

ALTRUISM IN WAR JOURNALISM: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE FILM “CIVIL WAR”

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ABSTRACT

Civil War is a dystopian genre film produced by A24, which explores the theme of the American Civil War from the perspective of a war correspondent. The film showcases the dedication of war journalists in reporting events at the front lines as a form of altruistic value. This study aims to examine and elaborate on the representation of the altruistic values of war correspondents depicted in Civil War. The research will employ a constructivist paradigm, a qualitative approach, Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method, and will be descriptive in nature. The study focuses on scenes that portray attitudes representing the altruism of war correspondents. The findings reveal four attitudes representing the altruistic values of war correspondents in Civil War: helping colleagues, high dedication, disregarding personal risk, and concern for mental health.

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1. Introduction

As social beings, humans are inherently involved in the practice of exchanging messages. As civilization has advanced, communication has evolved into various forms, one of which is through art, such as film. Today, we commonly understand that film is not merely a medium of entertainment, but it can also serve as a platform for conveying messages. As a form of artistic expression, the message in a film can be an imaginative expression of its creator or a reflection of phenomena occurring in society. This aligns with Noor (2015) perspective that, although art is fictional, it always references the realities of the real world.

Recently, films have captured the attention of many, as more films present compelling narratives infused with positive values. This is evidenced by the increasing number of films that deliver positive messages in a concise, clear, and engaging manner. Consequently, more filmmakers are motivated to create works that can be both enjoyed by the public and have a positive impact. Through its screenplay and plot, a film can captivate its audience by embedding the storyline within the viewer's experience. Conversely, if a film fails to convey a positive message, it risks being abandoned by its audience. The essence of a film, according to Kristiyanti (2019), should be educational for its viewers.

The message in a film indicates the relationship between the filmmaker as the communicator and the audience as the communicatee. Through the medium of film, with its blend of narrative, visual aspects, and the roles of each actor, the audience is invited to experience the thoughts of the director, who intends to convey a specific message that forms the main idea of the film. The messages conveyed can vary, ranging from merely expressing something, voicing issues, to providing education.

The increasing number of film productions today has introduced audiences to diverse and unique stories, including those that bring attention to underrepresented topics. One such example is the heroic depiction of war correspondents in the 2024 film *Civil War*. This film chronicles the journey of Lee Smith (played by Kirsten Dunst), a war correspondent reporting on the unfolding American Civil War. Smith and her fellow journalists are portrayed as self-sacrificing professionals, committed to conveying real-time updates from war zones despite significant risks.

Civil War is a dystopian action film written and directed by Alex Garland. Featuring renowned actors such as Kirsten Dunst, Wagner Moura, Cailee Spaeny, Stephen McKinley Henderson, and Nick Offerman, the film premiered globally at South by Southwest on March 14, 2024, receiving widespread acclaim. Distributed by A24 in the United States and Entertainment Film in the UK, the movie reached audiences on April 12, 2024. Set in a dystopian future, the film follows a group of journalists navigating through a war-torn United States amidst a second American Civil War. The conflict pits a totalitarian American government against separatist factions led by Texas and California's Western Forces. As they strive to survive, these journalists confront the brutality of war, including war crimes committed by extremist militias. The film delivers a profound depiction of devastation, emotional turmoil, and moral struggles within a dystopian setting.

Through its sharp visuals and evocative sound design, *Civil War* immerses viewers in the grim realities of war. The narrative highlights the emotional toll and depression faced by journalists as they perform their duties in brutal conflict zones. The film serves as a stark reminder of war's cruelty and its destructive impact.

Ongoing conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, have had significant consequences for war correspondents. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), as of August 2, 2024, at least 113 journalists and media workers have died while reporting from war zones like Israel and Palestine (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2024). This data underscores the high risks associated with the profession, where journalists often put their lives on the line for the sake of reporting and humanity. This dedication, driven by altruism, is a key theme depicted in *Civil War*.

Altruism is an attitude or behavior in which an individual acts for the benefit of others without expecting any reward. Altruism is often triggered by empathy, where a person feels or understands the emotions of others and is thus driven to help. Batson developed the empathy-altruism theory, which posits that when someone feels empathy toward another individual, they are motivated to alleviate that person's suffering, even if it comes at a personal cost. This theory suggests that altruism is an emotional response driven by empathy rather than by selfish motives (C. Daniel Batson, 2011).

