

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
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**Master thesis**

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**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism  
Department of Journalism

**Behind the Lens of a Conflict Zone: Male and Female  
Photojournalists in the Russia and Ukraine War**

**Za objektivem konfliktní zóny: fotožurnalisté a  
fotožurnalistky v rusko-ukrajinské válce**

*Master Thesis*

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**Study programme:** Journalism

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**Academic Year:** 2023-2024

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1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
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**Prague 29/04/2024**

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## References

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# Abstract

Since the beginning of the Russo-Ukraine War in 2022, news websites and social media platforms have been booming with powerful and distressing photographs of the war. Without a doubt, images have been playing a crucial role in this war encapsulating the intensity of destruction and tragedies caused by the Russian occupation. Despite having glorious news and research coverage of war zones, little has been talked about war journalism or the gendered aspect of it. There are gendered inequalities, damaging gendered angles aligning to war news, gendered expectations, violence, harassment (both physical and verbal), and sex stereotyping, pertinent in photojournalism that are reflected in the way visual representations of conflict are produced. Hence, the research is about the war photojournalists and the gendered aspects of their practices and journalistic perceptions and whether gender is a factor in any of them. Employing Social Role Theory as a theoretical framework, this study thematically analyses and compares the practices of 14 male and female photojournalists in conflict zones, focusing on the Russo-Ukraine war with the aid of qualitative semi-structured interviews via snowball sampling. Uniquely exploring sensitive topics such as motivation, practices influencing the encoding of images, communication with sources, the glass ceiling effect, autonomy, and working conditions, this study attempts to explore the binary (male and female) gendered differences among photojournalists who are covering a one-of-a-kind war like the Russo-Ukraine. Deconstructing harrowing experiences of photojournalists like never before, this research in a systematic, and gender-sensitive way scrutinizes a war that led to a grave humanitarian crisis modifying the geo-political landscape of Europe and having additional ramifications for the rest of the world. Findings suggest that gender is *one of the many* factors that regulate the encoding process of conflict photos in the Russo-Ukraine war.

# Abstrakt

Od začátku rusko-ukrajinské války v roce 2022 se objevují fotografie, které zaznamenávají tragédii způsobenou ruskou okupací. Výzkumy se v tomto směru zabývají hlavně zpravodajskými obsahy z válečných oblastí, ale jen malá pozornost je věnována válečnému fotožurnalismu a jeho genderovým aspektům. V odvětví totiž existuje řada genderových nerovností, očekávání, násilí, obtěžování (fyzické i slovní) nebo stereotypů, které se promítají i do způsobu, jakým vznikají vizuální reprezentace konfliktu. Proto se tato práce zabývá konkrétními podmínkami, se kterými se fotožurnalisty a fotožurnalistky během své práce ve válečných zónách setkávají a které jsou genderově zatížené. Zároveň zjišťuje, jestli a jak se může gender propisovat i do toho, jak fotografie z válečného konfliktu vznikají. S využitím teorie sociálních rolí tato práce porovnává postupy 14 fotoreportérů a fotoreportérek v konfliktních zónách se zaměřením na rusko-ukrajinskou válku, a to za pomoci kvalitativních polostrukturovaných rozhovorů. Tato práce se zabývá tématy jako je motivace, faktory ovlivňující vznik snímků, komunikace se zdroji, efekt skleněného stropu, autonomie a pracovní podmínky. Zkoumá hlavně binární (mužské a ženské) genderové rozdíly mezi fotoreportéry. Zjištění naznačují, že gender je jedním z mnoha faktorů, které regulují proces vzniku fotografií konfliktu v rusko-ukrajinské válce.

**Keywords** *Gender; photojournalism; social role theory; Russia-Ukraine war; thematic analysis*

**Klíčová slova** Gender, fotožurnalismus, teorie sociálních rolí, válka na Ukrajině, tematická analýza

## **Title**

Behind the Lens of a Conflict Zone: Male and Female Photojournalists in the Russia and Ukraine War

## **Název práce**

Za objektivem konfliktní zóny: fotožurnalisté a fotožurnalistky v rusko-ukrajinské válce



## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has aided me in making this Master's Thesis possible. Undoubtedly, this research **Behind the Lens of a Conflict Zone: Male and Female Photojournalists in the Russia and Ukraine War** is a topic that is very close to my heart that I have been researching for the last two years and hope to continue. It was Howard Zinn who said, "*There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people.*" From the bottom of my heart, this research is dedicated to all the innocent lives that have been lost in the Russo-Ukraine War.

