing unbiased, truthful information by virtue of the context in which they are presented, and as we will see later, this seems to be the case. Unlike images used in court, however, which may be scrutinized by viewers, the sheer volume of images presented in news media ensures that the same degree of scrutiny is not possible, making it more likely for news media images to be perceived uncritically.

In addition to the differences between vision and photographs and the authoritative contexts in which images are presented as evidence, the perception of ‘truth’ in images also relates to the way in which they are interpreted. Barry (1997) asserts that humans have a tendency to accept what is seen as true because unlike language-based communication such as text or speech, photographs are perceived holistically and “impact us on a level below our conscious awareness”, and as such we react to images on an emotional level before we have a chance to think rationally about them (p.9). Moreover, we apply the same processes of unconscious deduction to images that we do in reality, leading not to a perception of what really exists but rather an understanding of what we expect to see based on the amalgamation of visual information with knowledge gained from past experience. Examples of this unconscious process can be found in optical illusions, or more simply in our ability to ‘see’ objects that are partially obscured by conceptually filling in the blanks, like seeing a triangle even when it is drawn with the corners removed. So powerful is the mind’s ability to see according to what it expects
that with some optical illusions it may be impossible to perceive ‘the truth’ even once the illusion is revealed and the image is consciously reassessed.

This difficulty in recalibrating what is true based on additional information results from the human tendency to accept or believe as true that which is comprehensible and familiar due to repeated exposure to the same phenomena over time (Barry 1997). By virtue of being raised in a particular social context, where institutional powers such as the media govern what the majority of the population sees, individuals are repeatedly and unconsciously exposed to constructed worldviews that become familiar realities against which subsequent information will be compared. When perceiving an optical illusion, what is seen as true is based on what the mind knows to be true from previous experience or recurring themes in visual perception, and as such it may be difficult or impossible to incorporate new information that proposes a truth that is contrary. Of course, optical illusions are harmless examples of how human perception relates to truth or reality, however, when this is applied to other types of images the result may be more serious. By way of example, Barry notes that repeated childhood exposure to images associating certain individuals or groups with negative situations can “not only generate a negative attitude but also render that attitude unresponsive to logical argument or to contradictory factual information” (p.22). This is significant when considering the likely exposure of many individuals in the same society or culture group to similar types of imagery resulting from shared media, as this can lead to shared knowledge or experience and therefore to comparable perceptual interpretations that go beyond individual perspectives. Thus, while not all viewers will perceive images in an identical fashion, if they share visual experiences on which they draw to interpret future images, then it follows that a
photograph that is comprehensible and fails to challenge these beliefs will be more likely to be interpreted uncritically as evidence by those individuals.

For millions of people raised on the black-and-white Cold War photos of the Soviet Union in *Life* magazine in the late 1940s and 1950s, for example, the image of the Soviet Union as a drab and colorless place very likely influenced the way they envisioned the people and the politics of that country. (Barry 1997:21)

The notion that images represent truth may therefore result from many factors such as the history of photographic technology and its use in society, the context in which images are presented to audiences in contemporary society, and viewers’ interpretations, including the knowledge and beliefs upon which they rely. To clarify, this is not to say that viewers at all times perceive images as factual representations of reality, as many are undoubtedly critical of at least a portion of those they encounter on a daily basis. Indeed, even early images were viewed sceptically, as evidenced in the case of Muybridge’s horse photographs. Nor is this to suggest that ‘the audience’ is a homogenous group, as the grammatically singular term implies, that will interpret images in exactly the same way, because it cannot be denied that each of us draws on our unique assemblage of experiences and learned knowledge when perceiving our sensory environment. Ultimately, while the institutions producing images may present them as evidence or truth, we are “active processors and however encoded our received reality, we may decode it in different ways” (Gamson et al. 1992:384). Further, some have suggested that whereas familiar images and those which are in keeping with an individual’s prior experience and knowledge are likely to be uncritically accepted as true or real, unfamiliar images or those which are incomprehensible are more likely to evoke emotion and therefore draw attention, engagement and scepticism from viewers (Barry 1997; Coleman 2006). It is this scepticism that not only drives political and commercial institutions to
maintain the status quo by avoiding the use of images that could be perceived as untrue, but also makes images particularly susceptible to careful manipulation by these institutions.

Image manipulation is nearly as old as photographic technology itself and refers to the alteration of one or several elements comprising an image, which also often implies falsification as a consequence of the process. In its more extreme form image manipulation can mean the removal of objects or people from an image, or their insertion by merging two images, but more often it refers to less drastic but nonetheless manipulative editing practices such as the alteration of colour or shadow, or the addition or removal of aesthetic portions of the image. Though some suggest that technological developments resulting in high quality digital images and their easy manipulation has undermined people’s beliefs in what they see (Farid 2007, 2009), the long history of image manipulation and the ubiquity of images in contemporary society, especially those used as evidence in marketing and news media, seem to suggest the opposite.

Hany Farid, a scholar at the forefront of digital image forensics, has documented many examples of image tampering from both the past and present, and notes that photo doctoring has increased dramatically since the development of digital technology brought it within the grasp of anyone with a computer. Nineteenth century image manipulation generally involved the removal of individuals from photos or the replacement of one object for another, as evidenced by a fairly well known composite image of Abraham Lincoln in which his head had been merged with the body of politician John Calhoun (see Hany Farid). The early to mid twentieth century was much the same, with notable heads of state such as Stalin, Mao, Mussolini, Castro and Hitler ordering individuals removed
from photographs in an effort to alter visual history, while the latter part of the century saw an increase in the manipulation of magazine and advertising images (Hany Farid; Farid 2007, 2009). Now with the capabilities of digital photography it is almost expected that images such as those in advertisements and magazines will be manipulated, and some alterations may even be justified as necessary to the aesthetics of photographic publishing. However, this is not true of all images, and those published by news media in particular are still expected to “show us something real and true that has happened”, which is why they tend to be decried as fraudulent or false if they are found to have been manipulated (Saltzman 2007; Farid 2007).

Photographs may be deemed fraudulent in obvious cases where the image has been so crudely manipulated that it no longer seems to reflect reality, or in more subtle cases when it has been done so well that people generally believe it to be true until it is discovered and proven otherwise. The former does not occur as often in news media as in amateur photography and media, where photo tampering is well known and expected. However, altered news images are often well executed and are therefore difficult to discover, since the same technology that has allowed for easy photo tampering has also ensured that it is more difficult to perceive well performed alterations (Farid 2007). The underlying belief in the truth of news images is so strong that when photographs emerge that have been manipulated, they are treated as anomalies, there is shock and outrage by both the public and the source editors, and photographers are punished or fired.

In 2003, a news photographer of twenty years was fired from the Los Angeles Times for creating a composite image from two others in order to enhance the composition (Farid 2007). The altered image had been published on the cover and depicted a British
soldier in Iraq who seemed to be gesturing to civilians to retreat or take refuge, but was subsequently discovered to be a combination of two photographs with neither having a similar effect on their own (Farid 2007). Three years later, a photographer was found to have enhanced the amount of smoke portrayed in an image of the aftermath of an Israeli bombing in Lebanon, and amid the ensuing outrage was punished by having not only that image, but many of his others retracted by Reuters (Farid 2007). The resignation of another longtime news photographer in Ohio also illustrates the seriousness with which image manipulation is taken, as he quit after admitting to the alteration or removal of background features such as tree branches or utility poles from several images over the course of his career (Saltzman 2007). Again, the outrage of the source’s editors was made public with one editor indicating that photo manipulation was dishonest and that “[j]ournalism, whether by using words or pictures, must be an accurate representation of the truth” (cited in Saltzman 2007). These are but three examples of the way in which news media addresses the alteration of images, but Farid (2009) assures us that “sophisticated forgeries” are appearing with “alarming frequency” suggesting the circulation and consumption of countless other ‘fraudulent’ news images as truth or evidence (p.44).

If news photographers can potentially lose their jobs and jeopardize their future careers by manipulating images in much the same way that has become expected of magazines and advertisements, what separates acceptable from unacceptable alterations, and in what context is an image deemed a fraud? We have already seen that photographs, by virtue of their production, are not in actuality replications of reality but impressions created through deliberate and creative choices made by the photographer, the results of
which are then presented as evidence by the news source and perceived as true by at least a portion of viewers. As such, the distinction between truth and falsity is chimerical at best, and one could argue that in effect all published photographs are essentially the product of manipulation.

The process of manipulation in this sense begins with the decision of a photographer to make a picture of one scene over another, from a particular perspective, and framed with a certain composition. These decisions are personal to the photographer and may relate to their worldview, aesthetic or artistic style, or their visceral reaction to a scene. Whatever the motive, these initial choices inherently exclude other ‘truths’ of the moment and approaches to the chosen subject, and are therefore a means of manipulating the reality of experience. This is not to suggest that news photographers operate with the intention of misleading viewers but to highlight the way in which a photograph’s existence is reliant on the manipulation of human visual experience so that it fits into the frame, and that to remove this aspect is to cease making photographs. Once news images are created, these kinds of intangible manipulations continue, first with the photographer providing editors with a selection of their best images, then editors’ decisions concerning which of those to print. If not already completed, the selected images are physically manipulated in that they may be cropped, shadows or highlights enhanced, and lighting and contrast modified, although these adjustments are generally justified as necessary to prepare images for print.

4 Though less so today, these choices have sometimes included staging the scene. Some early war images, for example, were staged by picturing soldiers from the same side fighting against one another with half wearing the enemy’s uniform, while some 20th century photos of accident scenes featured a broken doll in the foreground, placed there by photographers to enhance the composition (Saltzman 2007).

5 While these adjustments are usually justified, on occasion they are applied ‘inappropriately’ in that they skew reality beyond what is deemed acceptable. Such was the case with the controversial Time magazine
Thus it appears that even the most ‘truthful’ news images, those that are not discounted as frauds, undergo a series of both intangible and physical manipulations from the moment they are conceived. The main difference between these and images resulting in punitive measures against the photographer seems to be found less in the images themselves, and more in the public’s expectations of news media, which is a direct result of the latter’s self-professed duty and capability to tell the truth. When image manipulation is questioned, and the photograph is said to exceed the amount of alteration deemed acceptable at the time, the public’s faith in news images may diminish and may threaten the credibility of the offending news source. This, rather than image manipulation alone, is why the altered news photograph is generally portrayed as an anomaly, the photographer as untruthful, and why the image is retracted and photographer punished, as this is the only means of restoring faith in both news images as evidence or truth, and the news source as a credible media institution.

**Signification and simulation**

The discussion of photographs thus far has revealed that the history of photography has significantly influenced the way in which photographic images are utilized by institutions and individuals, and how this may impact viewers’ perceptions of images published in different contexts. Their historical presentation as evidence has continued to the present and can overshadow a critical understanding of photographs in which they are not the exact, truthful, or accurate replications of reality that news media and others would have us believe. It is only when images generally used by authoritative sources as

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cover of O.J. Simpson during his trial, in which his significantly darkened portrait created an ominous tone that drew the scorn of many who felt it was inappropriate for such an already racially charged media event (Farid 2009, Saltzman 2007)
evidence are denounced as fakes that their truthfulness is publicly questioned, but this is only briefly and then they are regarded as aberrations in an effort to protect and restore their professed evidential qualities. If photographs are not exact replicas of reality, and their status as evidence is largely determined by their context, another means of understanding media images and their relationship to reality must guide this work. This is influenced by discussions of photography and reality put forth by Roland Barthes and Jean Baudrillard, both of whom have different approaches but nonetheless contribute elements to the understanding put forth here.

For Barthes (1972,1977), photographs are inextricably tied to their corresponding referents in reality and cannot be separated. These are replicated in the image and the meaning contained in photographs relies on knowledge about these real-world referents. The connections between images and reality thus enable the containment and production of meaning for viewers who ‘read’ the structure of images in much the same way as language. Undoubtedly influenced by his interest in language, in his essay Rhetoric of the Image (Barthes 1977) he applies semiotic analysis to a photographic advertisement revealing the connections and the simultaneously existing multiple meanings they contain at different levels of the image. He identifies the denoted message, or the non-coded iconic message, which is the obvious, literal meaning of the subjects of the image, as well as several connoted meanings, or coded-iconic messages, which refer to the symbolic meanings implied by the subjects in the image. While these meanings are understood by revealing the structure and connections between signifiers in the image and their signifieds in reality, he also acknowledges that these may shift according to particular contexts or worldviews (Barthes 1972, 1977). For instance, he suggests that Italians
might not be drawn to the same connotations as the French in an advertisement that connotes ‘Italianness” because they are too familiar with the symbolism to recognize its use in the image (Barthes 1977). Thus, for Barthes, photographs are not reality, but they are the “perfect analogon” and rely on reality for their messages to be understood, which in turn necessitates an understanding of culturally or regionally specific symbolism.

Barthes, like Barry, therefore views images as references to reality whose messages are decoded according to viewers’ previous visual experience, which is useful for our purposes with regard to the way in which images may be presented and perceived uncritically as evidence of reality. For, as we have seen, images that provide familiar symbolism, and therefore familiar connotations, will be more likely to be perceived uncritically by viewers as evidence. Additionally, his views on connoted messages in images are particularly useful as he, like Tagg, sees the creation and reception of images as tied to “institutional activity”, and goes on to suggest that connoted messages in media images in particular are published for the purpose of socialization and reassurance of the population to which they are presented, and are thus created meanings relying on familiar symbolism (Barthes 1977:31). In Mythologies, he illustrates the way in which connoted meanings do this by functioning as myths in society, pointing to a variety of situations such as striptease and wrestling by way of example (Barthes 1972).

With respect to connoted meanings, he particularly addresses news photographs, stating that they are deliberately “worked on, chosen, composed, constructed, treated according to professional, aesthetic or ideological norms which are so many factors of connotation” (Barthes 1977:19). He ultimately sees images and their meanings as bound up with larger social structures and in this way supports the notion here that images may
be regarded as evidence or truth due to the context in which they are presented as well as their use of symbolism known previously by the viewer. In fact, he suggests that good news photographs “(and they are all good, being selected) makes ready play with the supposed knowledge of its readers, those prints being chosen which comprise the greatest possible quantity of information of this kind in such a way as to render the reading fully satisfying” (Barthes 1977:29).

The work of Baudrillard has certainly been influenced by Barthes, in that he acknowledges the containment of meaning in signs, and sees these in everyday activities as well as images and the media. His notion of the relationship of signs to reality, however, moves beyond Barthes’ discussion of signs and symbols as relating back to reality and instead removes reality altogether. Unlike Barthes, Baudrillard sees signs and symbols taking precedence over reality, resulting in the elimination of the referents in reality such that “[i]t is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real…” (Baudrillard 2006:2). Photographs are therefore fiction, similar to Barthes’ notion of myth, but for Baudrillard it is through the image rather than reality that the world acts and “imposes its fiction” (Baudrillard 2000). Thus, for Barthes, signs in images are inextricably connected to their real world referents, whereas for Baudrillard the referents and reality as such no longer exist, leaving only the signs and symbols through which events become understood.

