Abstract

This study empirically grounds the information management practices of the British Military and British television broadcasters in Goffman's (1959; 1969) theory of impression management and strategic information management. In so doing, it seeks to illuminate how the ways that war is conducted and reported are increasingly interdependent. The empirical analysis highlights how those involved in the execution of war, and its reportage, engage in impression management to influence the definition of a situation in an attempt to influence the responses of others. Strategic interaction, as a sequence of moves, counter moves and adaptations becomes the means through which they attempt to control what is acquired, revealed and concealed about their activities in the pursuit of their broader objectives.

The thesis concludes that the impression management efforts of both the military and media have led to a situation where the strategic conduct of war and the execution of tactical war actions are intrinsically founded upon their impression management potential. Consequently, war actions increasingly incorporate a performative element. Moreover, media audiences are critically implicated in the formulation of military and media actions and interactions, for it is with them in mind that impression management performances are constructed.

The findings highlight the progression towards 'Mediated War', where the practice of war is enacted through, involves, and is dependent upon the media's reportage of it, and where the substantive elements of war actions become inseparable from the ways in which they are defined and performed for impression management purposes. This symbolic interactionist perspective has particular utility in furthering our understanding of the phenomenon of mediated war as a product of social relations between those engaged in reporting war, and those conducting war campaigns.