No amount of right words can convey my respect and appreciation to Sonali Chakraborty (mother) and Shrestha Chakraborty (sister) who supported me mentally, financially, and spiritually throughout this enriching process and because of whom I got to participate in this program.

To my supervisor, Barbora Součková, thank you for always encouraging me to believe in myself and the topic. You have been answering all my emails, resolving all my doubts, and providing me with your precious time and knowledge keeping the best interest of this research in mind. With you as my supervisor, I can proudly say that this thesis is a product of both of our hard work, patience, and discipline.

Additionally, I would like to thank my professors at Aarhus University Teke Ngomba and Cecilia Arregui Olivera for my foundation in writing a Diploma Thesis. Their teaching has been indispensable when it comes to understanding Journalism and all its realms.

My friends have always supported me in my every triumph and failure rendering me with unconditional support with kind words and compassion.

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**Main research question** (max. 250 characters):

According to male and female photojournalists, how does gender affect their work in the Russia-Ukraine war?

How do practices related to the production of photos vary for male and female photojournalists in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?

**Current state of research on the topic (max. 1800 characters):**

Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn (2011) argue, women have historically been expected to perform some very specific roles in the war zone. Similarly, the war zone has traditionally been conceptualized as a space in which the masculine reigns supreme (Mohanty, Riley, and Pratt 2008; Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2011). Conversely, Korte (2009) argues that there is a constant increase in the number of female war reporters. Even though there has been a relentless emphasis on “war being war for everyone” in almost all plethora of war research, the practical scenario on the battlefield says otherwise. In previous studies, women have been shown to focus more on the impact and aftermath of wars, to “humanize” and explore the consequences of events (Christmas 1997, 3–5) and give voice to women and non-elites (Beam and Di Cicco 2010, 397). But according to Alex Westcott Campbell and Charles Critcher (2018), men can no longer be exclusively equated with “hard” angles and women with “soft” angles in conflict reportage, and such damaging generalizations must be avoided. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ, [www.cpj.org](http://www.cpj.org)), a nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom around the globe, 1,120 journalists have been killed since 1992, of whom 38% were covering the war. Apart from the barbarous and risky nature of war encompassing all journalists, there are a few scholarly studies that are devoted solely to the obstacles that women war correspondents face (Prentoulis, Tumber, and Webster 2005; Melki and Mallat 2013, 2014). It is significant to note that in war photography, similar results have been concluded as compared to the newsrooms (as mentioned above) when it came to gendered exploitation and sexual harassment.



**Expected theoretical framework** (max. 1800 characters):

I would strive to situate Gender Role Theory in my research. Eagly (2012) mentions that the origins of men's and women's social roles lie primarily in humans' evolved physical sex differences, specifically men's size and strength and women's reproductive activities of gestating and nursing children, which interact with a society's circumstances and culture to make certain activities more efficiently performed by one sex or the other. Steiner (2017) argues that women continue to be concentrated in low-status media outlets and beats: they dominate community, small-town, and regional news organizations, and they produce "soft news," human-interest stories and features. This is where gender role theory comes into play which helps in grounding this research. Sex is biological whereas gender is socially or culturally defined. Gender Role Theory suggests that individuals socially identified as males and females are inclined to perform socially acceptable or predefined roles. D'heer et al. (2019) argue that women are underrepresented (...) and represented in a stereotypical way reflecting traditional domains and roles in society. Not only in theory but practical research on the gendered labor market by Hadland and Barnett (2018) suggests that the idea that women may not be suited to certain occupations is evident in the wider literature on labor. Similarly, the conflation of women, femininity, and gender issues also relies on a problematic notion of men and women as polar opposites, an unhelpful dichotomy that ignores gender minorities and, with reference to journalism, overlooks the impact of professional socialization (Steiner, 2019). War remains a highly gendered ideology where men's political and social dominance has been framed as given (Ashe, 2007): the notions of "war," "citizenship," "nationalism," and "manhood" are deeply enmeshed in Western culture and invested with traditions of individuality, selfhood, and autonomy. Along similar lines, feminist scholars have argued that gender norms and practices reproduced in representations of war are grounded in underlying structures of representations of sexual difference (Hutchings, 2008; Kronsell and Svedberg, 2011). For example, street uprisings in the Arab world in 2011 were male-centered and lacked an independent, political entity of women with a particular agenda aimed at transforming patriarchal gender relations. Following these gendered tropes in the visual word of conflict photography, this research will attempt to find whether this Gender Role Theory is relevant in the current scenarios of conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war.