Although this work will draw on some of Barthes’ ideas indicated above, the basis for understanding and discussing the relation of images to reality will be drawn from Baudrillard (2006); specifically a quote he cites from Émile Littré:
‘Whoever fakes an illness can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill. Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms’ (Littré). Therefore, pretending, or dissimulating, leaves the principle of reality intact: the difference is always clear, it is simply masked, whereas simulation threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false’, the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’. (P.3)

Here Littré refers to illness, but his notions of simulation and dissimulation are a useful means of understanding photographic images’ relation to reality. Unlike the terms “representation” or “reference” so often used with regard to photographs, “simulation” and “dissimulation” encompass the agency involved in making and publishing images. A simulation must be consciously created, so reference to an image as a simulation acknowledges the role of creators and publishers of news images in exerting control over the simulations of reality. The implication of agency thus enables “simulation” to not only account for the visual elements in images, but also to subtly acknowledge the way in which images come into being, and their relationship to larger institutions and therefore ideology as suggested by both Tagg and Barthes.

Particularly useful for an understanding of news media images is the notion of symptoms, which can be related to the visual cues required to understand the visual world as reality, and include important perceptual information such as light, colour, relative size, angles, and perspective, among others. These symptoms enable images to be perceived on an unconscious level, as they become familiar through repeated exposure over our lifetimes. When we view a scene with our eyes, these are cues that allow us to understand what we are encountering and from which we make deductions about our environment. For instance, when we see a bright, blue sky we deduce that it is a fine, clear day (rather than stormy, or the middle of the night). Similarly, when we look down a street, the closer buildings appear larger than those farther away, regardless of their actual relative size to each other, and we use this cue to judge distance. Though it is rare
to consciously acknowledge the information these visual cues provide, we require them to ‘make sense’ of our visual world. As such, photographs can be said to simulate visual reality by presenting the cues with which viewers are already familiar due to their routine use in everyday perception. To use Littré’s terms, photography displays the same symptoms as reality. If a cough and fever are symptoms of sickness, and to simulate sickness requires actually presenting these symptoms rather than simply pretending, then photographs also produce identifiable symptoms of reality. This is not to say that a photograph of a starving child, for instance, simulates the reality of the child’s experience, but that the visual cues or symptoms present in the image, such as colour, shadow or perspective, simulate the visual experience of sighted individuals generally.

As Baudrillard notes, the presence of symptoms leads to a blurring between ‘true’ and ‘false’. If someone is showing symptoms of illness, a doctor must assume the person is ill; to assume otherwise would be risking further complications if the individual really were ill. The same holds true for photographs. If all the symptoms of reality are there, as they would be in life, there is little choice but to accept that what is shown is ‘true’ or ‘real’. Even if one doubts the veracity of the image, one cannot possibly provide counter-evidence of its falsity if the image is actually simulating reality and the symptoms are present. Furthermore, the indistinguishability of simulated photographs from reality, for Baudrillard, serves to negate the real and its referents altogether and catapult both into the realm of hyperreality. According to Baudrillard (2006), “[s]imulation is no longer that of

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6 Though visual cues are often taken for granted, Barry (1997) discusses newly sighted people who have had cataract surgery to restore sight after up to 50 years of blindness and how they must learn or relearn how to move in the visual world. In one case, the individual complained of having no frame of reference for colour, depth perception, space, or the appearance of everyday objects. Thus, walking around and interacting with the world from this new perspective was frightening and at times difficult to comprehend. Though in a more extreme form, this difficulty seems to be synonymous with the problems of the 19th century public to ‘see photographically’, as they had not yet learned this particular skill.
a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal” (p.1). Understanding images in this way, as hyperreal symptom-laden simulations of reality, it is easier to understand the use and acceptance of news images as evidence, for viewers cannot discern the simulation from that being simulated, which may otherwise be unknown to them. Thus, the image itself comes to be ‘the real’ against which other images are understood. In this sense the hyperreal does not threaten signs and symbols, as these persist and remain as vessels of meaning, however it threatens the structure of messages put forth by Barthes through the elimination of reality in which the structure is rooted.

In order to fully accept the reference to images as simulations of reality, one is also obliged to account for the diametric opposite term provided by Baudrillard: dissimulation. If manipulation of the image can be discerned, despite efforts to faithfully simulate reality, the image can not be considered a simulation for it does not present the appropriate symptoms. Instead, it can be described as “faking” or pretending reality, and therefore can be referred to as dissimulation. If photographs simulate symptoms, then dissimulation refers to faking symptoms resulting in, as Baudrillard explained, the maintenance of reality or ‘truth’. We see this when manipulated news media images emerge and reveal a glaring separation between experienced reality and the image. Thus, using Littré’s metaphor, the person who fakes illness may be believed unless their contrived condition is discovered due to a lack of particular symptoms, or other aberrations to the facade. So too with photography. Photographs can be said to dissimulate when they have been tampered with, when things have been added or subtracted, or when the scene has been staged before the camera. The evidence of
tampering initially appears as symptoms, as with the person who claims to have a fever, and like other images it may be perceived as truth. As such, dissimulation is only understood as such when the aberrations become discernible, which may or may not occur. Photographs that dissimulate are therefore quite similar in appearance to simulations, which themselves are indistinguishable from reality due to their use of the same visual cues or symptoms.

Although Baudrillard’s approach to the relationship of images to reality is somewhat different than Barthes’, it enables an understanding of the way in which images can become reality while at the same time rejecting the notion that they are rooted in it. That images operate independently from what is traditionally meant by the term reality means that they occupy a space that is “no longer that of the real, nor that of truth” but one which Baudrillard says artificially resurrects referents “in the system of signs, a material more malleable than meaning” (Baudrillard 2006:2). Thus, Baudrillard’s work acknowledges signs, symbols and myth in a similar fashion as Barthes while pushing beyond the notion of a direct connection between images and reality.

The discussion of news media images in this thesis would like to take these understandings a step further and explore the idea that images, as simulations, sometimes push beyond hyperreality through a process of iconification. The term icon is most commonly related to the visual depiction of religious figures and stories in art, and indeed is a common term for art historians who study these works through ‘iconography’ or the study of the deeper, symbolic meanings represented by the images (Stokstad 2004). The concept of the icon, as a visual representation of a deeper complex meaning, persisted with the advent of photography and broadened with respect to the types of images it
could encompass. Barthes used the terms icon and iconic to refer to meanings in images, both ‘coded’ and ‘non-coded’, and alternate uses of the term refer to people, events, or images that are widely known for a particular reason and are promoted as such within society; the iconic status of ‘Che’ Guevara is one example. The term used here has been co-opted from the lexicon of computer science where it refers to the reduction of a window or program containing complex information to a simple icon on the desktop. With this in mind, use of the term iconification refers to the reduction of complex historical, social, political, and cultural meanings into a single image, or group of symbolically similar images such that they point to larger concepts without divulging specifics. Thus, it does not refer solely to an image that has become popular or well known, although that may also constitute an iconic image. Specifically for the purposes of this work, iconification, or being reduced to an icon, refers to a state of photographic being reached when groups of media images that rely on similar themes, or whose subjects are routinely portrayed in similar contexts with particular qualities, become inextricably linked to larger concepts. For example, the countless published images of famine victims in Biafra and later in Ethiopia and Sudan in the late twentieth century often portrayed skeletal black children and families, which conceptually merged these types of images with notions of famine, poverty and Africa such that the concepts and the people have become conflated in some viewer’s minds (Van der Gaag 2005; VanLeeuwen et al 2001). Once iconified, the subjects themselves, their stories, and the true nature of their situation ceased to be of concern, and images like these are now routinely used to refer to the concepts without explaining details specific to the context.
Whereas all images can be understood as simulations or dissimulations of reality, iconified images, therefore, are simulations that have become symbolic of larger concepts such as famine, oppression or war through their repetitive association in the media. Once images have been linked to concepts it becomes difficult to challenge the truth they evince, and likely impossible to attempt their de-iconification, as they become the conventional representation and uncritically enmeshed with many people’s understandings of issues. Thus, a result of repeatedly viewing iconified images of famine was the belief among many in Europe and North America that all black Africans were poor and malnourished (VanLeeuwen et al 2001: 78-79; Van der Gaag 2005). While individual images of starving children certainly simulated those particular children’s realities, once agglomerated they became an icon for more generalized (and often inaccurate) understandings of the concepts they invoked. The continued repetition of these images then only reinforces the understandings that over-simplify issues in social reality. Although the above example makes reference to the iconification of famine and the resulting misconceptions about Africa, Africans, and famine itself, the same process can apply to images from the ongoing war in Iraq.

This chapter has looked at the history of photography, starting with the period just prior to the daguerreotype and has explored the way in which this history is bound with those of individuals and institutions of the period. It was also during this period that images became entangled with the notions of truth, evidence and therefore by extension, reality, and these ideas have generally persisted to the present where images continue to be presented as evidence and generally perceived on an unconscious level by viewers.
However, despite their being deemed truth, reality, or evidence by various institutions, it is not accurate to say that images are exact replicas of reality since camera lenses function much differently than the human eye and require creativity on behalf of the photographer from preproduction to postproduction. While this creativity is often justified, it is occasionally denounced as excessive and the image is deemed fraudulent, thereby revealing the separation of image and reality. Given this problematic relationship between photographs and reality, the work of Barthes and Baudrillard was discussed and the notions of simulation, dissimulation and iconification were presented as the guiding frames of reference for the remainder of this work. While keeping this in mind, the following chapter will look more in-depth at representation in photographs, the media and the Iraq war, and visual perception.
Chapter 2 – News Media, War, Representation and Power

We walk around with media-generated images of the world, using them to construct meaning about political and social issues. The lens through which we receive these images is not neutral but evinces the power and point of view of the political and economic elites who operate and focus it. And the special genius of this system is to make the whole process seem so normal and natural that the very art of social construction is invisible. [Gamson 1992: 374]

Newspapers, radio, television, and increasingly, the Internet, hold a powerful position in society as “vehicles of culture”: mediums for communication, local and world news, as well as entertainment, and images have come to play a large role in this process (Spitulink 1993). Whereas images in early news media were few and far between, advances in technology for printing photographs enabled their more frequent use at lower costs, and now with the Internet, photographs and video are routinely published as article supplements, or presented in image galleries. Like photographs themselves, which are physical manifestations of photographers’ decisions when creating an image, media is not an unbiased entity but the result of creative human mediation and manipulation, and research shows that news media in particular has the potential to skew the perception of reality for media consumers when it portrays particular views of events or individuals (Anastasio 1999; Stabile and Kumar 2005; Abraham and Osei 2006). Further, in times of war or conflict the main goal of the media to present factually accurate information is often overshadowed by a desire to protect interests at home, resulting in a favourable presentation of the ‘Self’ or the country’s position in foreign affairs, and a devaluation of the enemy ‘Other’ or the individual or group that is positioned as a threat to sovereignty in an effort to justify conflict and maintain public support (Schechter 2004a; Brabazon 2005). Western news media surrounding the war in Iraq is no exception, and mainstream American sources, and to a lesser extent British sources, have relied on misinformation
and stereotypes to construct a favourable view of coalition soldiers and perpetuate negativity towards Iraqis, Muslims, Arabs, and the Middle East in the minds of some viewers (Karim 2004; Hashem 2004; Schechter 2004a; Hammond 2007; Jackson 2010). This is despite the fact that not all Arabs are Muslim and that the Muslim world is not solely comprised of the Middle East, which is itself an area occupied by numerous cultures, religions, and language groups.

It is with this in mind that the following discussion moves from the previous chapter’s historical and theoretical understanding of photographic images and their connection to evidence and reality to an exploration of contemporary media surrounding the beginning of the Iraq war, during which countless images were published and used as evidence. This war saw the production of more images than previous conflicts, perhaps in response to the Internet, which provided an additional medium through which to spread news. Although the Internet provided individuals with the resources to seek alternative media on the war, the voices of mainstream media outlets seemed to overpower much of these alternatives. As such, particular attention will be paid to mainstream media from the United States as it seemed to guide international Western media sources by situating them either for or against the position of the U.S.. Additionally, attention will be given to the way in which visual media may have looked to and recreated historically rooted stereotypes using visual cues that speak to power relationships.

**News Media, Objectivity, War and Propaganda**

Objectivity or lack of bias has not always been the aim of media, and early news media, unlike its contemporary equivalent, usually presented a one-sided perspective, with American newspapers in particular being expected to present a partisan viewpoint
(Schudson 1978). However, the creation of the first American wire service in the mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century by several New York newspapers collectively known as the \textit{Associated Press} instigated a movement from partisan to non-partisan news publishing. In order to appeal to a wide variety of the partisan sources across the country and ensure its success as a news provider, the \textit{Associated Press} had to distribute stories with as objective a tone as possible; a strategy that was soon mimicked by news publishers elsewhere who also saw the potential for greater readership and sales (Schudson 1978). The objective news style thereafter became conventional in America and elsewhere as the \textit{Associated Press} and similar wire organisations such as \textit{Reuters} grew and began to distribute news to both domestic and international sources for print. As a result, the claim of objectivity came to be associated with truthful reporting and not only increased sales but also aided in creating the overarching sense of news media as a non-partisan authority on local and international affairs and as the bearer of evidence and therefore truth.

Today, the \textit{Associated Press} (AP) has its headquarters in New York along with many of the nation’s other major television and print news media, and continues to be one of the largest news distributors: serving 1,700 American newspapers and 5,000 radio and television outlets plus countless more internationally and reaching more than half the world’s population on any given day (Associated Press 2011). Along with \textit{Reuters}, also based in New York, the AP is therefore responsible for much of the news that circulates internationally as well, given that global news outlets frequently look to American media conglomerates and sources like the \textit{Associated Press} and \textit{The New York Times} for stories and images (Schudson 1978; Gans 1980; Roach 1997).
While objectivity and balance continue to be valued as journalistic traits today, one must question how objectivity can be maintained in an environment in which news media is produced, distributed and managed by so few corporations and other elites. For instance, the Associated Press is itself a non-profit organization owned by the some 1,500 daily for-profit U.S. newspapers it serves, which, in addition to most American magazines, television, books, motion pictures, as well as some non-media related companies, are owned by relatively few, large for-profit corporations that increasingly engulf competitors to become larger and fewer in number (Associated Press 2011; FAIR n.d.). Additionally, many of these corporations tend to be affiliated with the government, which is in turn said to be “the most dependent of any nation on the press for performance of its functions” (Davis 2001:94; Achbar 2002). As such, news media in the United States is bound to business as well as government, rendering its presumed objectivity questionable at best, for as Schudson (1978) notes, “[o]bjectivity is a peculiar demand to make of institutions which, as business corporations, are dedicated first of all to economic survival” (p.3). Indeed, news outlets are under continual pressure to keep readers as well as advertisers and other supporters satisfied, and while they may claim objectivity, there continues to be selective reporting or under-reporting of issues threatening to jeopardize that balance.