Altruism can manifest in various forms, depending on social and cultural contexts. According to Robert Cialdini (1991), one form of altruism is "reciprocal altruism," in which an individual provides assistance with the expectation that it will be returned in the future. Although there is an expectation of reciprocity, this action is still considered altruistic

because the initial motivation is to help, not to gain a reward. Additionally, there is also "pure altruism," where someone helps without expecting anything in return, which is often seen in humanitarian actions or selfless donations. These forms of altruism demonstrate that helping others can arise from various motivations and be expressed in different situations, as is the case with Lee Smith's profession as a war correspondent in the film *Civil War*.

Representation is the process by which reality is conveyed and presented in communication through various mediums, such as words, sounds, images, or a combination of these. According to (W. A. Krebs, 2001), representation comes from the word "represent," which means "to stand for" or "to symbolize something." Thus, representation can be understood as the act of presenting something through symbols or signs that differ from the original. Furthermore, Fiske (2004) explains that representation is the production of meaning through language, where symbols and signs—whether written, spoken, or visual—are used to convey concepts, thoughts, and ideas (Fiske, 2001).

The study of representation encompasses various approaches to understanding how meaning and reality are constructed and communicated. Stuart Hall identifies three main approaches to representation: reflective, intentional, and constructionist. The reflective approach views representation as a reflection of existing reality, where language merely acts as a tool to depict the world objectively. The intentional approach, on the other hand, considers meaning to be determined by the intentions of the message creator, where the individual creating the representation has full control over the meaning being conveyed. Meanwhile, the constructionist approach emphasizes that meaning is not only produced by individuals or external reality but is also constructed through social and cultural interaction (Juliastuti, 2000). These approaches illustrate that representation is a complex and multidimensional process, where meaning is continuously shaped and reinterpreted.

Symbols are representations of something beyond their physical form, providing a deeper meaning than mere signs. Sobur (2006) explains that symbols have a structured relationship between form and meaning, where symbols cannot be understood in isolation but must be viewed in relation to other symbols. Unlike signs, symbols possess three important dimensions: the interpretation of their use, the rules of use according to the type of discourse, and the creation of meaning based on the intention behind their use. This indicates that symbols are not just visual or verbal forms but also function as communication tools with complex rules and meanings.

Erwin Goodenough, as cited by Dillistone (2002), adds that symbols not only convey literal meaning but also function beyond their literal interpretation. Goodenough distinguishes between two categories of language: denotative language, which is precise and scientific, and connotative language, which allows for varied interpretations. Symbols fall into the second category, meaning that they have the ability to convey associative and contextual meanings. In Barthes' framework, symbols are analyzed through three main aspects: denotation, connotation, and myth, which together form complex and layered meanings.

Denotation refers to the direct or literal meaning of a sign, which is the first meaning that comes to mind and is generally accepted. For instance, the image of an apple is denotatively understood as the fruit itself. Connotation, on the other hand, is the additional meaning that arises from the cultural or emotional associations attached to the sign; for example, an apple might connote knowledge or sin in certain contexts. Barthes also

developed the concept of myth, which he defined as a system of meaning that is socially constructed and accepted as natural or inevitable, even though it is actually the result of history and ideology. In Barthes' view, myths transform connotative meanings into denotative ones that are perceived as natural, thereby concealing the underlying ideology and accepting it without question. Thus, denotation, connotation, and myth serve as an analytical framework for understanding how signs operate in the construction and reproduction of meaning within culture (Roland Barthes, 1972).

This study offers a fresh perspective in semiotics, specifically in exploring the representation of altruism in the profession of war correspondents as portrayed in *Civil War*. Unlike previous research, such as Dewayani and Azwar's work on gender equality in the *Barbie* film, this study focuses on altruism within a high-risk profession (Dewayani & Azwar, 2024). Both studies employ Roland Barthes' semiotic approach to analyze the symbolism in films but explore distinct social contexts.

