

CHARLES UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Di Mauro Teresa

Thesis title: Does Gender Play a Role in Peace Journalism Practices? An Analysis of the Armenian and Azerbaijani Coverage of the 44 days Karabakh War.

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Dimitrov Michal

Affiliation: Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism, external lecturer

1. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL AND THESIS (mark one box for each row)

		Conforms to approved research proposal	Changes are well explained and appropriate	Changes are explained but are inappropriate	Changes are not explained and are inappropriate	Does not conform to approved research proposal
1.1	Research objective(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2	Methodology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.3	Thesis structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific): The author presented a bold research proposal on a very sensitive topic with the aim to cover a new perspective of research on peace journalism: the role of gender of (peace) journalists who are covering a war conflict, almost a blind spot in empirical research. The initial aim of the study was to apply a mixed method approach: content analysis and semi-structured interviews with selected journalists. However, as the author explains on page 35 of her thesis, it was not possible to gather a representative sample of articles to conduct a reliable content analysis, as the majority of the articles were not signed and it was impossible to assess the gender of the journalist. Di Mauro decided to focus on "reconstruction interviews" (introduced by Reich 2009 and Brüggemann 2013) with selected journalists both from Armenia and Azerbaijan to discuss with them their work, attitudes and perceptions of their role as journalists. Despite struggling in this part as well, as it was due to sensitivity of the topic, cultural context or language barrier hard to find enough journalists (more than initially planned with the mix-method approach) to get a sufficient sample, she was able to find 8 journalists from both countries, using snowball-technique and middlemen: 4 journalists from Armenia (2 women and 2 men) and 4 from Azerbaijan (2 women and 2 men). The author conducted "reconstruction interviews" with them, recreating the biography of a few selected news pieces published by the respondents, and then discussed with them their perception of peace journalism and the role of the gender in the work of journalists. This method opened access to understanding challenges of peace journalism and role of gender of a journalist in the region without changing the original research questions and hypothesis. Thus, the changes to the research proposal regarding methodology and thesis structure can be evaluated as well explained and appropriate.

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
2.1	Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework	A
2.2	Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature	A
2.3	Quality and soundness of the empirical research	A
2.4	Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly	A
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	B

2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	B
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COMMENTARY (description of thesis content and the main problems):

In the theoretical part, Di Mauro presents and discusses theoretical and empirical literature on peace journalism and the role of gender in war journalism. Further, she introduces the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the role of patriotic norms and values of the societies in the both countries and their possible impact on the work of journalists with respect to their gender. Based on the discussion in the theoretical part, Di Mauro presents 4 research questions (p 17-18):

- RQ1: How did Armenian and Azerbaijani female and male journalists cover the 44 days war?
- RQ2: Were there significant differences in the way female and male reporters from both sides reported on it?
- RQ3: What were the journalists' perceptions on peace journalism?
- RQ4: Do they think the gender of the reporter matters when it comes to applying peace journalism practices and if so, why?

These rather descriptive questions are the departing point for collecting data through the "reconstruction interviews" with the selected journalists, focusing on "story ideation" (event-driven, proactive or reactive) and story narration" (what angle and what frame is used) as the two main steps of the news production process (Hoxha and Hanitzsch). In the second part of the interviews, the author concentrates on the reporter's views on peace journalism, their role as journalists and their opinions on the role of the(ir) gender when applying peace journalism practices. She pays attention to the role of environment and context of the society where the journalists were raised, where they live and where they work.

In the analytic part, the author shows ability to provide solid analysis and interpretation of the collected data in the context of norms of the Armenian and Azerbaijani societies. The gender aspect is present not only in the section 4.4 (Peace Journalism and the Role of Reporter's Gender" - as perceived by the interviewed journalists themselves), but it is being partly reflected in the preceding three sections analysing and discussing story ideation, story narration and peace journalism. Thus, the author succeeds in applying the gender lens in all analysed aspects of her analytic part while not resigning on picturing the broader challenges Armenian and Azerbaijani reporters have to deal with while doing their job. In this sense, the analysis is valuable not only with respect to the gender aspect but reveals a variety of obstacles peace journalism practices face in the region and the role of the personal experience of the journalist as well.