This pressure is increased in times of conflict or war when the interests of big business and government are mobilised and bear down on mainstream media producers, often resulting in the production of what has variously been termed propaganda, public relations, or more recently public diplomacy, rather than critical journalism. In the West, and particularly in the United States, the term is taken to be in contrast to the apparent
tradition of objective journalism, and has become associated with sources perceived as sinister, as in ‘Nazi propaganda’ or ‘Communist propaganda’, somehow rendering it outside the margins of Western media production and something of which to be suspicious (Zaharna 2004). However, propaganda is not new to any war and countries including those in the West routinely rely upon the selective and intentional propagation of particular information through the media in times of war in an effort to “demonize their enemies” and “mobilize their nations” (Schechter 2004a:25). Further, mainstream media are frequently willing and compliant accomplices in the distribution of information provided by the state when the country in which the source operates is at war, and there also tends to be a greater acceptance of this information by the public when the country is at war than when there is peace (Kellner 1997; Karim 2004; Schechter 2004a; Zaharna 2004). Perhaps this is not surprising given that media outlets in the West, being economically motivated, have something to gain from providing patriotic rather than critical coverage of a war, as CNN discovered when it became a “top global news brand” as a result of its Gulf War coverage (Schechter 2004b; Thussu 2004).

Acknowledging the relationship between mainstream media and the government as well as the former’s overall bias during periods of war is important here, because images form an integral part of the media arsenal in any war, which tends to be as much about convincing the public of the country’s superiority as it is about threatening the enemy. However, due to their assumed ability to serve as evidence and truth, images can be either helpful or detrimental to the government’s intended message, and advances in image and computer technologies means that governments must work even harder to

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7 It is somewhat ironic that this association has itself come about as a result of Western propaganda from WWII and the Cold War.
control the images that make it to the press. Whereas Stalin, Hitler and others could relatively easily manage and manipulate images, for example, the beginning of televised war rendered it more difficult to manage both official propaganda as well as the actions of news outlets that might send crews into the field. Such was the difficulty for the U.S. administrations dealing with the Vietnam war, during which government information was presented by the media but countered by other televised images showing another side of the war that supported those opposed. Some, such as Lyndon Johnson himself, believed that it was this relatively free flow of televised images from Vietnam that ultimately lost the war for the United States, and that it may have gone the other way had the administration been able to exert stricter control over images (Mandelbaum 1982; Tumber and Palmer 2004; Schechter 2004b).

This belief must have pervaded succeeding administrations, as it has been suggested as an explanation for the increasingly tight controls over media throughout the Gulf War and the more recent Iraq war, during which information was controlled through the management of journalists, either through press pools in the former or embedded journalism in the latter (Langton 2009; Tumber and Palmer 2004; Schechter 2004b). The control of imagery during the important preliminary phases of the attack on Iraq was certainly foremost in the minds of the coalition who, in a bid for good PR, admitted to a plan to fly in journalists to witness and document the initial bombs dropped on Baghdad and other desired ‘scenes of liberation’ (Hammond 2007). This disclosure revealed not only the extent to which the presentation of the war was contrived, but also the extent to which images would be used in ‘public diplomacy’ efforts. As one US Marines spokesperson was quoted as saying: “The first image of this war will define the conflict”
Images certainly did define the conflict, and the construction of war and the imagery used to validate it have led some to call this a new type of war, a fully postmodern war in which reality and truth are in constant flux, and a hyperreal war which is experienced by proxy with no indication of where reality stops and simulacra begins (Hammond 2007).

The United States media has since been criticised by many both within and outside the country’s borders for skewing the truth of war and portraying a sanitized view that focused on “promilitary patriotism, propaganda, and technological fetishism, celebrating the weapons of war and military humanism, highlighting the achievements and heroism of the U.S. troops” (Kellner 2004:74). Images and stories portraying these sentiments were published in a variety of newspapers, most notably the The New York Times - one of the foremost newspapers in the United States, and were said to have “politically anesthetized” many in the U.S. who were presented with a “serious but innocuous” view of the war (Artz 2004:89). Those Americans who wished to escape this perspective were said to have looked to Canadian or British news sources such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) or the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in addition to independent news outlets available through radio, satellite television and the Internet, as these were thought to provide a more balanced view of the war due to their not being American (Artz 2004; Kellner 2004; Hammond 2007).

While it is plausible that Canadian news portrayed a slightly different perspective than that in the United States resulting from the country’s opposition to the war, it is also very likely that some of the information and imagery provided to Canadians was derived from American wire services, suggesting an overlap in some of the messages. Regarding
British sources, it is interesting to note that critics writing from an American perspective claimed British media to have had more accurate coverage (Artz 2004; Kellner 2004), whereas Hammond’s (2007) discussion of media from the British perspective suggests that while sources like the BBC and The Guardian were sometimes critical of American government and media tactics, there was also the sense that the war was ultimately a necessary measure in fighting global terrorism, suggesting that the media was at least partially complicit in the manipulation of public opinion through information and image control.

Thus, while media outside of the United States may have been attractive to Americans who were presented with daily images of ‘shock and awe’, there were likely similarities in the way media from other Western nations portrayed the war and the Middle East more generally. By contrast, Arab and some non-Arab Middle Eastern news sources were much more critical of the attack on Iraq, and looked at the war from a perspective not readily acknowledged in mainstream Western media (Hashem 2004; Badii 2004).

**Media Perspectives of The 2003 Iraq War**

From its onset the war in Iraq was as much a media war as a battle between armed forces, and global media sources variously constructed the 2003 Iraq War as “Operation Iraqi Freedom”, “Showdown with Iraq”, “War on Iraq”, or “America’s Imperial War for Domination and Occupation” (Kellner 2004; Snow 2004). The difference revealed by these monikers mirrored the variation in international opinion regarding a war that many, including the UN, saw as unjustified and understood as intimately linked to events long preceding March 19th, 2003, when American-led forces crossed into Iraq. Unsurprisingly,
American media and to a lesser extent that from the U.K. presented the war as necessary to fight global terrorism, whereas Middle Eastern sources and others who opposed the war were more likely to refer to it as an attack, an invasion, or an occupation.

The difference in perspective appears to come from the context in which the war was initially understood, and Hashem (2004) argues that it was the “relevant historical context” highlighted in much Middle Eastern media that formed many people’s understandings of the war in that region. From this perspective, much of the conflict with the West is rooted to its colonial past in the region, the formation of Israel and the ensuing crisis with Arabs in the region, during which the U.S. supported Israel and in so doing gained a foothold in the Middle East. This Western influence increased when the desire to secure access to oil in the late 1950s drove the Americans, British and French to assist in the successful coup which brought the Baath Party to power in Iraq; the party of which Saddam Hussein would eventually become leader (Hashem 2004). Later, the oil embargo of 1973 enabled Iraq to gain wealth, and the country used this money to build new infrastructure to support the influx of business, resulting in the same “modernist” (Karim 2004) or “Westernized” (Hashem 2004) look that had developed under the Shah in Iran. Whereas Iran had once been an ally with the United States, the Iranian revolution in 1979 culminating in the removal of the Shah and instatement of Muslim cleric Ayatollah Khomeini meant the loss of this relationship, and America thereafter began to shift its support toward Saddam Hussein, perhaps most famously by trading weapons for

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8 Although this is the marker identified by Hashem and addressed here, this history can be traced back much farther to the Middle Ages when conflict was predominantly between Christianity and Islam (Said 1997:5).

9 Karim (2004) problematizes the terms ‘Westernize’ and ‘modernize’ asserting that the former assumes “the uncritical acceptance of almost all aspects of Western culture”, whereas the latter involves “a selective acceptance of innovative ideas within the context of [a] cultural and intellectual heritage” (p. 109-110). Calling a country with modern infrastructure ‘Western’ therefore negates not only that country’s culture(s), but also its ability to develop over time while free from Western cultural influence.
oil when Iraq began losing its war with Iran in the eighties (Hashem 2004). However, U.S. support shifted again when Iraq invaded neighbouring Kuwait in 1990 and George Bush senior gathered forces to “liberate Kuwait from the aggression of Saddam”, which ultimately fell short of removing Hussein from power, leaving the Shiite and Kurdish resistance movements that had formed against him vulnerable to attack by his remaining forces, and the U.S. image tarnished in the minds of many in the region (Hashem 2004).

This abbreviated historical context, which seems to be missing from much of the initial American media coverage from the war, shows the long-time influence of the United States and the West more generally in the region; specifically the way in which local government was continually undermined “by actively creating militarized states and laying foundations for subsequent military influence” which would later become the basis for the U.S. led invasion (Hashem 2004: 152). Thus, Hashem’s belief and, according to him that of many Arabs in the region, is that the 2003 attack on Iraq was set against the backdrop of colonialism and related to events and political relationships from the preceding half century. Hence, references to the war as ‘America’s Imperial War’, the ‘invasion’, or the ‘assault’ by Al-Jeezera and other networks can be understood as responding not only to the 2003 war but also to the overall history of the West, and the United States specifically, in the Middle East.

By contrast, Western populations and especially those in the United States were presented with a war that was not connected to this history but moulded by the media’s presentation of the Middle East and Islam from a decidedly Western worldview (Mowlana 1997; Artz 2004). Coverage tended to conflate the states and histories comprising the Middle East and equated the entire region with a monolithic notion of
Islam to the extent that media consumers received a simplified and distorted view of not only the war but also the parties involved and those caught in the crossfire (Kamalipour 1997; Mowlana 1997). The consequence was that many Americans (and likely others) became “politically anesthetized” by this sanitized and simplified view of the war, suggesting a lack of criticality amongst large segments of the population about media information surrounding the war and those involved (Artz 2004:89). Even among those who were critical of the rhetoric and pointed to the United States’ oil interests as the reason behind the war, there remained disengagement concerning the historical context and little criticism regarding the presentation of the Middle East and Islam. This is not surprising given that the West in general has been faulted for an overall lack of knowledge about this region of the world, and even among intellectuals there are many who rely on sources that foster misimpressions about the histories, cultures and religions of which it is comprised (Kamalipour 1997; Said 1997). Thus, unlike many media outlets based in the Middle East, which situated this war in its historical context, there was a general disregard by many Western sources of the regional tension caused especially by American support of Israel and its resulting influence in the region.

Coverage instead focused on current events, and prior to the attack on Iraq the West, led by American media\(^\text{10}\), was introduced to a war deemed a necessary pre-emptive measure to maintain security against terrorism and create peace in the Middle East. This was to be accomplished by ridding Iraq of its ‘tyrannical leader’, Saddam Hussein, and the ‘weapons of mass destruction’ (WMD) he was said to possess, despite the astonishing

\(^{10}\) Although much of the research, including that here, focuses upon American media, and to a lesser extent British news sources, as we have seen it is not uncommon for international media outlets to access American news sources or wire services and as such it is likely that media in other countries reported at least some of the same information in the initial stages.
lack of evidence to support this claim (Chitty 2004; Hashem 2004; Karim 2004; Kellner 2004; Hammond 2007). This constructed threat of WMD was taken seriously in the media and began to be presented in relation to terrorism against the West, with Iraq slowly becoming conceptually entangled with the concurrent ‘War on Terror’ being waged against the militant Islamic group al-Qaeda and its leader Osama bin Laden, which was itself a reaction to the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings in New York on September 11th, 2001 (9/11).

This link was manufactured and sustained by drawing together discussions of Hussein in Iraq, bin Laden in Afghanistan and the attacks of 9/11 under the umbrella of ‘terrorism’, a term as powerful as it is vague, in that it can be applied deliberately to particular acts or actors of politically motivated violence while ignoring others. In so doing, the ‘War on Terror’ was broadened and came to include Iraq in an attempt to justify, and ultimately gain public support for, a pre-emptive strike (Hashem 2004; Karim 2004). The Bush administration’s hope, according to some, was that a quick defeat of terrorism in Iraq would distract the public from the administration’s failings, secure Bush’s re-election, and legitimate future pre-emptive strikes (Kellner 2004). This intention was especially conspicuous during a press conference in the weeks prior to the invasion when George Bush junior “repeated the words ‘Saddam Hussein’ and ‘terrorism’ incessantly, mentioning Iraq as a ‘threat’ at least sixteen times, which he attempted to link with the September 11 attacks and terrorism” (Kellner 2004:70). As a result of this conceptual merger of news reports about Saddam Hussein, weapons of mass destruction, Al-Qaeda and 9/11 in the minds of the public, about half of the U.S. population came to believe that Saddam Hussein was involved with 9/11 (Chomsky
2004). From this understanding, one that largely ignores America’s history with the Middle East, it becomes easier to see how these viewers may have remained uncritical of FOX News Channel’s “Showdown with Iraq”, or the Pentagon and CNN’s “Operation Iraqi Freedom”.

**Representations of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’**

With the Western media’s depiction of the war also seemed to come an implicit and historically based association of terrorism with Islam, a connection that Edward Said (1997) has attributed to the “time-honoured view of Islam” in Western media, in which Muslims are portrayed as “oil suppliers, as terrorists, and...as bloodthirsty mobs” (p.6). The notion of ‘Islamic terrorism’ in particular is said to have roots in the legend of ‘The Assassins’, a story popularized in 11th and 12th century Europe in which a small group of Ismaili Muslims were said to have been coerced into risking their lives in ‘suicidal missions’ to assassinate their enemies’ leaders so as to gain territory without battling against superior military powers (Karim 2004). This legend continues to influence contemporary Western representations of Islam, in which Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are not only likened to each other, but also to this specific medieval group through an association with terrorism, thereby supporting the West’s association of terrorism with Islam while simultaneously depicting Muslims “as belonging not to the present age but as stuck in the past” (Karim 2004:114). This perspective not only renders Muslims archaic, violent and barbaric, it does so in a way that reduces the diversity of religions, cultures, and languages in the Muslim world to a single term -‘Islam’, portrays it as existing exclusively in the Middle East, and refers to it only in connection with “newsworthy issues like oil, Iran and Afghanistan, or terrorism” (Said 1997:16;
Kamalipour 1997; Karim 2004). For media consumers after 9/11, some of whom had also
witnessed similar media from the Gulf War, the connection between terrorism and this
overarching view of Islam was only strengthened as Osama bin-Laden and Saddam
Hussein became the most well-known (and for some perhaps the only known) examples
of Muslims presented in the media, thereby contributing to the negative and stereotypical
assumptions of Arabs and Muslims more generally as terrorist threats (Kamalipour 1997;
Jackson 2010).

