

Appendix 2 : Selection and sampling processes

Although this research takes a qualitative approach and will not claim representativeness (i.e. generalizability) on a quantitative basis, it is important to select a sample as objective as possible in terms of content. With the given limitations of searching for and archiving from the different media, this research has intended to provide a representative image of the activity on the different platforms. This means the researcher has not been cherry-picking articles or postings, but that all possible checks were put in place so that the sample under study would actually be representative of the activity on the given platforms.

There are three different types of content productions:

- Newspaper articles
- Postings on blogs
- Updates on Twitter

In the following, the selection of specific cases will be clarified.

- Newspapers: the top ten most trafficked US newspaper websites according to the most recent Nielsen/NetRatings available (2008) were selected:
 1. New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com>)
 2. USA Today (<http://www.usatoday.com>)
 3. Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com>)
 4. Los Angeles Times (<http://www.latimes.com>)
 5. Wall Street Journal (<http://www.online.wsj.com>)
 6. Daily News (<http://www.nydailynews.com>)
 7. Chicago Tribune (<http://www.chicagotribune.com>)
 8. New York Post (<http://www.nypost.com>)
 9. Boston Globe (<http://www.boston.com>)
 10. SFGate.com / San Francisco Chronicle (<http://www.sfgate.com>)
- Blogs: the most popular and influential news blogs that covered the Wikileaks Iraq video were selected. A list of blogs was compiled using the combined data of Technorati (a site that measures a blog's standing & influence in the blogosphere by looking at linking behavior, categorization and other associated data over a short, finite period of time) overall and political top 100 rankings (as of May 3, 2010); an Ebizma ranking for most popular blogs (2010); and a *New York Times* blog list (2010).
 - The focus was on 'holistic' news blogs that cover all sorts of news themselves. They are seen in this research as journalistic organizations.
 - Aggregators were excluded.
 - One-man blogs at traditional media institutions were excluded. Andrew Sullivan of The Daily Dish, for instance, writes for The Atlantic's website, but his blog although very popular cannot be seen as an online journalism organization.
 - One-issue blogs were left out (e.g. Media Matters, Right Wing Watch).
 - Blogs were only included if they had in fact reported on the Wikileaks Iraq video.

The selected blogs are:

1. Huffington Post (<http://www.huffingtonpost.com>)
 2. Hot Air Blog (<http://www.hotair.com>)
 3. The Daily Beast (<http://www.thedailybeast.com>)
 4. Think Progress (<http://www.thinkprogress.com>)
 5. Politico (<http://www.politico.com>)
 6. Talking Points Memo (<http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com>)
 7. Salon (<http://www.salon.com>)
 8. Mediaite (<http://www.mediaite.com>)
 9. The Dangerroom at Wired (<http://www.wired.com/dangerroom>)
 10. Truthdig (<http://www.truthdig.com>)
- Twitter: selected were updates that show up in a *Google update search* for the query *wikileaks iraq video OR "collateral murder"*. Google provides the possibility to show Twitter updates between very precise time frames:

The screenshot shows a Google search interface. The search bar contains the query "wikileaks iraq video OR 'collateral murder'". The search results are filtered to "Updates" and show a timeline for April 5, 2010, from 5:11pm to 5:12pm. Three updates are visible:

- cboyack:** RT @wikileaks: LEAK: Cover-up of murder of civilians and journalists through US forces in Iraq. Video online at: [Collateral Murder](http://collateralmurder.com) - collateralmurder.com. Twitter - 05 Apr 2010 5:12:58 pm
- edial:** Wikileaks releases collateral murder video of civilians and journalists by US forces in Iraq (via @netzpolitik) [Collateral Murder](http://collateralmurder.com) - collateralmurder.com. Twitter - 05 Apr 2010 5:12:26 pm
- derfreitag:** RT @wikileaks: Video also online on Youtube: ... (full) + ... (short) #wikileaks #iraq [YouTube](http://youtube.com) - Collateral Murder - youtube.com [YouTube](http://youtube.com) - Collateral Murder - Full video - youtube.com. Twitter - 05 Apr 2010 5:12:20 pm

From the newspaper websites and blogs, the (1) initial reception of the news and (2) the first follow-up on the initial reception were located via search and archived for analysis. (Postings appearing on newspaper blogs were excluded, because this research is interested in the first official drafts of the news, i.e. newspaper articles.)

It was impossible to take the exact same approach for tweets because one can never be sure that a tweeter who shows up in Google search results reported on the news more than once (more than one tweet). Via search, it is simply impossible to find only tweeters who followed

up on the initial reception, i.e. to filter out those people that just produced one tweet on the topic. (Manually, this is possible but it would simply take too much time.)

Therefore, for tweeters, a different approach had to be taken to resemble the initial reception and the first follow-up. This was done by selecting from different time slots, i.e. tweets produced on the day the news broke (April 5, 2010) and tweets produced two days after (April 7, 2010). It may be expected that a tweet two days after the breaking of the news, contains some sort of follow-up – it is assumed that most tweeters were already up to date on the initial breaking of the news. This is supported by the fact that tweeters are very active news followers: “The average Twitter user is two to three times more likely to visit a news website than the average person” (Farhi, 2009, cited in Hermida, 2010: 2).

For the tweets, it was impossible to establish whether or not the producers were American.

SAMPLING FROM TWEETS

The sampling from the newspaper Web sites and blogs was straightforward in the sense that the first and second article or posting on topic were selected. The sampling of tweets had to be done by using a specific targeted approach further described in the appendices containing the tweets (appendices 6c and 6d). In general terms, it should be stated that a stratified, systematic sample with a random start was used. Because all tweets were collected and sorted by time of publishing on the selected days, this stratified sample was the best way to ensure a representative sample from tweets published on different times of that day. A random sample from the list of tweets would have contained the risk of over-representing some section of the list, i.e. some time of the day (cf. Babby & Baxter, 2004: 154).