**Expected methodology, and methods for data gathering and analysis (max. 1800 characters):**

For many feminists, qualitative methodologies are better suited to give voice to personal, everyday perspectives of individuals and to understand how they make sense of their own lived experiences (Fisher and Embree 2000; Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006). My method of data collection will be in-depth interviews because it gives more opportunity to ask the interviewees to expand on their elements of experience and clarify specific meanings of words. The research about gendered influence in the Russia-Ukraine war is driven by in-depth interviews of male (7) and female photojournalists (7) covering the Russia-Ukraine war. This study will employ a snowball sampling method.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is appropriate for in-depth interviews as it will give me the freedom to identify similarities and dissimilarities among the interviews and sketch out relevant themes which will give a concise and clear understanding of the data to the readers.

**Expected research design (data to be analyzed, for example, the titles of analyzed newspapers and selected time period):**

Via in-depth interviews I would be interviewing male (7) and female (7) photojournalists who would describe their experiences and challenges they face on the field of war. These photojournalists would be experienced professionals who have or are covering the Russia-Ukraine war. I am attempting to have sample diversity and hence want to interview photojournalists from different backgrounds, countries, cultures, and ethnicities-preferably experienced photojournalists who can explain their craft confidently and let me peek into the thought that went into capturing their pictures while they chose their subjects. These interviewees will serve as the ideal sample for the study because they capture the dynamics of covering a war of this scale. I am particularly interested in viewing the experiences of these journalists through the gender lens- whether its their physical challenges, mental exhaustion, wage gap, communication with sources among others.



**Expected thesis structure (chapters and subchapters with brief description of their content):**

**Abstract:** This study with the help of thematic analysis will analyse and compare the experiences of male and female photojournalists in conflict zones, focussing on the Russia-Ukraine war.

**Introduction:** Gender stereotypes, discrimination, and role expectations have always been a part of society and journalism alike. Consequently, this study, using thematic analysis and gender role theory will highlight the ways gender plays a role while covering wars that stand out like Russia-Ukraine.

**Theory and Literature Review:** This section will focus on important literature regarding the significant elements of this research such as the conflict photos, gendered perception, motherhood, glass-ceiling effect, experiences in the war field, gender role theory, and so on. Additionally, much importance would be given to the gender role theory and the way one can situate it in war journalism.

*- Theoretical Framework*

I) Situating Gender Role Theory in Journalism

*- Literature Review*

I) Gender Gap in Journalism

II) Women in War Photojournalism

**Method and Data Collection:** Firstly, a sufficient description and practicality of thematic analysis in research will be provided. If found, similar examples can be portrayed in this section for the readers to get a good grasp of this method. The interviews will be conducted via Zoom and telephone calls over the span of a month. During the interviews, I will focus on a few themes such as choice of subjects, experiences, and gendered differences.

*-Thematic Analysis*

*-Sample and Data Collection*

**Analysis and Discussion:** For this section, quotes from the interview might be highlighted to focus on gendered tropes of practices and experiences (if there are any) of photojournalists covering the war. Specific attention will be given to practices that align with gender that are repeated across interviews.

*-Analysis*



**Basic literature list (at least 5 most important works related to the topic and the method(s) of analysis; all works should be briefly characterized on 2-5 lines):**

**-Aoláin, F. N., Haynes, D. F., & Cahn, N. (2011). *On the frontlines: Gender, war, and the post-conflict process*. Oxford University Press on Demand.**

Authors argue, women have historically been expected to perform some very specific roles in the war zone. Similarly, the war zone has traditionally been conceptualized as a space in which the masculine reigns supreme.