Western governments’ reliance upon this view of the inherently ‘bad Muslim’, one
who is barbaric and violent, has been used for centuries in order to gain public support
for attacks on Muslim-majority regions, however it has only been relatively recently that
mass media has been used to propagate this view (Karim 2004). Western media
consumers who have lived during the various conflicts in the Middle East since the
formation of Israel have likely become accustomed to this portrayal of Muslims and the
Middle East, and although Americans are said to have very little knowledge of the region
in general, some suggest that due to these stereotypes what is known is largely negative
and usually generalises Muslims as “threatening” and as “international terrorists” (Said
1997; Jackson 2010). Perhaps it was fear of being associated with the perpetuation of this
stereotype in the aftermath of 9/11 that prompted then-president George W. Bush to make
attempts to differentiate the enemy from others, by stating that the enemy were the
“traitors to their faith, trying, in effect, to hijack Islam itself” (Jackson 2010).11 In a
similar (media) show of understanding towards the world’s Muslims, Bush was said to

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11 Additionally, on television in the first few weeks after 9/11, a commercial ‘paid for by the government of
the United States of America’ was aired, telling viewers that Saudi Arabia was a friend, and that citizens
should not be hostile towards people of this country. Although I saw the advertisement, and confirmed its
existence with others, I have since been unable to find footage of it elsewhere.
have visited a mosque after the attacks of 9/11, and the U.K.’s then-prime minister Tony Blair had claimed to be reading the Koran (Hammond 2007). These efforts were short-lived, however, as mainstream media continued to provide information and visual portrayals about what they saw as the negative aspects of Islam and neglected to report on the majority of non-fundamentalist Muslims (Jackson 2010).

While the media perpetuated this view of Muslims as terrorists, the coalition forces were generally portrayed in a positive light (Schechter 2004b). As the above discussion of propaganda suggests, this is not entirely surprising given the function of mainstream media as the mouthpiece of government during wartime. Additionally, with the heart of American media in New York, many of those covering the war had been personally affected by the attacks on the World Trade Center buildings, and some suggest the media did not have to be coaxed into taking a patriotic stance by representing the troops positively; this occurred naturally in response to fears of being denounced as unpatriotic in the climate of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ created by the Bush and Blair administrations (Schechter 2004b).

In addition to news sources’ complicity within the United States, the stories and images provided by those working inside Iraq also contributed to the creation of a positive perspective of the troops. Learning from the Vietnam war in which journalists’ movements and reports had proved difficult to control, the journalists in this war were restricted in ways that surpassed even the corralled and controlled press pools of the Gulf War. Most journalists and photojournalists were restricted to either operating from hotels or working as embedded reporters, which not only limited what they could see and therefore report, but in the latter case also shaped their coverage directly due to their
required agreement to a strict set of restrictions on what could be revealed in the media (Kellner 2004:72). Despite these regulations, it appeared to media consumers and to many British and American embedded journalists themselves, that they were providing a unique type of ‘on the ground’ coverage as they lived and travelled with military units capturing the daily life of the soldiers and occasional combat situations, which was an improvement upon comparative lack of material produced during the Gulf War. While this made for good human-interest stories about the soldiers, and news that appeared to be amid the action, the result was often an empathetic view rather than a critical assessment of the soldiers actions in addition to an either non-existent or hostile perspective on Iraqis (Schechter 2004b). Since embedded journalists were unlikely to be trained in combat, their safety as well as their food and shelter was in the hands of the military unit to which they were assigned, and this reliance in many cases led to the formation of a bond thereby making the journalist less likely to be critical or report negatively upon the events they witnessed (Schechter 2004a; Kellner 2004). As one embedded reporter was quoted as saying: “I lost some or all of my neutrality in terms of physical safety. I was an American, I was with American soldiers, and people from another country were trying to kill all of us” (Larson 2004:127). Thus, placing journalists within military units not only maintained their safety, it also ensured a favourable view of the soldiers and their efforts while embedded reporters became “propagandists who often outdid the Pentagon and the Bush administration in spinning the message of the moment” (Kellner 2004:73).

Not only official representations were controlled, however, as the Internet played a larger role than in previous wars and threatened to counter official media reports of
coalition action. In response to this threat, the U.S. military actively blocked soldiers’ access to video and image-sharing sites while the U.S. Defense Department engaged in ‘online visual management’ by introducing its own channel on YouTube, on which videos were posted of soldiers engaged training exercises or in other sanitized views of the war; both of these in an effort to maintain the media-constructed image of the troops as combatants of an enemy and emancipators of an oppressed people (Anden-Papadopoulos 2009). The images that were disseminated were therefore in keeping with the image presented in the mainstream media:

[T]here is clearly an element of selection at work here. We do not see any seriously wounded or dead coalition soldiers, no deceased Iraqi women and children, and no American soldiers committing potentially incriminating acts of violence on camera. The soldiers have apparently taken precautions not to publicize visuals that may violate the interests of the military community – that is, images that risk undermining troop morale or disrupting the collective self-image of just warriors fighting a sinister enemy. [Anden-Papadopoulos 2009:927]

In contrast to images routinely published in mainstream news media and those censored by the military, the soldier-generated images that were able to bypass the censors situated themselves not just as warriors, but as ruthless aggressors. The images of torture in Abu Ghraib prison, for example, are likely the most widely known examples of soldiers representing themselves in visual media, and though not intended for the media, they illustrated an aspect of the war not acknowledged by mainstream news. Officials dismissed the images of torture as anomalies, much like the manipulated images discussed in the previous chapter were dismissed as unrepresentative by news media, but many viewers saw them as evidence of the aggression of the coalition forces. In other less public cases of self-representation, gruesome images of soldiers posing with dead Iraqis, as well as other images of violence and its aftermath, were submitted by soldiers to the now defunct website Now That’s Fucked Up (NTFU) (Anden-Papadopoulos 2009). The
images were proof of military identity and used in lieu of currency in exchange for free access to pornography, as soldiers were not able to use credit card payments while stationed overseas. Again, the images illustrated aspects of the war not encountered through mainstream media, contradicting the overarching message that coalition troops were heroic fighters for freedom and democracy engaged in a sterile war.

While the images in the above examples were in stark contrast to the rhetoric of the mainstream media, and compromised its construction of a clean, just war, in another sense they simultaneously repeated a similar message: the superiority of the coalition forces over the enemy. Both situated the coalition troops as militarily and technologically superior: in the media through a focus on soldier’s non-combat activities or combat successes, and in soldier-produced images through an exploitation of the results of that power. Thus, power appears to have been a theme that pervaded soldiers’ as well the mainstream media’s portrayals of themselves as well as ‘the enemy’, which as we have seen played on stereotypes that conflated the enemy not only with civilians but with all Muslims and situated them as inferior to coalition forces.

**Visual Representations of Power**

The notion of power that seemed to permeate initial Western mainstream media about the war was, as we have seen, carefully crafted and controlled, and the photographs were unlike soldiers’ self-representations in that they seemed to neglect the violence and death indicative of war. Instead, power relationships and the ultimate superiority of the West, as embodied by the troops, were illustrated by controlling which images were published and by highlighting the soldier’s perspective as interpreted by embedded photojournalists. This perspective was more likely to associate the coalition soldiers with
military and technological prowess in relation to Iraqis for the reasons discussed above, including the media’s construction of the war and this construction being rooted in the historical stereotypes of Muslims as antiquated violent terrorists.

However, in the absence of overt shows of dominance such as those seen in the photographs from Abu Ghraib, it is not clear from the literature how media images, as separate from language-based information, may have spoken to this notion of power. This thesis suggests that power was referenced through subtle and largely unconsciously perceived visual cues, similar to those used in advertising images, with which most people in North America and the U.K. can readily identify. To use Baudrillard’s terms, these visual cues simulate reality or real interaction by exuding the same symptoms encountered through experience, thereby giving the sense that the image is evidence of reality rather than a simulation. Photographers rely on people’s familiarity with these cues in order to construct images that ‘speak to the viewer’ at a visceral level and, therefore, the use of everyday visual cues and symbolism related to power differentials could explain why apparently commonplace images, such as those depicting the daily routine of a soldier, were as Artz (2004) confirms, so “effective as propaganda” (p. 79). While there are countless aspects of the visual world that combine to inform our understanding of what we see, those of interest here are often considered in photography, film, and marketing and can be understood as contributing specifically to the viewer’s understanding of power. When viewed, these are taken in conjunction with other aspects of the image such as subjects’ perceived gender, ethnicity, age and facial expressions, the presence of weapons or other expressions of potential violence, as well as the perceived context in which the image was created, in order to derive meaning. Thus, photographs
taken of the same subjects in the same context may exude a different message if the visual cues are manipulated.

The use of various camera angles in relation to the subject of the image is “highly manipulative emotionally and...perhaps one of the simplest and easiest to understand examples of visual language grounded in perceptual experience” (Barry 1997:135). Various angles mimic real interaction, with larger or taller individuals tending to be perceived as commanding respect, more intimidating and powerful, and consequently more likely to be perceived as ‘masculine’ than smaller or less imposing figures (Barry 1997; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001; Bell and Milic 2002; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Therefore, high camera angles that place the camera above, looking down upon the subject, situate this individual in a weakened position relative to the viewer. Conversely, low angles that look up at the subject place this individual in a powerful position relative to the viewer, while neutral or even angles bring a sense of equality (Barry 1997; van Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001; Bell and Milic 2002; Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). The knowledge that this simple change in perspective could have such a perceptual effect is not new, as Nazi propaganda tended to show Aryan families and Nazi soldiers from low angles, whereas Jews were generally depicted from high angles (Barry 1997).

An extension to this concept of camera angle is the notion of relative height, whereby in the case of an image with multiple subjects, if one is markedly taller that individual is more likely to be perceived as powerful. Similarly, if one is standing while another sits, the former will be seen as having power (Barry 1997) since from a defensive perspective the more vulnerable or weak position is the seated position, while the standing individual has an advantage in the event that the situation becomes hostile.
In addition to camera angle and relative height, the notion of relative distance also plays into the concept of power and provokes specific interpretations due to people’s culturally specific experiences of distance in personal interactions. For instance, Edward T. Hall (1966) noted several distance zones that were perceived in real world interactions in the eastern United States, and asserted that an intimate distance (nearly face to face) could either be desirable in certain contexts or threatening in others. Further, as the distance between two individuals widened, there resulted a less threatening atmosphere. Images use the same principle, with a close-up referring to either intimacy or a threat (power) whereby the far-away subject having indiscernible facial features becomes robbed of their significance and rendered unthreatening (Barry 1997).

With the intimate distance often comes eye contact, which is likely to attract a viewer’s attention if the subject appears to be looking directly out of the photo, and as such, images using an intimate distance with eye contact are often intentionally used by campaigning politicians to foster a perceptual relationship with the viewer and inspire trust (Messaris 1997). Also, the gaze of the subjects in the image may be gendered, as Goffman found of images in advertising, in that a direct purposeful gaze tends to be associated with masculinity, while the feminine gaze may be undirected or staring beyond the frame visible to the viewer (cited in Bell and Milic 2002). Taken together, the direction of the gaze and the presence or absence of eye contact situates the viewer as either an insider who appears to be involved with the subject’s gaze, or an outside observer whose presence goes unnoticed. Considered in conjunction with other aspects of the image and visual cues, eye contact may also give an indication of power relationships. For instance, an image of one man standing over another who is seated and gazing at
something in the distance is likely to render the standing individual powerful due to both his relative height and the ‘feminine’ gaze of the seated individual.

To a somewhat lesser extent, light can also evoke a sense of power in that, depending on its source and angle, light can give subjects an evil or angelic look, or give the image an overall positive or negative ambiance. According to Barry (1997), lighting from behind or below generally causes a menacing effect, however subtle, and will leave the viewer with a sense that the subject is somehow dishonest and/or powerful. However, lighting from above sees the subject transformed into a representation of goodness and purity, and the image is uplifted. That said, it is important to note that the notion of darkness being associated with evil and lightness with good is generally recognized as a Christian perspective and is not necessarily universal. Thus, one must consider the intended audience in order to more accurately assess the meaning produced by lighting.

When these visual cues are taken with other aspects of the image and its related caption, they may provide messages about the power relationships between the subjects of the images as well as between the subjects and the viewer. Thus, although they may not display overt violence, which is generally associated with power, they can continue to provide a similar message to the viewer. By extension, images such as those from the war in Iraq, which appear to have been controlled so as to portray soldiers in a positive light while perhaps not as aggressive or overtly powerful, may have referred to this power relationship through these types of visual cues. In this way, apparently innocuous news media images may have contributed significantly to the perpetuation of stereotypes that situate the West as superior to its generalised notions of Islam and the Middle East.
In sum, in this chapter we have seen how the notion of objectivity has become related to truth in news reporting, and how this emerged as a means of increasing profit. This has been maintained as a preferred journalistic trait despite the limitations that must come from so few of the wealthy elite controlling most of the media, in addition to their connections to government bodies. In times of war this objectivity is further threatened and the media tends to function as a mouthpiece for the government, which in the 2003 Iraq war resulted in fabricated justifications for war that relied on historically rooted stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims to gain public support. Although Western media sources conjured these stereotypes, there was an overwhelming lack of acknowledgment of long-time tensions between the West and the Middle East, whereas Arab and non-Arab media in the region tended to refer to this history to contextualize the war in its media. As a result of its focus on current events rather than looking at the historical context, Western media and especially that from the United States was able to more effectively represent the West as superior to the ‘enemy’, the demarcation of which was unclear and seemed to refer to all Muslims. When one compares these mainstream media images with those produced by soldiers there appears to be a similarity in the way they refer to power relationships, though it was suggested that while self-representations display overt depictions of domination and power, those in the mainstream media may rely on more subtle culturally specific visual cues to talk about power.
Chapter 3- Methodology

The use of the visual as a data source, or as a medium for capturing, processing, and expressing social scientific knowledge, continues to challenge current scholarship as it is both a demanding and rewarding but hitherto still rather uncommon (nonmainstream) and largely unchartered - territory. [Pauwels, 2010: 575]

From the Iraq war and subsequent occupation has come a plethora of static as well as moving images, and while they have been published by a variety of sources, we have seen that major Western mainstream media sources such as The New York Times and the BBC were more likely than most to have an interest in presenting the war according to the wishes of their respective governments. Thus, in the aftermath of 9/11 and the attack on Iraq two years later many scholars and others were prompted to consider the role of the media in perpetuating fear and misconception on behalf of Western governments and especially that of the United States. Of those who took up the task of analysing post-9/11 media few considered images in particular, and many of those who did focused on the media’s overall presentation of the war or the images that came to define it: the statue of Saddam Hussein as it was pulled to the ground by coalition troops, George W. Bush in military uniform aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln announcing victory, or the Abu Ghraib torture photographs (Griffin 2004; Zelizer 2004; Schwalbe, Keith and Silcock 2004; Aday, Cluverius, Livingston 2005; Anden-Papadopoulos 2008; Fahmy and Kim 2008; Johnsrud 2011).

The existing literature about the war has demonstrated that media images have ideological effects. This thesis acknowledges and accepts these effects and seeks to examine the way in which the everyday lesser known images may have also been, as Artz
(2004) has suggested, powerful tools to guide public opinion. These images are significant because their potential affective force has been largely neglected by other research addressing this visual war, either because they are addressed only as contributions to very large samples not concerned with in-depth analysis, or because they have been overlooked by research that favours the more famous images. They are also significant because unlike the images that have come to define the war, the comparative mundaneness of these pictures and the fact that they have not become the focus of research suggests they were less likely to prompt critical reflection to the degree of the clearly propagandist images. Finally, these images are of interest because due to the reasons just mentioned they could contribute to the notion of iconification discussed in the previous chapter through subtle and largely unconsciously perceived visual cues.