The author shows ability to confront her findings with the existing literature, discuss the limitations of her study and formulate questions for a further research on this sensitive topic. Quite interesting is the finding, that there is no shared view among the interviewed journalists on the reporter's gender in applying peace journalism practices: "Despite the fact that the number of interview partners is low and not representative enough to make general conclusions on a quantitative basis, it is worth mentioning that - contrary to what was expected - this section of the study showed that the amount of respondents that believe the reporter's gender matter is equally distributed between men and women. In fact, half of the journalists interviewed said they believe the journalist's gender plays a role, while the other half thinks gender does not make a difference." (p. 67)

The most important finding reflects the role patriarchal norms of both societies play in the reporter's work practices - with respect to his or her gender. However, even though Di Mauro offers questions for a further research, she does not have the ambition to formulate a hypothesis or methodological approach that would - building on her findings and the limitations of her empirical study - bring the research on gender aspect of peace journalism further.

Regarding the content, there are only a few errors that can be perplexing (e. g. "eight out of nine respondents" on p. 67; when the number of interview journalists was 8), but this does not diminish the quality of the thesis in general.

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

Use letters A – B – C – D – E – F (A=best, F= failed)

		Grade
3.1	Quality of the structure	A
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	A
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	A

3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	B
3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	A
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	B
3.6	Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices	B

(*) in case the text contains quotations without references, the grade is F; in case the text contains plagiarised parts, do not recommend the thesis for defence and suggest disciplinary action against the author instead.

COMMENTARY (description of thesis form and the main problems):

The thesis has a logic structure and argumentation. The author uses appropriate academic terminology. Citations are appropriate as well, even though indicating the particular page of the quoted/cited literature in the theoretical part would be welcomed. However, the thesis conforms to quotation standards. The author uses an appropriate academic writing style and the quality of her language is on a very high level despite a few spelling errors. The quality of the textual lay-outing could be better, but it is not much disturbing for the reader. The transcription of interviews is attached as an appendix. However, the selected original texts of the authors (serving as the basis for the reconstruction interviews) are not attached and not in all cases sufficiently introduced in the analytic part - this would help the reader to a better orientation in the analysis.

4. OVERAL EVALUATION (provide a summarizing list of the thesis's strengths and weaknesses):

The aim of the study was to "be a contribution to a less common way of researching peace and war journalism." (p. 38), as the majority of researchers rely on the analysis of news content and it is rare that they study how the news were created. In this sense, despite not being able to conduct a content analysis and present a mixed-method study in line with the original research proposal, Di Mauro, succeeded in applying the method of "reconstruction interview" with 8 journalists from Azerbaijan and Armenia when dealing with a war conflict in Nagorno Karabakh (2020) and can be seen as a successful contribution to the research on the role of gender in war/peace journalism. The key findings of her thesis on this very sensitive and important topic deserve to be accessible for a broader (not only academic) public - after necessary adjustments. To enhance the effect and clarity of her analysis, the more detailed introduction of the texts (or even attaching them as appendices) that served as the basis for the reconstruction interviews would be welcomed.

5. QUESTIONS OR TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING THE THESIS DEFENSE:

5.1	The author comes to this conclusion: "Despite the fact that the number of interview partners is low and not representative enough to make general conclusions on a quantitative basis, it is worth mentioning that - contrary to what was expected- this section of the study showed that the amount of respondents that believe the reporter's gender matter is equally distributed between men and women. (p. 67) Does gender matter in peace journalism then - and if yes - how?"
5.2	Given the variety of limitations of her study, discussed in Chapter 5, where does the author see the contribution of her thesis? How can further research benefit from her analysis considering the limitations of her study?
5.3	How was the evolution of the thesis affected and limited by the language barrier? How could the results of the thesis change, if the author spoke Armenian and Azarbaijani - and conducted these interviews with local journalists in their respective mother language?
5.4	Di Mauro struggled with finding a solid sample for a qualitative/quantitative content analysis, as most of the articles were not signed and it was impossible to determine the gender of the author. What would she suggest to do in order to get a representative sample in an active conflict such as the Russian-Ukrainian war?

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis' antiplagiarism system score.

If the score is above 5%, please evaluate and indicate problems:

6.1	-
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7. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

A excellent

B very good (above average but with some weaknesses)

- C good (average with some important weaknesses)
- D satisfactory (below average with significant weaknesses)
- E marginal pass (meeting minimal requirements)
- F not recommended for defence

If the mark is an “F”, please provide your reasons for not recommending the thesis for defence:

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Date: 1. 9. 2022

Signature:

A finalised review should be printed, signed and submitted in two copies to the secretary of the Department of Media Studies. The electronic version of the review should be converted into a PDF and uploaded to SIS, or sent to the Department of Media Studies secretary who will upload it to SIS on the reviewer’s behalf.

Do not upload PDFs with a scanned signature, the review uploaded to SIS must be without signature.