In Dewayani and Azwar's study, gender equality is represented through four key phenomena: stereotypes, objectification, marginalization, and emotional oppression. Their analysis highlights how *Barbie* tackles gender issues through the interplay between utopian and real-world narratives, challenging societal constructions of gender. Conversely, this research focuses on the altruistic values in the war correspondent profession, depicting their dedication, sacrifice, and empathy in covering high-risk conflicts. Using Barthes' semiotics, the representation of altruism is analyzed through layers of denotation, connotation, and myth in *Civil War*. The film's portrayal of war devastation, emotional strain, and journalists' moral struggles forms the core symbolism that communicates humanitarian values to audiences.

By doing so, this study broadens Barthes' semiotic applications to include moral and professional dimensions, showcasing how visual media like films can inspire and educate society. Furthermore, this study provides insights for filmmakers, encouraging them to consider how symbolic representation can influence public perceptions of social issues. In this context, films transcend entertainment, serving as tools to reflect and shape societal values. Hence, this research underscores the critical role of films as meaningful communication media.

2. Method

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, qualitative approach, Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method, and a descriptive research design. The constructivist paradigm is chosen because the research focuses on understanding how reality is constructed within the film (Guba, 1994). A qualitative approach is employed to explore the deeper meanings of the object of study, allowing for richer analysis of non-quantifiable data (Creswell, 2014). Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method is applied to uncover hidden layers of meaning within the text by examining signs, connotations, and myths produced in specific cultural contexts (Barthes, 1972). A descriptive research design is selected because the goal is to provide a comprehensive and detailed depiction of the phenomenon under study, rather than testing hypotheses or predicting outcomes. For this study, scenes from the film *Civil War* are selected based on their relevance to the theme of altruism. The chosen scenes are those that explicitly or implicitly represent altruistic values, such as helping others, showing high dedication, disregarding personal risk, and addressing mental health concerns. The scene selection process begins with watching the entire film and noting moments that reflect these values.

Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method is used to explore the hidden meanings within these selected scenes by examining the signs, their connotations, and the myths they generate in the context of the film's cultural framework (Barthes, 1972). This approach enables a nuanced understanding of how altruism is symbolically represented in the narrative and visual elements of the film. The descriptive design ensures that the study provides a comprehensive narrative of the findings without attempting to generalize or predict specific outcomes.

3. Results and Discussion

This study reveals how the altruism of war correspondents is represented in the film "Civil War." The findings are analyzed through verbal and non-verbal signs, including specific scenes from the film. Based on the collected data, "Civil War" presents several scenes that reflect the altruistic values of war correspondents, including helping colleagues, demonstrating high dedication, disregarding personal risks, and showing concern for mental health.

Helping Colleagues

Table 1.

The first scene shows Joel, Lee Smith, and Jessie helping each other with the coverage.

FRAMES	VISUAL/TEXT
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Figure 1.1

Joel: Lee!
Lee Smith: (approaching)

Figure 1.1 Full shot
Figure 1.2 Close up
Figure 1.3 Full shot



Figure 1.2

Lee Smith: Take (press vest) this!
Jessie: No, I can't!



Figure 1.3

Lee Smith: Take it!
Jessie: Thank you!

DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIED
<p>Figure 1.1 Lee Smith and Joel are professional journalists. Both are near the location of the riot to cover it.</p>	<p>Figure 1.1 Joel calls out to Lee Smith to give him the press vest before covering the riot.</p>
<p>Figure 1.2 Lee Smith tries to help Jessie, a young journalist he meets amidst the riot.</p>	<p>Figure 1.2 When the riot breaks out, Lee Smith sees a young journalist, Jessie, getting hit by authorities while covering the event without a press vest. Lee then takes the initiative to give Jessie his own vest.</p>
<p>Figure 1.3 Lee Smith gives his press vest to Jessie.</p>	<p>Figure 1.3 Jessie initially refuses the vest, but after Lee insists, she eventually accepts it.</p>
CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIED

Figure 1.1 Lee Smith and Joel are professional journalists. Both are near the location of the riot to cover it.

Figure 1.2 Lee Smith tries to help Jessie, a young journalist he meets amidst the riot.

Figure 1.3 Lee Smith gives his press vest to Jessie.