**Analysis**

Whereas scholarly interest in news media at one time focused on verbal or text-based messages and meaning (Gans 1980; Schudson 1978; Anastasio 1999), it is becoming more common to examine photographs and moving images, especially with the increasing popularity of newer image-reliant media such as the Internet, which is discussed further below (Abraham and Osei 2006; Anden-Papdopoulous 2009; Jackson 2010; Brosius et al. 1996). Even with this heightened interest in images, however, many visual researchers continue to assert that they work in an underappreciated minority field within the social sciences, which are, as Margaret Mead noted, “disciplines of words” (Banks 2001). This appears to be a result of the general lack of specific, clearly defined, and cohesive methodologies for the procurement, analysis and discussion of images within the social sciences, and particularly with regard to existing or found images.
(Prosser 1998; Christmann 2008; Pauwels 2010). This dearth of methodological resources specific to images has prompted visual researchers to look outside their fields to disciplines such as photojournalism, art history, marketing and communications for cues as to how images might be approached, and has resulted in many of the currently accepted methods having been adapted from those developed for language or text-based research.

One of the more common of these is content analysis, which tends to be used to determine the frequency of particular themes from large quantities of images via systematic examination and quantification whereby particular elements of the images are coded, counted and attributed meaning. When the meanings evoked by the images are discussed with regard to the frequency with which their corresponding elements appear, a broader understanding of the presence of particular meanings in media or society may be discussed. This method is widely accepted, is often used to study media images, and has been amply applied to research related to images of war and in particular those from post-9/11 conflicts (Schwalbe, Keith and Silcock 2004; Keith, Schwalbe and Silcock 2010; Schwalbe 2006; Fahmy 2004; Fahmy and Kim 2008, Aday, Cluverius and Livingston 2005; Salem, Reid and Chen 2008). Content analysis of large samples of war images has also facilitated discussions of framing, or the way in which the images under consideration routinely present a particular ideology, by generating a hierarchical framework focused on the frequency with which the coded elements appear. Although this method is routinely used, it is limited in its ability to study images across media platforms (Keith, Schwalbe and Silcock 2010) and more importantly for this thesis, it neglects the holistic nature of images which are produced and received in their totality.
As such, content analysis tends to ascribe meaning to elements of images without acknowledging the variation that can occur when the element in question is taken with other aspects of an image.

This thesis is not concerned with analysing the overall portrayal of the war but seeks to build on the studies discussed in the previous chapter, which have demonstrated that media images have ideological effects. As such, the analysis of images here requires a method that can acknowledge their historical underpinnings while focusing upon the subtle visual cues or symptoms produced and their potential connotations. That is to say, the analysis of images in this thesis wishes to do justice to the holistic nature of images by analysing their elements while drawing together and acknowledging their historical context and creation as well as their reception by focusing the reader’s attention to the images themselves and their visual cues. As such, the analysis in the following chapter will make use of semiotics in an effort to address the connotations of particular elements that contribute to the layers of meaning contained in an image while not losing sight of the context in which it is produced and received.

Semiotic analysis, like content analysis, identifies particular aspects of images, however it also accounts for the whole of the image in combination with different layers of meaning, thereby providing a decidedly different view of photographs. In essence, this is also an approach to the notion of framing, but unlike that discussed with respect to content analysis, does not provide results that can be generalized to all media images. Widely attributed to Roland Barthes (1972), this approach seeks to understand how meaning is contained in images and has influenced the work of many preeminent scholars interested in visual communication (Hall 1973; Fiske 1987; Kress and van Leeuwen...
2006; Baudrillard 2006). As such, semiotics remains one of the main methods for the investigation of images in contemporary visual studies, and has also been applied to studies of small samples of images from the war in Iraq (Adelman 2009; Popp and Mendelson 2010).

Whereas this thesis gains insight from studies such as these, which see the value in taking a holistic approach to images, acknowledge viewer interpretation as flexible, and address the historical contexts and ideological implications of war images, there remains a crucial difference between existing research and that produced here. Specifically, the research cited above is focused upon the most striking images: those that graced the cover of Time magazine or were chosen for inclusion in a coffee-table book providing a photo history of the Iraq war from an American perspective. Thus, although they demonstrate the benefits of semiotic analysis for a study of images from the Iraq war, they also reinforce the claim put forth in this thesis that more attention must be paid to the comparatively mundane images that are perceived and interpreted nonetheless.

For the purposes of this thesis Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) understanding of social semiotics is particularly useful, as it builds on Barthes’ analysis of signs and the notion of images as tied to institutional activity to acknowledge the active role of image makers. That is to say, Kress and van Leeuwen emphasise the role of image makers, such as those working within an institutional structure like the media, with all its connections to other institutions, in creating or manipulating signs rather than simply using ready-made signs in the sense that Barthes described. Thus, for Kress and van Leeuwen signs are flexible and, like images themselves, can have multiple or changing meanings according to other signs and the context in which they are created and received. This has
implications for the analysis of visual cues or symptoms discussed in the first chapter, such as camera angle or distance of subjects to the camera and to each other, in that their connotation as related to notions of power are understood as likely, but not the only meanings that might be interpreted by viewers. As Jewitt and Oyama (2001) note, the meanings discussed through social semiotics “are an attempt to describe a meaning potential, a field of possible meanings, which need to be activated by producers and viewers of images” (p.135). They also acknowledge, however, that the possibilities of interpreted meanings are not unlimited, and that to connote a powerful subject, for example, it would be unlikely to express this through a high angle that looks down on the subject and more likely to use a low angle (Jewitt and Oyama 2001). Thus, while signs and their meanings are flexible, they still work within a set of boundaries that are closely connected with the context in which they are produced and the visual experience of the viewers.

For the purposes of this thesis, the notion of activated meanings is seen from the perspective of Baudrillard’s concept of images as simulations, whereby activation can be understood as occurring through the use of symptoms or visual cues that are familiar to viewers and are generally associated, albeit unconsciously, with particular meanings. Thus, the repeated portrayals of symptoms or visual cues connoting power relationships between particular groups assists in the creation of new signs or connections such that the subjects come to refer to abstract concepts related to power that cannot be pictured directly. This is what is referred to here as ‘iconification’, whereby images as simulations (by virtue of their symptoms) not only blur the boundaries between the image and a
presumed external reality resulting in what Baudrillard termed ‘hyperreality’, but also serve to reinforce the constructed signs through repeated portrayals of these simulations.

The method of analysis taken up in this thesis is therefore unlike content analysis in that individual images are given closer inspection and the interaction of symptoms in an image can result in a different interpretation than would be put forward by content analysis alone. For instance, a content analysis of war images might count the usage of low angles (those looking up at the subject) and discuss the frequency with which subjects are portrayed as powerful, whereas semiotics would acknowledge this connotation of power but add that the individuals pictured also appear to be surrendering, thereby negating the sense of power created by the angle. In addition to recognizing the image as a whole and acknowledging the context in which they are both produced and interpreted and the associated ideological implications, social semiotics in particular allows for a more flexible examination of images which recognizes that visual elements in an image can ‘activate’ particular signs. Social semiotics therefore provides a useful method for the discussion of war images using Baudrillard’s theory of images as symptom-producing simulations and by extension the notion of iconification put forth here.

Research and the Internet

The images under analysis are drawn from the online versions of *The New York Times* and the *BBC* (British Broadcasting Corporation) using the keywords ‘Iraq’ and ‘Iraq war’. Other potential sources, such as *The Guardian*, the *CBC* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and *The Globe and Mail* were eliminated based on poor image archives or retrieval systems, images too small for analysis, or lack of adequate quantities
of images depicting people rather than landscapes, military equipment, or maps. *The New York Times* and the *BBC* not only proved to be superior in those areas but are also of national significance in their home countries of the United States and the United Kingdom, which were also the two major Western powers involved in the war.

The decision to access these sources via the Internet rather than in their traditional formats was made for other reasons as well, the most influential of which being the increasing popularity of this medium for users as well as researchers. The Internet is a highly visual medium and online sites are able to publish vast quantities of quality images and video relatively inexpensively, making online news media a marriage of its print and television predecessors. As such, the Internet played a much larger role in the Iraq war than in any previous, leading some to deem it the ‘Internet war’ in reference to the way mainstream television and printed news were mirrored on the Internet and combined with alternative news, satire, as well as blogs and video/image hosting sites to offer a melange of judgements about the war and those involved (Brabazon 2005).

In spite of its popularity and conveniences, online image research presents particular issues not often encountered in archival research of printed news. Unlike print media, which is archived in the same way it was published - in its original context – digital images may become separated from their accompanying articles when archived, creating difficulty in understanding their context except in rare cases when a link to the article is provided. Further, archiving images with their corresponding articles seems to be time sensitive in that recently archived articles are more likely to contain images than older articles, which eventually cease to display images altogether. Additionally, some photographs originally published on a given date become irretrievable through regular
archive searches, perhaps due to the server’s space constraints or expired copyright licenses. Unfortunately, for a researcher of online news media images the result is an inability to gain a thorough understanding of what an Internet news source looked like on the day it was published unless it is accessed on that date. Therefore, the potential to not only create and distribute, but also rewrite or re-present history is far greater with digital media than with traditional print media, as the speed at which it moves requires the constant elimination of some previously documented information. The Internet’s interactivity, speed and popularity therefore make it an increasingly important topic of research, and while the main focus of this thesis is strictly mainstream news images of the Iraq war, the intention is to contribute to the growing body of knowledge about the Internet and its relation to society.

**Sample Images**

A total of 120 images, representing the first images to appear using the search terms, were collected depicting individuals associated with the Iraq war: 60 from *The New York Times* and 60 from the *BBC*. Within each source’s 60 images, 30 were derived from the first week of the attack on Iraq in 2003 (March 19th to March 26th), during which the significance of the war was visually established, and the remaining 30 were taken from the twelve months of 2010, during which the end of the combat mission was announced and the number of published images significantly dropped. The images were collected with reference to the source of the photo or photographer’s name, related text from associated article headlines or captions, the date of publication, the web address from
which they were retrieved, and their context either in a photo gallery or accompanying an article\textsuperscript{12}.  

In an effort to facilitate discussion about the ways in which the war was presented through those involved, these images were sub-categorized according to three themes emergent from the total sample relating to the coalition, Iraqis and their interaction (see Appendix A). These themes revealed themselves upon initial coding of printed copies of the 120 collected images for the visual cues or symptoms discussed in the first chapter. Set against the historical context in which they were produced and the understanding of these images as having been published as evidence of the war and the relationships of those involved, including the largely Western viewer, the sample images were found to depict the Western ‘self’ largely in the form of coalition soldiers, the Iraqi ‘other’ in the form of soldiers and civilians, and the other images showed the interaction of both groups. After coding all the images, it was found that there were far more images of either the ‘self’ or the ‘other’ than there were explicit depictions of their interaction, and that many of the images situated the viewer as a coalition member thereby creating a sense of this interaction without a clear depiction as such. Thus, the images from each source and year were subcategorized in this way not only for the purpose of facilitating discussions of power but also because all of the images appeared to have been published in an effort to provide evidence of the ‘self’ the ‘other’ or their interaction.

Given the use of semiotic analysis, which is best applied to a small selection of images for in-depth analysis, a total of twelve images were selected for analysis with one image being taken from each subcategory within each source/year. These were not

\textsuperscript{12} Although this information was useful during the processes of image collection and analysis, the discussion below only addresses this when necessary.
intended to be representative of the others in the subcategory, as each photograph is ultimately unique despite the use of similar visual cues, and since the goal of semiotic analysis is not to provide generalizable results. Instead, images chosen for analysis were those found to contain several of the visual clues most apparent within a particular subcategory, and which would therefore allow for comparison with images selected from other subcategories (see Appendix A). The selected twelve images were chosen and analysed to facilitate discussions of power that illuminate certain features of the remaining images from the larger sample without analysing each in depth. That is, the selected images were chosen for their ability to root discussions of expressions of power due to their presentation of the visual cues also recognizable within the larger sample. As such, the images analysed in the following chapter provide the focus for discussions of the way photographs produced during the two time periods made use of visual cues related to power and in so doing, spoke to the relationship between the coalition/the West and Iraq/the Middle East/Muslims.
Chapter 4- Images of War and Iconification

An image may be defined as a combinatorial construct whose subject is itself a collection of images in the individual memory of various aspects of reality. It is the totality of attributes that a person recognizes or imagines. Images are to varying degrees interdependent on one another. The structure of one is inferred or predicted from that of another; and change in one produces imbalance and, therefore, change in others [Mowlana 1997: 3]

The first two chapters explored the history of photography, the relationship of photographs to reality, how their use in the media tied images to the notion of evidence, and the way in which media from the Iraq war relied on this history as well as that related to the West’s involvement with the Middle East to construct a war that situated the West as superior. With this in mind, the following analyzes a selection of images published during the initial week of the Iraq war according to the method discuss in the third chapter in an effort to uncover whether these apparently innocuous images may have depicted the countries and those associated with the war, both soldiers and civilians, according to historically-based stereotypes intimated through common visual cues that speak to power differentials. Additionally, images from 2010 concerning Iraq and the war will be similarly assessed and discussed in relation to those from seven years prior to determine if these portrayals changed over time. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a discussion of the way in which these images, as simulations of reality, moved beyond Baudrillard’s notion of hyperreality to contribute to the iconification of concepts such as terrorism, oppression, and liberation.
First Images of War

This sample of 60 images are a fraction of those published during the first week of the war in 2003, however they give insight into the way some people were portrayed during this crucial period when justification for the war polarized public opinion. An initial indication is provided by the sub-categorization of sample images, which reveals the number of those depicting coalition members to be roughly equal to those depicting Iraqis (23 and 26 respectively), while portrayals of the interaction of these groups comprise the remaining 11 images. It is interesting to note that so few of these depict the interaction between coalition forces and Iraqis, especially given the ubiquity of embedded journalists in the early stages. Despite this, other images in the sample seem to imply the interaction through visual cues combined with the understanding that there necessarily exists an ‘enemy other’ in war and that this can be portrayed even in images of the ‘self’ and vice versa.

The ‘Self’

Images associated with the coalition or the West more generally are the first to be considered here, as these represent the presentation of the ‘self’ by the two countries from which the sources originate and those that led the attack on Iraq. The selected image from The New York Times was taken in Iraq, as indicated by the caption, and portrays a group of approximately eight (presumably male) soldiers in full combat gear stooped over a ninth soldier lying on the ground, whose face is the only one discernible in the image (see Wounded Soldier). Although the caption states that he is a wounded marine surrounded by medics, he appears to be conscious and communicative, his facial expression neutral.

13 Their limited number may be the result of editors’ decisions to omit such images from the archives, as my research in 2003 contained several images depicting this interaction that are no longer readily available through searches of online archives.
rather than pained, with no blood visible and no readily apparent need for emergency aid. There appears to be eye contact between the marine and one of the medics, however, there is none between the subjects and the viewer, which combined with their perceptual distance, situates the latter as an outside observer or witness to the event. Though perhaps not drawn into the image, the viewer seems to be unthreatening and equal in power as indicated by the neutral camera angle and the soldiers’ lack of concern about the viewer’s presence, which conceptually embeds the viewer with the soldiers. The height of the stooping medics relative to the marine visually situates them in a position of power, however the concern indicated by their postures coupled with the knowledge that they are all coalition soldiers overrides this visual cue. Taken together, the cues in this image suggest an air of strength and solidarity despite the presence of a wounded marine, as there is no visual reference to injury, pain, or the need for medical attention other than the fact that he is lying down, suggesting not vulnerability but control over the situation and a resilience and strength that is stereotypical of soldiers. Additionally, according to the caption, he was injured while taking control of an ‘oil pumping station’, which implies not only a successful mission but his personal sacrifice and therefore loyalty to the mission, again, stereotypical of soldiers. The assertion that he is wounded also implies the existence of an ‘enemy other’ ultimately at blame for the injury despite their absence in the photograph. Thus, the image is able to avoid presenting the coalition as weak or revealing the potential horrors of war, while making use of the symbolic strength of a soldier wounded during a successful mission to present a message of coalition superiority over the visually absent enemy.
The *BBC* image selected from this sub-category also promotes the trope of the strong soldier while making reference to an unseen enemy (see Masked Soldier). It is a portrait-like photograph in which the head and full torso of a lone soldier in combat gear and gas mask are seen, making the distance between subject and viewer about that necessary for conversation. Although the mask obscures the eyes, the face is directed at the camera and insinuates eye contact, which, when coupled with the soldier’s proximity, is likely to attract the viewer’s attention, suggest intimacy, and in so doing give the sense that the viewer is an insider. Therefore, unlike *The New York Times* photograph, this image draws the viewer in and inspires empathy and trust for this individual, who is laden with military equipment and who may be enduring a gas attack, as suggested by the mask and the haziness of the background.\(^\text{14}\) Although the caption reveals that the haze is caused by a ‘fierce sandstorm’ rather than gas, this image does not lose its magnetism, as it is the mask rather than the source of the haze that makes reference to the unseen enemy, who would presumably be the source of such an attack should one occur. Thus, as with *The New York Times* image discussed above, this image makes reference to the interaction between the groups categorized here as ‘coalition’ and ‘Iraqi’ even in the absence of an explicit visual depiction. Instead, the existence of the ‘enemy other’ is embodied by the gas mask, which symbolizes both the possibility of attack as well as the coalition’s preparation and consequent control over the situation. This notion is further strengthened by the low camera angle, which gives the pictured coalition soldier a heightened and therefore powerful appearance, and the position of the soldier’s firearm, which is carried at the ready with finger near the trigger. That the gun is pointed away from the viewer

\(^{14}\) During the initial days of the war the possibility of WMDs were still entertained and troops were encouraged to wear gas masks, with the resulting images harking back to the Gulf War under George Bush Sr.
again suggests intimacy, in that the viewer is not a threat, and combined with the low camera angle gives the sense that the soldier may be protecting the embedded viewer.

It is unclear whether either of the two coalition images were taken by an embedded photographer, as both simply cite the Associated Press, however both images position the viewer as conceptually embedded through the subject matter, the positive portrayals of the soldiers, the apparently unthreatening presence of the viewer, and the apparently remote locations. Both position coalition soldiers as powerful, resilient, prepared and in control while acknowledging the presence of an enemy and associated potential danger. Conversely, they suggest little about the enemy other than the potential threat they pose, though this threat seems to be diminished in light of the strength and resilience of the soldiers presented here.

The ‘Other’

The second sub-category of photographs portrays Iraqis, including images of soldiers as well as civilians, and therefore shows what went unseen in the previous images. For Western mainstream media these photographs represent the ‘other’, although the images seem to reveal two main themes: the ‘enemy other’ portrayed as the target of the coalition attack, and the ‘victim other’ portrayed as those to be liberated. Whereas women and children are generally assumed to be victims and presented as such, images depicting men, who may be civilians, enemy soldiers, or soldiers assisting the coalition are portrayed as either the enemy or the victim, thereby blurring the line between the two.

Both types of ‘otherness’ are reflected in the images selected for analysis, with that of The New York Times focusing on the ‘victim other’ while the BBC image exemplifies the ‘enemy other’. The former portrays a woman and four children and seems to have
been taken outside a city, perhaps in the desert, as there are no buildings, trees or other
greenery (see Family). There are also several sheep as well as metal basins in the
photograph, in addition to what appear to be ropes, perhaps used as clotheslines, crossing
through the foreground, all of which suggest a rural settlement. One of the girls cowers
behind the woman, who is sitting on the ground gesturing with upturned, open palms
toward the camera with a pained expression, as if pleading to the viewer for assistance,
though she could just as easily be pleading to be left alone or pleading for her and her
family’s lives. This, coupled with the high camera angle serves to weaken her and the
children and suggests the viewer is above and therefore superior to those pictured. That
she is wearing a veil further weakens her in many Western eyes, through which the veil is
seen as an overarching symbol of Muslim women’s oppression, in spite of the history and
complexity of its meaning. Thus, the ambiguity of her expression, the sex and age of the
subjects, the high camera angle, and her veil, all contribute to this quintessential image of
the ‘victim other’.

While all of the subjects make eye contact with the camera, which should draw the
viewer in and create a sense of intimacy, their distance and position behind the
conspicuously barbed wire-like ropes crossing through the foreground gives the illusion
that they are imprisoned and therefore separate from the viewer. The overall sense of
viewer separation and superiority is partially explained in the caption which reads: “The
U.S. Army 2nd Battalion passing by an Iraqi family in the desert”. That someone
accompanying the Battalion took the photograph confirms that the photographer, from
Reuters, was embedded with this group. Further, the caption implies the presence of the
coalition troops, the ‘self’, outside the frame of the image with whom the viewer becomes conceptually embedded.

The BBC image also implies the presence of the ‘self’, but through a depiction of the ‘enemy other’ rather than the ‘victim other’. In this photograph, approximately ten men in what appear to be plain green military uniforms are pictured walking toward and to the right of the viewer as if surrendering: single file and unarmed with their hands on their heads (see Soldiers Surrender). While the coalition troops to whom these soldiers are presumably surrendering are not pictured, their presence is clear from the image combined with the caption, and thus it is likely that the Associated Press photographer was embedded. Their body language coupled with the caption’s confirmation that they are surrendering is the first sign of their weakness relative to the expectations of coalition soldiers, however stereotypical, who were seen in the previous images depicted as powerful and loyal to their mission. Additionally, only the faces of the closest two soldiers are visible and appear to be acknowledging the viewer, but because they are not close enough for their features to be recognizable they lose some of their significance to the viewer. Interestingly, this image utilizes an extremely low angle that places the viewer below the oncoming soldiers, almost as if in a seated position, which should suggest the relative weakness of the viewer in relation to these men. In this case, however, the cues discussed initially relating to the soldiers’ surrender, lack of weapons, and general weakness in relation to the unseen coalition troops, with whom the viewer appears to be embedded, seems to nullify the usual emotional response to the low angle.

Both images discussed here appear to have been taken by embedded photographers as they clearly demarcate the viewer from the subjects, situating the former with the
coalition troops, who are not pictured but are clearly present behind the camera. In fact, their presence is discovered in uncropped versions of the BBC image seen elsewhere online, in which a coalition member is clearly discernible to the right of the knee of the second man in line and reveals other coalition soldiers alongside the road on which the Iraqi soldiers are walking. In the BBC version, originally from the Associated Press, these individuals are blurred into the background, cropped out of the image altogether, or hidden behind the ‘AP’ signature in the bottom right corner of the photograph. The manipulation seems to be the work of the BBC, as uncropped versions found on websites for the American television network CBS and The Boston Globe (owned by The New York Times Company) also attribute the image to The Associated Press, suggesting it had originally provided an uncropped version. Though image cropping is routinely practiced by news media, there is only one other cropped version of this scene readily available online and is a Reuters image available from the Guardian website, also a British source, which has cropped the image much more tightly than the BBC. While the captions in the two British sources make no mention of coalition troops, those associated with the uncropped versions from American sources claim the soldiers in the image are members of the British Royal Marines, which suggests an attempt by British sources to portray Iraqi soldiers as willingly surrendering without acknowledging the presence and possible coercion of British troops.

As seen through the analysis, however, cropping or otherwise obscuring their visual presence does not eliminate their implied presence in the photograph, it simply diffuses responsibility from the British troops to the coalition as a whole while presenting the Iraqi soldiers as cowardly. Thus, whereas images of the coalition refer to the ‘self’ and
imply an ‘enemy other’, images of Iraqis also imply the presence of the coalition while also referring to an ‘enemy other’ or a ‘victim other’. In both cases Iraqis are weakened in relation to the coalition, with women and children being portrayed in a stereotypical role as victims and men as the surrendered/captured, and therefore emasculated, enemy.

The ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’

Similarly, images depicting the interaction between the coalition and Iraqis during the first week of the war portray power relationships, but unlike those previously discussed, these images use more overt cues. The New York Times image depicts one Iraqi soldier, two American marines (as described in the caption), and the hand of what appears to be a third marine all wearing military fatigues, though the Iraqi soldier, unlike the marines, is unarmed and lacking a helmet (see Water). The soldier is sitting with a kneeling marine on each side, one of whom is pouring water from a canteen into his mouth, suggesting the soldier’s inability to do so. If the caption is accurate, the Iraqi soldier has surrendered to the coalition at the border with Kuwait, and as such has likely been handcuffed making it impossible for him to hold the canteen. Further evidence of his detainment is provided by the gun held in the disembodied hand of the third marine, which due to the perspective in the image appears to be pointed at the soldier’s head but is more likely aimed at his lower body. The subjects do not make direct eye contact with each other, as the seated soldier has his eyes closed, and in this way they are distanced from one another despite making physical contact. Similarly, there is no eye contact between the subjects and the viewer, which situates the latter as an outside observer or spectator despite the apparently close proximity. As with some photos discussed above, the marines’ disregard of the viewer’s non-threatening presence also suggests equality
and a sense of embeddedness wherein the viewer is an outside observer being provided an insider’s perspective. This is also promoted by the camera angle, which is high in relation to the Iraqi soldier and neutral with the kneeling marines, thereby suggesting equality with the marines and power over the Iraqi soldier. Although the marines initially appear to be assisting the soldier by supplying water, their relative height in conjunction with the camera angle, the gun’s aim, and the soldier’s apparent immobilization renders him visually and literally helpless. Given the timeframe in which this image was published, days after the first bombs were dropped on Baghdad, images such as this would certainly have helped promote the impression of the coalition as not only powerful and swift in capturing their adversaries, but also morally driven to assist the enemy.

The image from the BBC is similar and seems to overtly express coalition power and Iraqi subordination. The photograph shows the profile of what appears to be a coalition soldier in full military uniform standing with a gun to the back of a man in civilian clothing, who is kneeling with his hands in the air (see Gun Against Back). The gun to his back is a strong indicator of who is in the powerful position in this image, as is the height of the standing coalition soldier in relation to the kneeling man, and the disadvantaged or weakened position of the latter, who cannot see the aggressor. Additionally, from the viewer’s perspective there is a slightly low angle used in relation to the soldier, placing him in a position to be revered. Both subjects’ faces are obscured, that of the soldier by a helmet and what appears to be a gas mask, and the other man by a white hood as well as his raised arm. This, in conjunction with the lack of eye contact and perceived distance between viewer and subjects, situates the viewer as an outside
observer whose presence may be unknown to the subjects. Thus, the viewer seems to be situated as a witness though not ‘embedded’ as with many of the previous photographs.

What is perhaps most interesting about this image is the accompanying caption which reads: “Counter-terrorism: Expanded role at home”, suggesting that the location in which the image was taken was not Iraq, but perhaps the U.K.. The accompanying article’s headline gives only slightly more information: “Fact file: Australian special forces”. The location in which this image was taken is no clearer, nor is the identity of subdued man, though it can be assumed that the man with the gun is an Australian member of the coalition troops. Also interesting is that despite the ambiguous nature of the image, it was returned in a search using only the keywords ‘Iraq’ and ‘Iraq war’, which further highlights the link made between Iraq and terrorism leading up to the war.

While the location and identity of the subdued man remain unknown, it is clear from the image and caption that he is considered an enemy, and as such the Australian soldier is impelled to exert power over him. Thus, while the context of this image is much less clear than that from The New York Times, it uses the same types of visual cues to imply coalition power over anyone deemed ‘a terrorist’, a stereotype that was seen in chapter two as having its roots in European stories of Muslim Arabs in the Middle East. As such, it matters little whether the man’s face is visible because the image and associated caption link him with terrorism, making him the ‘enemy other’. Thus, the images that show interaction between the coalition and Iraqis appear to draw together the sentiments put forth in those solely portraying the ‘self” or the ‘other’, though in a more overt way.
As some of the first depictions of coalition troops and Iraqis to Western audiences, the majority of the images analysed above give the sense of ‘embeddedness’ and an overwhelming sense of the coalition’s power over Iraqis in general. In those portraying the coalition, whether alone or in combination with Iraqis, they are presented as strong and resilient, successful in missions, and unlikely to be severely wounded. They tend to be shown with high or neutral camera angles that place them either as equal to the viewer or in a position to be revered, but never in a lower position. By contrast, images that portray Iraqis as the ‘enemy other’ more often show them unarmed and from high camera angles with hands in the air, behind their back, or on their heads and in lower positions relative to coalition soldiers, suggesting military inferiority. In the one case in which a low angle is used in depicting Iraqi troops, the subjects are also unarmed with hands in the air and a caption confirms their surrender, which essentially negates any power afforded to them by the angle of the camera. Additionally, Iraqi women and children are portrayed as ‘victim others’ and weakened in relation to the unseen coalition soldiers through camera angles and other cues, thereby reinforcing not only gender stereotypes but also the historically based notion of Muslim women’s oppression relative to their Western (and largely Christian) counterparts. These assessments are made from the six images selected for analysis, however, images in the larger sample indicate similar trends.

For instance, of the images sub-categorized as ‘coalition’, the majority depict soldiers with neutral or low camera angles that situate them as equal or more powerful than the viewer. The few that do employ high angles continue to maintain a sense of equality by portraying a context in which the viewer is visually embedded with the
soldiers. Additionally, all but two images of the troops portray them in military gear and engaged in activities readily associated with war, such as pointing guns, driving in tanks, lying in trenches, or raising flags, thereby suggesting their military prowess in relation to the unseen, but insinuated, enemy. The remaining two images of coalition soldiers create a link between military and civilian life by portraying soldiers watching the bombing of Baghdad on television, as did many civilians, and highlighting the religiosity of the troops by showing soldiers receiving communion at a make-shift church in Iraq. Thus, these images at once equate the troops with civilians in the U.S. and U.K., portray them as objects of reverence, and situate them as superior to the ‘enemy other’ who pose a continual threat.