As professional journalists who frequently report from war zones, Joel and Lee Smith understand the importance of wearing a press vest while on duty. This understanding prompted Joel to quickly hand a vest to Lee as soon as he arrived at the scene. Likewise, when Lee saw Jessie in the middle of the riot without a vest, he quickly moved to rescue her from the crowd and gave her his own press vest. This event in the scene highlights the mutual support among journalists when working in the field.

Source: Data analysis results

In the first scene, altruism is represented through the act of helping colleagues during the news coverage process. This is depicted when Joel hands his press vest to Lee Smith upon arriving at the reporting site. Furthermore, this sense of mutual assistance is reinforced when Lee promptly helps Jessie, who becomes trapped in the middle of a riot without her press vest. Lee then hands over her own press vest to Jessie. The myth presented here is that journalists in the field often assist one another during coverage, particularly when safety is at stake. As portrayed in this scene, Lee's action in saving Jessie and giving her the press vest illustrates a strong sense of camaraderie among journalists.



Figure 1.4
Jessie expresses gratitude after being assisted by Lee Smith during field reporting

In conflict zones, war correspondents often find themselves in high-risk situations where their safety and well-being are constantly under threat. In such conditions, they frequently exhibit altruistic behavior by helping and supporting their colleagues—for example, providing emergency medical aid, sharing resources, or offering logistical assistance when circumstances become dire. According to (Robert B. Cialdini, 1993), such altruistic actions are often driven by empathy and solidarity, as individuals feel a sense of responsibility to support their team members for the sake of collective safety.

Based on this analysis, the representation of altruism in conflict situations involving war correspondents reflects not only solidarity and empathy but also serves as a survival strategy in dangerous scenarios. Mutual assistance among journalists can be seen as a form of social adaptation that enables them to perform their journalistic duties more safely. In high-pressure environments like war zones, altruistic behaviors often emerge as a result of strong group dynamics and shared identity. (DeSteno, 2010), in his work on the psychology of trust and

cooperation, highlights that under stressful conditions, individuals are more likely to engage in acts of altruism toward those they perceive as part of their ingroup. Such actions are driven by a sense of mutual dependence and emotional bonds that enhance trust and cooperation within the group. Lee’s act of giving her press vest to Jessie exemplifies this principle, reflecting how shared professional experiences and survival instincts foster altruistic behaviors in conflict zones.

The mutual support depicted in *Civil War* highlights the strong solidarity among war correspondents. In the scene where Lee gives her protective vest to Jessie, the film showcases how journalists support one another in hazardous situations. This representation strengthens public perception of war journalists as individuals characterized by solidarity, prioritizing collective safety over personal interests. However, this portrayal may also create unrealistic expectations that all journalists work in perfect harmony without professional conflicts or pressures.

In reality, institutional pressures from media organizations—such as competition among journalists or strict deadlines—often hinder the development of such solidarity. This representation idealizes the journalism profession as an altruistic community while overlooking structural factors like media institution pressures. Group solidarity theory emphasizes that collaboration in high-risk situations is an essential survival mechanism, as depicted in this film scene. Acts of mutual aid among journalists, like Lee's actions, highlight the importance of collegial relationships in the field while reminding us that internal challenges remain an inherent part of the journalism profession.

High Dedication

Table 2.
The first scene shows Joel, Lee Smith, and Jessie helping each other with the coverage.



FRAMES	VISUAL/TEXT
<p>Figure 2.1 Full shot Figure 2.2 Full shot</p>	 <p data-bbox="1023 1451 1145 1480">Figure 2.1</p>
	 <p data-bbox="1023 1765 1145 1794">Figure 2.2</p>
DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIED

Figure 2.1 The vehicle labeled “press,” carrying the media crew (Joel, Lee, Jessie, and Sam), drives past wrecked cars.

Figure 2.1 A vehicle is seen moving towards the war zone. On the way, the vehicle carrying Joel, Lee, Jessie, and Sam passes by many abandoned wrecks left after the chaos from the conflict.

Figure 2.2 The vehicle stops at a checkpoint before entering the war zone.

Figure 2.2 Before entering the war zone, the vehicle stops at a military checkpoint to report the purpose of their coverage.

CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIED
<p>Figure 2.1 The vehicle labeled “press,” carrying the media crew (Joel, Lee, Jessie, and Sam), drives past wrecked cars.</p>	<p>The four media crew members demonstrate high dedication as they plan to enter the war zone for coverage. Before entering the dangerous area, they are already greeted by the remnants of the horror caused by the conflict. Many cars are abandoned along the main road leading to the city center, left behind by their owners.</p>
<p>Figure 2.2 The vehicle stops at a checkpoint before entering the war zone</p>	

Source: Data analysis results

In the second scene, altruism is represented through a strong sense of dedication. This is depicted in the actions of Lee and her colleagues as they plan to enter a war zone to interview the President. Along the way, they encounter harrowing sights, such as abandoned car wrecks, and must navigate through military checkpoints. The myth portrayed in this scene is that, even in life-threatening situations, war correspondents exhibit unwavering dedication to fulfilling their duty of disseminating information to the public.



Figure 2.3
The journalism team encounters soldiers while attempting to enter a war zone.

Dedication, in this context, refers to a journalist's deep and enduring commitment to reporting conflicts with the goal of providing accurate and truthful information, often at the expense of their own safety and comfort. Robert Fisk, a renowned war correspondent, emphasized that the duty of a journalist is to "challenge authority, all authority, especially so when governments and politicians take us to war." This commitment to truth-telling often requires immense personal sacrifice, as journalists risk their lives to ensure the world understands the realities of conflict, embodying the principle that bearing witness to the truth is a moral obligation of their profession (Fisk, 2005).

From the analysis above, it is evident that such dedication is not merely a professional commitment but also a manifestation of altruism that underpins the ethos of journalism. In

life-threatening situations, as depicted in the second scene, dedication becomes a tangible expression of altruistic values, where journalists willingly prioritize the public interest over their personal safety. Sebastião Salgado, a renowned photojournalist, encapsulated this sentiment when he said, "What I want is for my photos to provoke a discussion, to get people to talk about what I show them. It's not just about beauty, but about making people think about injustice" (Salgado, 2014). This perspective underscores how strong dedication stems from an altruistic desire to share the truth and inspire change, regardless of the risks involved.

Through actions like those of Lee and her colleagues, we see that journalists are not merely conveyors of information but also moral agents bearing the responsibility of ensuring society gains a clear understanding of ongoing events. High dedication, therefore, is a cornerstone of journalistic ethics, reflecting not only professionalism but also profound humanitarian values.

The dedication displayed in the film, such as the journalists' courage in entering a war zone, reflects the moral values inherent in the profession. In the scene where the press vehicle moves through the ruins toward the conflict zone, it becomes clear how journalists demonstrate a steadfast commitment to reporting the truth to the public, even at the risk of their lives. This representation reinforces the image of journalists as individuals with a moral responsibility to convey the truth. However, this depiction also creates a narrative suggesting that such dedication is always altruistic, disregarding economic or institutional pressures.

In this scene, the significant risks undertaken by journalists symbolize the moral responsibility often overlooked by media institutions. Fisk emphasized that the role of a journalist is to "challenge authority, all authority, especially so when governments and politicians take us to war." This perspective highlights the personal morality that drives journalists to expose the truth, often at great personal cost. The scene not only reflects individual sacrifices but also underscores the collective need for balancing moral responsibility with better institutional protections for journalists, ensuring that their vital work can continue without compromising their safety (Fisk, 2005).

This portrayal suggests that high dedication is not just a reflection of professional work ethic but also a call for institutional reform within the profession. The scene highlights the dual aspects of dedication: as an ethical ideal and as a catalyst for systemic change to ensure that journalists' moral commitments are supported by their organizations.

Disregarding Personal Risk

Table 3.
In the third scene, Joel, Lee Smith, and Jessie assist each other with the coverage.