Conversely, when the ‘enemy other’ is revealed in conjunction with coalition troops in six of the total 11 images in the corresponding sub-category, they are portrayed not as threats but as easily overpowered and relatively weak. In all but one case, Iraqi soldiers are shown from high angles and in physically lower positions relative to coalition soldiers, and in all cases they have been subdued either by injury, surrender, capture, or death. This is also true of four of the remaining images in this sub-category, which portray the ‘victim other’ in conjunction with coalition troops. These employ high angles when depicting women and children accepting food or other assistance from coalition troops who are also physically taller, thereby suggesting their physical power as well as their sense of morality. The notion of morality appears as a dominant theme in photographs of coalition and Iraqi interaction from The New York Times in particular, in which six of the seven images picture soldiers providing some form of assistance to Iraqis, whether providing medical aid or water to detained soldiers, or giving food to
women and children. Not only do these types of photographs reinforce the notion, put forth in mainstream American and British media at the time, that the coalition was in Iraq to bring aid as well as freedom, but they also visually situate the recipients of such aid as incapable of helping themselves. In fact, only one image in this sub-category shows an interaction between an Iraqi man and coalition soldier in which the former is not presented as weak through the use of camera angle, relative height, or by portraying him as surrendering, detained, injured, or dead.

The presentation of Iraqis as weak is also apparent from the sub-category solely depicting Iraqis (26 in total) in which they are frequently presented as victims. While this sub-category shows comparatively more variety in terms of locations, people, and situations, the majority (18 images) portray women, children, and families and tend to show signs of hardship and emotion from high camera angles, thereby presenting these subjects as victims. That being said, other images in this category portray strength through the ‘enemy other’, with some showing groups of men gathered with their weapons while another shows a group of men celebrating the downing of an American helicopter and yet another shows newly conscripted soldiers rejoicing with their guns in the air. Thus, unlike the analysed image from this sub-category, which portrays soldiers surrendering to the coalition, these show the enemy as threatening, if somewhat ill organised. This is interesting because the analysed image implied a coalition presence, which was found to be cropped out of the photo, whereas in the remaining images of the ‘enemy other’ in this sub-category there is no such implication. Thus, while the analysed images did not find portrayals of Iraqi soldiers as prepared or threatening, the larger sample shows that these images do exist. Though when taken in conjunction with images
including the coalition there seems to be a suggestion that while the enemy may pose a threat on their own, if they come into contact with the coalition they will be subdued.

Although the above analysis reveals that both sources portray coalition troops and Iraqis according to similar themes, there remain some notable differences between the types of images in each source sample. For instance, whereas The New York Times sample has several images of both American and British coalition troops providing assistance to Iraqis, those from the BBC are more likely to contribute to the presentation of coalition strength through depictions of overt dominance. Additionally, The New York Times sample favours images of Iraqis as victims while the BBC tends to show images of both the ‘victim other’ and ‘enemy other’. Most notably, however, is the overall presentation of the ‘self’ from both sources. For the BBC this means exclusively showing images of soldiers in Iraq, whereas for The New York Times it means showing not only the coalition troops, but also images of emergency workers in New York, protests in America, a deployed soldier’s child, and George W. Bush with members of his ‘war council’. Thus, in contrast to the BBC’s uniform portrayal of the troops away at war, the variety displayed in this sample from The New York Times suggests a nation at war through visual references to the president, the sacrifices made by citizens such as emergency workers and soldiers’ children and families, and controlled (and ultimately ignored) protests. These portrayals of sacrifice and heroes in many ways echo the sentiments presented in American media in the aftermath of 9/11 and can be a read as a reflection of The New York Times’ location as well as the media’s presentation of the Iraq war as retribution for that attack.
Regardless of the differences between source samples, however, the visual cues seen in both sources refer to coalition strength and Iraqi weakness, which is to be expected considering the images were produced in the first week of a rather controversial war by sources located in the two countries responsible for its commencement. Nonetheless, these images illustrate how apparently innocuous photographs can associate subjects with particular understandings of power and ultimately work against the critical interpretation of images. With these themes in mind, the following sections compares images collected from 2010 in an effort to determine whether the themes and associated visual cues found in images from 2003 persisted over time, or if they were superseded by those more useful to the changing political situation in Iraq.

**Seven Years On**

The sample of images derived from 2010 was published in the year President Barack Obama officially declared the end of the war and the removal of coalition troops from Iraq began. Unlike those from 2003, which were gathered from the first week, images in this sample span the year as there were significantly fewer images returned in the search. Despite the difference in time frame, the distribution of images across the three sub-categories is similar to the 2003 sample, with 30 images categorized as ‘Iraqi’, 23 as ‘coalition’, and the remaining 7 showing the interaction of both groups. In both sample years there are significantly fewer images showing their interaction than depicting the groups separately, but like those from 2003, these images speak to the relationship between those categorized as ‘coalition’ and ‘Iraqi’ even when they are not pictured together.
The ‘Self’

Whereas the initial images portrayed soldiers in activities associated with an engagement in war, The New York Times image selected from the ‘coalition’ sub-category for 2010 gives the impression that the war is coming to a close. In it, a soldier flips onto what appears to be a folded tent or tarp as he prepares to leave the desert in the military vehicles parked in the distance and the caption adds that he and other soldiers are dismantling a temporary base (see Soldier Flip). The photo is taken at a neutral camera angle, which, combined with the apparently remote location and absence of other people within the frame, suggests that the viewer is not just a passerby but embedded, despite the lack of eye contact and consequent lack of intimacy. The soldier is shown as an equal, but in contrast with images of the coalition from 2003 he is unarmed and not wearing equipment needed for combat, and as such he is not presented as powerful. Additionally, his lack of preparation combined with his gymnastics display suggests there is no immediate threat in the area, so unlike many images from 2003, there is not the sense of an unseen ‘enemy other’.

By contrast, the BBC image indicates an unseen enemy in its portrayal of five armed soldiers standing on the median of a city road with their tank behind them, with two holding their guns causally but ready to shoot if necessary, while a third man appears to use binoculars to look at something outside the frame (see Soldiers Ready). The caption is vague and does not refer specifically to the photograph or its context, but unlike the previous image it gives the sense that although the war is no longer at its height, it is not yet finished. That they appear to be standing guard on the median combines with the slightly low camera angle to give the soldiers a more powerful appearance than the previous image and is in keeping with the photos from 2003. Two of the soldiers are
talking together and making eye contact while the other three seem to be surveying the scene, one of whom looks toward but past the viewer. Thus, despite the camera angle and their relatively close proximity, the lack of eye contact and the location in a city (rather than the isolation of a desert where someone would be reliant on the troops) gives the sense that the viewer is not embedded and is gazing at these soldiers from an outside perspective.

Although both images are derived from the same year, and were both published a month prior to the United States’ August deadline for the removal of troops from Iraq, only the first image, printed in *The New York Times*, seems to exemplify this upcoming development, while the other appears to be thematically similar to images of the coalition from 2003. Interestingly, the caption associated with the latter photograph refers to “the invasion of Iraq in 2003” rather than current events, which may be the reason behind a similar use of themes, or could suggest that the photo was taken in 2003 and reprinted in 2010.

**The ‘Other’**

Unlike the differences in presentation found in images of the coalition, those selected from the sub-category depicting Iraqis continue to present them as the weakened ‘other’, though using different kinds of imagery. The first, from *The New York Times*, shows a man walking on a street with an arm around the shoulders of a girl with a bandage on her wrist, perhaps a family member, who seems to be crying, and two boys, possibly in their teens, who are positioned behind the man and girl (see Girl Crying). The grave expressions of the man and boys coupled with the girl crying suggest that she was recently injured, which is substantiated by the caption: “Baghdad: A man helped his
wounded daughter away from the scene of a deadly bombing at a police station on Wednesday”. The camera angle is neutral with respect to the daughter but slightly low in relation to the father, thereby endowing him with some power in relation to both the daughter and the viewer. Though it is clear that the girl is literally a victim of the bomb, her uninjured father (despite the power suggested by the camera angle) also appears victimized by virtue of his inability to protect her from this incident and the unseen ‘enemy other’; the notion of protection being one often associated with strength, masculinity and fatherhood in the West. In spite of appearing relatively close, the lack of eye contact with the main subjects, the father and daughter, positions the viewer as an outside observer, as does the stare of one of the boys in the background who seems to be watching the viewer gaze upon them.

The other image, from the BBC, appears to be the site of a recent bombing with the charred remnants of two vehicles seen parked on the side of a street alongside buildings that could be residences (see Car Bomb). The caption also indicates this, adding that such bombs have “targeted homes in mainly Christian areas” of Bagdad, which suggests the work of a non-Christian enemy and therefore not the coalition. The image shows a boy with a neutral expression walking past in the foreground, two men also with neutral expressions in civilian clothes surveying the damage in the middle ground, and another man holding a child too far in the background to decipher facial features. While they do not appear to be the victims of the bombing, their presence in this apparently Christian area suggests they may live nearby, which situates them as possible victims of future attacks. The neutral camera angle situates the viewer as equal to the men in the photo, and slightly higher than the boy, which reflects his weakened state by virtue of being a
child, though none of the subjects make eye contact with the camera, suggesting the viewer remains an outside observer.

While both images highlight the vulnerability of Iraqis and distance the viewer as an outside observer in various ways, unlike the images from 2003, those analysed above portray Iraqis with neutral or low camera angles that situate them as equal to the viewer. Additionally, these two images do not imply the presence of the ‘self’, or the coalition, and the threat of violence remains attributable to other (presumably Muslim) Iraqis. Thus, although these images depict ‘victim others’ rather than the enemy, the latter is insinuated as a threat despite not being shown and therefore maintains the 2003 notion of the ‘enemy other’ as well as that of the ‘victim other’.

The ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’

The two selected images in which Iraqis are portrayed with the coalition initially appear to be quite different than those from 2003 in that they show coalition soldiers working with Iraqis rather than dominating the ‘enemy other’. The first, from The New York Times shows two coalition soldiers lifting a third in what seems to be a demonstration, as a group of Iraqi soldiers look on and one takes a photograph (see Training). The caption indicates that it is a training exercise to ensure Iraqi soldiers know Medevac (medical evacuation) techniques prior to the departure of coalition troops from Iraq. That the Iraqi soldiers are receiving instruction from the coalition soldiers suggests the existence of an unseen ‘enemy other’ who will persist once the coalition has left the country. The coalition instructors are in a physically lower position than the students in this image, with the camera angle being neutral with respect to the former group. Thus, the viewer is situated as equal to the coalition, though none of the subjects in the image
make eye contact with the viewer, thereby situating the latter as an outside observer. In spite of the low camera angle with respect to the Iraqi soldiers, the fact that coalition members are providing them with training puts them in a weakened position similar to that seen in images from 2003 in which Iraqis are shown receiving coalition assistance.

The second photo, from the **BBC**, shows two armed coalition soldiers in the foreground with weapons held ready to engage, another partially obscured coalition soldier behind them, three Iraqi women in the background, one Iraqi boy and the back of a man (see Soldiers and Women). The camera angle is slightly low in relation to the soldiers which, combined with their military equipment, demeanour, and presence as the main subjects of the image, lends them a powerful appearance. Given that women and especially veiled Muslim women tend to be viewed as victims, their appearance in the same frame as the soldiers supplies more power to the latter, who may be perceived by non-Muslim Western audiences as protecting these and other Iraqis. Unlike the images from 2003, however, these women are portrayed with a neutral camera angle, with expressions that are not emotional, and are not shown caring for children or with families, which means they are not as weakened as in other images. That being said, due to the perspective of the photograph given by their appearance in the background, they are shown as physically smaller than the soldiers in the foreground thereby contributing to an appearance of vulnerability in spite of the other cues. Finally, the caption asserts that the soldiers are expecting “an increase in militant attacks”, which, despite not making direct reference to the image, explains why the soldiers appear to be on guard, gives an increased sense that they are protecting these women and Iraqi civilians, and makes reference to the unseen enemy.
Whereas the analysed images from 2003 depicting the coalition and Iraqis clearly portrayed Iraqis as the ‘enemy other’ and the coalition as militarily and morally superior, these images differ in that they present Iraqis as ‘victim others’ who rely on the assistance of the coalition to protect civilians and teach Iraqi soldiers how to fight against the unseen ‘enemy other’. As such, these images also continue to portray the coalition as militarily powerful, but do so more subtly than in the photographs analysed from 2003.

The larger samples from which the analysed images are drawn also show thematic similarities to the 2003 sample despite some differences in visual cues. As with the 2003 sample, the sub-category depicting those associated with the coalition predominantly contains images of soldiers, who continue to be portrayed most often from neutral or low angles, suggesting either their equality with the viewer or their placement in a position of power. However, unlike the older sample, they are less frequently seen overtly dominating the ‘enemy other’, which occurs in only two of the seven images depicting both the coalition and Iraqis, as opposed to six of the total 11 from 2003. Also interesting is the predominance of horizontal lines formed by the position of elements in the images, which in this sample lessens the dramatic effect often seen in the images from 2003 created by the use of diagonal lines (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). Further, the vulnerability of the coalition is briefly seen in two of the 23 images from 2010, both from the BBC, showing soldiers carrying or preparing the coffin of a fallen comrade. Rather than detracting from the overall sense of coalition power provided by the sample as a whole, however, these images appear to contribute to the sense of bravery, loyalty, solidarity, and strength so often attributed to soldiers.
The 2010 sample also reveals that while Iraqis are more likely to be portrayed from neutral angles and less likely to be explicitly presented as the ‘enemy other’, they are more often associated with the unseen ‘enemy other’ and increasingly depicted as the weak ‘victim other’ using visual cues other than camera angle. Some of these are addressed above and include the relative size of female Iraqis next to coalition troops, Iraqis as students of the troops, and Iraqis as victims of bomb attacks by non-coalition groups. Images and captions referring to bomb attacks particularly contribute to the presentation of Iraqis as victims in the larger sample by insinuating the presence of an ‘enemy other’, which in 2003 was more often found in images relating to the coalition. This suggests that the unseen enemy has become less a threat to the coalition than to Iraqis, and as such, Iraqis in the larger sample continue to occupy roles as both victims and the enemy while coalition involvement is removed from focus. The increased presentation of Iraqis as weakened ‘victim others’ can be read as a response to shifting popular perceptions over the seven years of the war and in American and British politics, which saw the resignation of Tony Blair in 2007, the removal of most British troops from Iraq in 2009, the election of Barack Obama the same year, and the decision to begin removing American troops the following year. With the intended removal of troops came a new approach to the war that sought to transfer security and governance to Iraqis after building relationships with communities and providing military protection and training in addition to other humanitarian aid. Quite unlike the initially stated objectives for war, this approach relied on winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis and intended to work with Iraqis and provide assistance and skills to govern and protect their own population prior to the eventual extraction of coalition troops and the symbolic
handed over of power to local Iraqi governments and military. By 2010 public support for the war had waned and British involvement was negligible, but the images continued to portray the majority of Iraqis as ‘victim others’ living in fear of the unseen enemy, yet ill-equipped to govern and protect themselves without the ongoing assistance and mentorship of coalition governments and troops. The discussion in the second chapter regarding the relationship between government and media is thus made visually clear here, in that the media would have been the main method of perpetuating the shifting ideologies of especially the American government at that time. This also illustrates the ideological effect of images produced particularly during periods of war, when the role of the mainstream media tends to become more supportive than critical.

While the images from 2010 maintain the overall notion of Iraqi weakness and coalition strength seen in those from 2003, as with the earlier sample there is a difference in the types of images used by each source. Whereas in the 2003 sample both sources depict the coalition and Iraqis in roughly equal quantities, the 2010 sample from *The New York Times* tends to focus its attention on Iraqis while the *BBC* portrays more images of the coalition troops. Given the role of the United States military in Iraq at that time and the intention to shift the responsibility of security and governance away from the coalition, *The New York Times*’ increasing portrayals of Iraqis can be understood as promoting this approach. The *BBC*’s focus on coalition troops, however, is especially interesting because by the time these images were published very few if any British troops remained in Iraq. Upon closer inspection of the photograph’s captions, all those depicting the coalition either indicate that the subjects are American or fail to clarify the nationality of the individuals pictured or the context of the image. This suggests that in
addition to the analysed coalition image from the *BBC* for 2010, others from that sample may be stock footage or reprints from years previous. Despite this difference, however, both sources appear to maintain the same underlying themes in both years while altering the types of images shown according to the political and national contexts.

**From Simulation to Iconification**

The images discussed above, like all photographs, are the result of creative human influence over the writing of light on paper. As the visual products of photographers, editors and publishers who exert control over their formation, these photographs and others are manipulated from the moment the photographer decides to create a particular image until its publication, and as such, their relationship to reality is not merely one of ‘representation’ or ‘reference’. Rather, these images can be understood as simulations of reality, which as discussed in the first chapter, acknowledges their intentional creation and accounts for not only the visual elements they present and the concepts to which they refer, but also their relationship to the larger institutions supporting their construction and presentation as evidence. Further, simulations are indistinguishable from reality, which as Baudrillard asserts, blurs the line between truth and falsity, resulting in the ultimate negation of reality and its substitution with the simulation, which places these images in the realm of hyperreality through which reality then becomes understood. The images analysed above can be understood as examples of simulations through which the war in Iraq has become understood by providing visual cues about the physical aspects of the image related to the subjects relative to each other and the viewer while also speaking to notions of power.
As seen in the first chapter, images simulate visual reality in the same way that someone simulating illness might produce symptoms such as a fever, in that they present visual cues or symptoms through camera angles, perspective via relative height and distance, facial features and other common but unconsciously perceived visual elements experienced in reality. These cues not only give information about the physical environment, but can also refer to more abstract or culturally specific concepts that have no real world referent, such as the colours pink and blue coming to be associated with femininity and masculinity. Beginning from a young age sighted people learn to read these visual cues in order to navigate through their physical and social environment, and similarly, when looking at a photograph individuals rely on the familiarity gained through previous visual experiences to understand what is shown in the image.

Moreover, the visual cues or symptoms encountered through photographs, whether in reference to concrete or abstract concepts, will not only be understood according to previous visual experiences but will be added to the memory-bank of visual experiences and knowledge that help to inform future interpretations. This familiarity also means that the symptoms in images are rarely consciously perceived but, as Barry (1997) asserts, become understood and acted upon on a more intuitive, emotional, or visceral level that bypasses logic. While this is not necessarily ideological in and of itself, it illustrates the way in which images can be drawn into the service of ideologies. With regard to the images from Iraq, affective forces at this level of perception combine with the indistinguishability of simulations from reality and their traditional and authoritative presentation as evidence in news media to discourage viewers from questioning their veracity. As with the doctor who must assume someone producing a fever is actually ill,
the presence of symptoms in images leaves viewers with little choice but to accept them as ‘true’ or ‘real’, especially in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

The images discussed in this thesis are not merely simulations used as evidence of war, but images that also refer to power differentials among those involved. The above analysis has revealed the majority of images routinely employ everyday visual cues to portray subjects as strong or weak along lines separating the Western ‘self’ from the Iraqi ‘other’. These cues indicate relations of power that in turn refer to historically based stereotypes such as terrorism and are likely to have been seen in images from the first Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan among others. Given that images are interpreted according to previous knowledge and also contribute to viewers’ experiential memory-banks, it is significant that these images, which appear unexceptional compared to others from the war, use routine visual cues to refer to these larger concepts. As discussed in the first chapter, when particular cues and concepts recur in association with the specific subjects in photographs, the subjects can come to function as icons symbolic of the concept itself.

The term iconification was discussed in the first chapter as referring to the reduction of complex historical, political, social meanings and contexts into a single image or group of similar images through repeated portrayals of subjects in association with particular concepts, such that the images come to point to the concepts without revealing the complexity. The example given was the way in which images of malnourished Black African children in the late twentieth century came to refer not only to famine and poverty but to Africa as a whole in the minds of some, while the political, historical and social context behind the experiences of those depicted in the images was overshadowed
or obscured. Similarly, the majority of sample images discussed above can be understood as contributing to the iconification of concepts such as terrorism, oppression and liberation and their association to Arabs, Muslims and the West more generally by repeatedly presenting Iraqis as either the ‘enemy other’ or the ‘victim other’, and by portraying coalition soldiers as powerful saviours. Unlike the images of famine, however, which emerged and became iconified in the late 20th century, the concepts referred to by the images from Iraq have their root in the West’s historically based understandings of Arabs and Muslims as archaic, barbaric and prone to terrorism whereas by contrast, the West and Christians have been understood as modern, civilized liberators.

The notion of the ‘enemy other’ seen in the sample images is, therefore, not an idea borne only out of the war in Iraq but refers to these traditional stereotypes and equates those thought to be an enemy with Islam and terrorism. Some of the sample images make reference to this through depictions of armed Iraqi men in what appear to be civilian clothes, grouped together and sometimes shown yelling or rejoicing with guns in the air. To Western eyes these types of images have long given the sense of militancy due to the presence of weapons but lack of uniforms, in addition to portraying the subjects as archaic, barbaric and as potentially threatening or terroristic. Images like this are few in this sample, however my previous research in 2003 found many of these types of images depicting the ‘enemy’ (MacLellan-Mansell 2004). Other sample images equate Iraqis to terrorism by alluding to an unseen enemy in portrayals of bomb attack remains or symbols of the potential threat of attack, whether against coalition troops or Iraqis. Thus, images of soldiers wearing gas masks or Iraqi civilians gathered around the aftermath of a car bombing refer to this ‘enemy other’, who is presented as Muslim rather than Christian
and therefore associated with terrorism and disassociated with the coalition or the West more generally. Lastly, the ‘enemy other’ is portrayed in images in which coalition soldiers are shown overpowering Iraqis, whether the latter are soldiers or civilians, which not only situates Iraqi men as potential enemy threats, but also displays coalition soldiers in positions of strength and power, discussed further below.

If not presented or insinuated to be an enemy, Iraqis and particularly Iraqi women tend to be portrayed as ‘victim others’ via the same historically-based stereotype about Arabs and Muslims which, in conjunction with the feminist movement in the West, has resulted in the understanding of Muslim women as inherently oppressed and weakened by their ‘archaic’ religion and culture via Muslim men. Thus, we see Iraqi women portrayed most often in relation to family and children, who are themselves understood to be innocent victims, and weakened through displays of emotion, apparent domestic hardship, and of course the presence of the veil, which was once exoticized by the West but has more recently come to refer directly to Muslim women’s oppression. Men are also presented as victims when portrayed as casualties of bomb attacks or as care-givers to casualties. Additionally, some images in which Iraqi men are shown amongst the aftermath of a bomb attack situate them as potential future victims simply by virtue of them not being the enemy. This weakens subjects and presents them as incapable of identifying or fighting off the enemy without outside assistance, often in the form of coalition troops.

The coalition troops, by contrast, are generally presented in a positive light, as powerful, civilized and morally good liberators, which is to be expected considering the sources of the images and their tendency to visually associate or embed the viewer with
the troops, particularly in the initial images of the war. Therefore, the troops tend to be portrayed as militarily superior through depictions or suggestions of their domination of the ‘enemy other’. They are shown as morally superior when providing medical assistance or food to enemies, and knowledgeable in terms of war as well as politics when shown training or working with Iraqi security personnel or government officials. Finally they are portrayed as saviours when shown providing assistance to Iraqi civilians or other ‘victim others’, especially women and children.

The images discussed in this chapter, like all photographs, are simulations of reality through which events and people are understood. In this sample of images the repeated depiction of Iraqis and coalition soldiers using visual cues related to power combines with historically based stereotypes to not only refer to the individuals in the images, or those involved in this war, but more generally to Arabs, Muslims, and the West. Additionally, the media’s presentation of the war as intimately tied to the events of 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, and global terrorism supported the notion that the images from Iraq provided overarching evidence of terrorism by Muslims in the Middle East. This visual conflation of the ‘enemy’ in Iraq with the Middle East, Muslims and terrorism was also explicitly made in the sample images, which although derived using the search terms ‘Iraq’ and ‘Iraq war’ returned several images depicting the ‘enemy other’ from other mainly Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Turkey, and Jordan. Thus, in much the same way that images of emaciated black African children in the twentieth century came to be icons for the concept of famine and Africa more generally in the minds of many, the images from the Iraq war have contributed to the iconification of concepts such as terrorism, oppression and liberation. Although these concepts and associations are not
new, images from this war present these historically based stereotypes using cues seen in
everyday visual experience and do so through seemingly innocuous images whose
veracity is unlikely to be challenged. In so doing, these images push beyond hyperreality
as discussed by Baudrillard and contribute to the iconification of concepts such that the
people and events shown cease to be of importance. Thus, images of uniformed Western
soldiers remain icons for liberation and liberty much as they did in prior wars. By
contrast, images of armed Iraqi men come to be icons for terrorism, and those of veiled
Iraqi women for oppression. Additionally, the further reduction of the historical, social
and political contexts surrounding these images and others like them renders them not
only icons of liberation but of the West, and not only terrorism and oppression but also of
Islam and the Middle East.


Conclusion

Having emerged out of the Industrial Revolution, photographic technology quickly became enmeshed with mass media, tourism, colonialism, science, war, and social control to the extent that photographs came to be part of the construction of experience in these arenas. This led to their being presented and understood as evidence of reality, a belief that has persisted over time and continues to inform the use of images in advertising as well as news media. As we have seen, however, the relationship of images to reality is not one of replication, but one of simulation whereby photographs, as constructions, produce the same visual cues or symptoms experienced in reality thereby rendering the simulation indistinguishable from reality as the former comes to be understood as the real.

With regard to the Iraq war, news media’s use of photographs and other images was unprecedented in terms of the quantity and the controlled manner in which images were produced and disseminated, and as such, there were countless simulations through which the war came to be understood. Yet there are few remembered today as defining the war, and these tend to be the staged scenes that were deliberately constructed with a particular overt message or those not intended for the media, while the majority of the others remain difficult to recall. It is this majority that were of interest in this thesis: those apparently innocuous images that were unlikely to call attention to themselves as requiring a critical assessment because they used familiar visual cues to portray sterile scenes of war. This, combined with the tendency of images to be perceived on an
unconscious emotional level that bypasses reason, suggests that these types of images were likely not critically assessed to the same degree as the more memorable images.

Indeed, as the examination of images from the Iraq war has shown, in addition to giving viewers visual information related to perspective, these cues also sometimes subtly and sometimes overtly spoke to power differentials between the subjects and the viewer. In so doing, they not only presented viewers with ‘evidence’ of the war but with ‘evidence’ of the relationship between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’, which as seen in the second chapter can be understood as having ideological effects. This in turn reinforces historically based associations of concepts like terrorism, oppression and liberation with Arabs, Muslims, the Middle East and the West without making reference to these associations directly. Moreover, the repetitive portrayal of these themes contributes to the reduction of the historical, political, and social contexts of the war into specific types of images or icons, whose depictions and subjects have come to refer to the concepts without revealing any of the complexity.

The discussion of photographs, media, and historical context of the war in conjunction with the analysis of war images supports the notion that photographs produced in times of conflict can be interpreted as promoting the ideologies of the governing bodies that influence media. However, that is not to say that photographers intend to make photographs that support these ideologies or that viewers interpret them in one particular fashion. In order to determine the intentions behind images, one would have to contact photographers, and similarly, in order to gauge audience reception one would have to survey viewers of these images. These questions are not answered within
the scope of this thesis, but offer future research possibilities to those wishing to more closely examine how exactly these images were produced and received.

Additional research might also include a more thorough examination of the life or timeline of digital media images in particular, which were found through the course of this research to be far more tenuous than their printed counterparts in that the representations of the visual past change according to which images can be accessed. That the majority of digital images presented to viewers on the first day of the Iraq war are no longer accessible means that the representation of that day has changed over the years and suggests that at some point in the future it may become difficult to locate any of the original images.

Although the images assessed here are perhaps not the first that could be considered icons for these concepts, they also do little to challenge the long-time stereotypes associated with them. Thus, while these images may appear to be innocuous visual evidence of the war in Iraq they actually signal the need for greater critical engagement with media photographs, such as that suggested by Jackson (2010). This can be executed through the integration of media literacy and more specifically visual media literacy within primary or secondary school social studies or human diversity classes, if not through courses devoted specifically designed towards promoting critical media literacy. Given the increasing predominance of the Internet in North American society and the extent to which youth are engaged and interacting with images and each other via the Internet, it seems like a necessary addition to the curriculum, especially if the gap between parents’ or educators’ knowledge of the Internet and young people’s knowledge is as wide as it appears when speaking with the younger generations.
This thesis can therefore be understood as not only an examination of the way in which images from the war in Iraq portrayed power relationships between the Western ‘self’ and the Muslim ‘other’, but also as foundational research for future explorations of media images and specifically digital online images, photographs and ideology, audience reception of news media images, and media literacy in education. With the increasing predominance of images in many aspects of social life, it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of news media images as well as imagery more generally and the way in which both static and moving images can unconsciously influence our perceptions of the world and our communities.
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## Appendix A – Visual Cues in Sample Images

Highlighted rows represent images selected for analysis

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<sup>15</sup> 1FA = one female adult, 2MC= two male children, 1-C= one child

<sup>16</sup> High camera angle (H), low camera angle (L), neutral angle (N) – may contain more than one if subjects appear at different angles to the camera

<sup>17</sup> For the purposes of this chart, an intimate (I) distance refers to the subject and the viewer being at conversation distance or closer. A close public (CP) distance refers to the subject and viewer being at non-conversation distance, though they could be heard if speaking loudly. A far public (FP) distance refers to a distance whereby the subject can be seen by the viewer, but talking would be difficult or impossible, and facial features may not be clear. This category may also contain more than one.

<sup>18</sup> Eye contact between the subject(s) is denoted by (S), whereas eye contact between the subjects and the viewer is denoted by (SV). Indiscernible or absence of eye contact, is denoted with (-).

<sup>19</sup> This refers to acts whereby subjects clearly point guns at other subjects or the viewer (pointing a gun at an unseen target is not constituted as violence), or acts in which one subject seems to be causing bodily harm to another.
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120. NYT 2010  Both  5MA  L  I/CP/FP  S  N  N

**Source Information for each photograph**

17. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2875843.stm
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