FRAMES	VISUAL/TEXT
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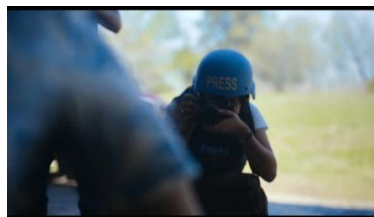


Figure 3.1

Figure 3.1 Full shot

Figure 3.2 Full shot



Figure 3.2

DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIED
<p>Figure 3.1 Jessie is capturing the moment when one of the resistance soldiers is shot.</p>	<p>Figure 3.1 shows Jessie capturing a photo of one of the fallen resistance soldiers during the shootout. In this critical moment, a comrade of the soldier is administering first aid to try to save him.</p>
<p>Figure 3.2 The moment of a fallen resistance soldier during the shootout, being attended to by a comrade.</p>	<p>Despite the dire situation, Jessie, as a journalist, continues to strive to document the</p>
CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIED
<p>Figure 3.1 Jessie is capturing the moment when one of the resistance soldiers is shot.</p>	<p>This scene depicts the media crew with the resistance soldiers on the battlefield. Jessie, as one of the reporters covering the event, is seen alert with her camera, capturing every moment.</p>
<p>Figure 3.2 The moment of a fallen resistance soldier during the shootout, being attended to by a comrade.</p>	<p>One such moment is when a soldier is shot and needs assistance from a comrade. Here, Jessie appears to ignore personal risk to report on the events on the ground, despite the possibility of</p>

Source: Data analysis results

In the third scene, altruism is represented through the act of disregarding personal risk. This is reflected in the actions of media personnel who enter the battlefield alongside resistance soldiers to report events in real time. In this scene, Jessie, one of the journalists involved, is seen swiftly capturing the moment when a soldier is shot and requires first aid. Even as a war journalist, Jessie faces the risk of being shot or losing her life. Yet, this is where altruistic values emerge, as she ignores personal danger for the sake of her duty.



Figure 3.3

Jessie, wearing a press vest, photographs one of the soldiers who was shot in the war zone.

Disregarding personal risk not only highlights bravery but also underscores a journalist's commitment to their professional responsibilities. In the context of war journalism, reporters often find themselves on the front lines of conflict, where their safety is constantly at stake. However, they persist in their mission to deliver the truth to the public. This aligns with Robert Fisk's view that journalists are not merely passive observers but must actively "challenge authority, all authority, especially so when governments and politicians take us to war." Jessie's altruism can be seen as a manifestation of a deep commitment to the journalistic profession, where reporters serve not only as conveyors of news but also as witnesses to history, presenting reality regardless of the dangers they face (Fisk, 2005).

Based on this analysis, the altruistic attitude demonstrated by journalists like Jessie is not merely a heroic act but also reflects the fundamental values every journalist should uphold. This emphasizes the importance of journalistic ethics, where personal safety is often set aside for a greater purpose: delivering truthful information to the public. As Fisk's perspective suggests, this form of altruism underscores the vital role of journalists as truth-keepers who ensure that the realities of conflict are brought to light (Fisk, 2005).

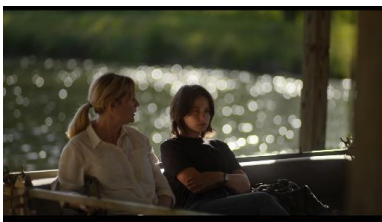
Acts of disregarding personal risk, such as Jessie's coverage amid gunfire, highlight the courage and dedication of journalists in their pursuit of truth. While the scene creates an inspiring depiction of heroism, it also risks fostering the expectation that journalists must be prepared to sacrifice their safety without adequate protection.

This portrayal conveys the impression that bravery is a standard in the profession of war journalism but neglects the need for legal protections and structural support for journalists. Robert Fisk, a celebrated war correspondent, emphasized that while the profession requires immense personal courage, it is equally vital for media organizations to provide adequate support and protection. Jessie's courage in this scene not only reflects her professional responsibility but also underscores the critical need for better safety training, emotional support, and institutional measures to protect journalists operating in conflict zones. The film brings attention to these pressing issues, advocating for a more robust framework to ensure the safety and well-being of those who risk their lives to report the truth (Fisk, 2005).

Caring About Mental Health

Table 4.

I The fourth scene shows Lee’s concern for Jessie, who is deeply affected after the death of one of their comrades, Sam.

FRAMES	VISUAL/TEXT
<p>Figure 4.1 Full shot</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p style="text-align: center;">Figure 4.1</p> <p>Jessie: I hardly knew Sam better than you did. Lee: You knew him! Jessie: I’ve never felt this afraid before.</p>
DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	DENOTATIVE SIGNIFIED
<p>Figure 4.1 Jessie is calming herself in a gazebo by the edge of the lake. Lee approaches and stays with Jessie, who is still shaken.</p>	<p>Figure 4.1 Shows Jessie and Lee in a gazebo by the edge of the lake, near the resistance soldiers' base. Jessie is still shaken after one of their comrades was killed during their journey. Here, Lee is trying to comfort Jessie.</p>
CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIER	CONNOTATIVE SIGNIFIED
<p>Figure 4.1 Jessie is calming herself in a gazebo by the edge of the lake. Lee approaches and stays with Jessie, who is still shaken.</p>	<p>Jessie is still shaken after the death of Sam, one of the media crew who was with them covering the battlefield. In the midst of mourning, she tries to calm herself. Lee, being a more senior journalist, comes to comfort Jessie. He reassures her that what happened to Sam was part of the risks involved, and that Sam understood this well.</p>

Source: Data analysis results

In the fourth scene, altruism is represented through the act of caring for the mental health of fellow media colleagues. This is demonstrated when Lee attempts to comfort Jessie, a junior journalist shaken after the death of Sam, one of their team members. Jessie is deeply distressed by the tragic incident, and Lee plays a pivotal role in reassuring her that the death was not her fault. Lee emphasizes that Sam was aware of the risks involved in entering a war zone. The audience witnesses Lee’s efforts to restore Jessie’s emotional stability after the traumatic event. This concern for a colleague’s mental well-being reflects the altruistic values upheld by journalists.



Figure 4.2

Lee Smith tries to comfort Jessie, who feels guilty about the death of their colleague.

Lee's dedication to supporting her colleague extends beyond professional obligations; it is a manifestation of her moral commitment to fostering the well-being of others, particularly in high-stress environments like war zones. In journalism, where both physical and mental risks are prevalent, having empathetic colleagues who understand and support one another is crucial. Journalists bear not only the responsibility of reporting the truth but also of supporting each other in coping with the emotional challenges of their work. This dedication highlights that altruism in journalism is not limited to direct actions, such as helping disaster victims, but also encompasses moral support among professionals.

This portrayal conveys the impression that bravery is a standard in the profession of war journalism but neglects the significant psychological toll and need for institutional support. Research by Meer and Yousaf (2022) highlights that exposure to traumatic events often leads to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety among journalists, which directly impacts their mental health and professional performance. Their study underscores the critical need for both individual resilience strategies and systemic interventions, such as professional counseling and trauma-informed training, to mitigate these challenges (Meer et al., n.d.).

The scene where Lee consoles Jessie after the loss of their colleague reflects the humanistic side of journalism, where interpersonal support plays a crucial role in coping with psychological stress. However, as Meer and Yousaf emphasize, relying solely on peer support is insufficient. Media institutions must prioritize structured mental health services to support journalists exposed to repeated trauma. Such measures not only aid individuals in recovery but also strengthen team cohesion, enabling journalists to continue their critical work with integrity and commitment to truth.

This depiction in the film underscores the importance of acknowledging the dual responsibility of individuals and institutions in addressing mental health challenges in the profession, ultimately advocating for a more sustainable framework to protect journalists in high-risk environments.

Furthermore, this scene highlights the need for structured mental health support services within media institutions, such as professional counseling and stress management training, to assist journalists in coping with the emotional challenges of covering conflicts. Thus, the film not only reflects the realities of the journalism profession but also advocates for the importance of addressing mental well-being in modern journalistic practice.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the researcher concludes that four attitudes representing altruistic values are displayed by war journalists in the film *Civil War*. These attitudes include helping colleagues, high dedication, ignoring personal risk, and concern for mental health. The attitude of helping colleagues is demonstrated through acts of assistance among journalists in the field, such as Joel helping Lee and Lee helping Jessie during their coverage. High dedication is shown by the strong determination of journalists to cover the war, especially when Lee and his team decide to go to the front lines to interview the President. Ignoring personal risk is illustrated by the media crew's commitment to their duties even amidst gunfire. Finally, concern for mental health is represented by the empathy shown among media colleagues when coping with the loss of one of their own during their time in the war zone.

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