**-Beam, R. A., & Di Cicco, D. T. (2010). When women run the newsroom: Management change, gender, and the news. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 87(2), 393-411.**

This research looked at the content of ten small daily newspapers before and after a woman took over as managing editor. Following that, the outcomes were contrasted with content modifications at ten "matched" periodicals where a man served as managing editor during both periods. For both categories of publications, the mix of subjects covered by the newspapers did not significantly alter over time. But when women were promoted to managing editors at newspapers, the kinds of pieces they wrote altered. Standard hard news decreased while feature approaches to the news gained prominence.

**-Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.**

In psychology, thematic analysis is a commonly employed qualitative analytical technique that is ill-defined and hardly recognised. In this study, the authors contend that it provides a theoretically flexible and easily understandable method for assessing qualitative data. They define thematic analysis, situating it against other qualitative analytic techniques that look for themes or patterns as well as against various ontological and epistemological stances.

**-D'Heer, J., Vergotte, J., De Vuyst, S., & Van Leuven, S. (2019). The bits and bytes of gender bias in online news: a quantitative content analysis of the representation of women in Vice. com. *Feminist Media Studies*, 20(2), 256-272.**

Published in *Feminist Media Studies*, the article focuses on examining the representation of women in Vice.com through a quantitative content analysis. It discusses the findings and implications of the analysis.

**-Hadland, A., & Barnett, C. (2018). The gender crisis in professional photojournalism: Demise of the female gaze?. *Journalism Studies*, 19(13), 2011-2020**

The document talks about the gender crisis in professional photojournalism and the



challenges faced by women photographers. It highlights that despite having higher education and more training in photography, women photojournalists face more demanding circumstances than their male counterparts. The underrepresentation of women in photography is an ongoing issue that is likely to continue in the future, resulting in a decline in the female gaze. The study aims to identify trends in the employment of women in the photojournalism industry and the consequences of this distortion.

**-Korte, B. (2015). *Represented Reporters: Images of War Correspondents in Memoirs and Fiction.***

Reporters covering war are well-known figures in the media. Not long after their profession was established in the middle of the 19th century, they became embedded in the collective imagination. This study examines how war journalists are portrayed in memoirs, books, and films from the Victorian era to the present, with an emphasis on Britain. These portrayals respond to and contribute to the perpetuation of preconceived beliefs about war reporters. This book's cultural approach makes it a useful addition to media and communication studies, history, and ethnology courses that examine war correspondents.

**-Melki, J., & Mallat, S. (2013). Lebanon: women's struggle for gender equality and harassment-free newsrooms. *The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Journalism*, 432-448.**

In the past, Lebanon has been among the most liberal and progressive nations in the Arab world, with a culture and legal system that are generally supportive of gender equality and a relatively free media environment. Although there is a long history of press freedom in the nation, almost all media outlets have connections to political parties (Al-Najjar 2011). Despite the continued existence of some discriminatory legislation and practises, women are granted equal constitutional rights and are legally permitted to pursue almost all occupations and professions. Furthermore, Lebanese women in the majority of occupations encounter a nationwide trend of underrepresentation in leadership roles, particularly in the media.

**-Westcott Campbell, A., & Critcher, C. (2018). The bigger picture: Gender and the visual rhetoric of conflict. *Journalism Studies*, 19(11), 1541-1561.**

The study assesses if there are noticeable gendered variations in the semiotics of conflict images and whether or not women photojournalists are becoming more and more well-known. Following the presentation of the image sample to focus groups in three different nations, gendered decoding practises were assessed. Seven female WPPA winners were then interviewed to explore gendered experiences related to encoding practises and gendered aspects of photography individuals in conflict zones. The move towards "aftermath" pictures may be explained by the steady rise



I) Is there something “gendered” about it

II) Beyond the Gender factor

*-Discussion*

**Conclusion:** My conclusion would focus on if at all there are gendered differences in the interpretation of war photos. If there is, what are those, and whether these results can be generalized across different war situations? Next, other significant results relating to experience among photojournalists will also be added in this section. Important questions that will be raised during the interviews will be highlighted to facilitate discussions in the journalistic forums. To keep the research transparent, both its findings and limitations will be discussed with traces of the scope of future research.

in the number of female photographers, according to the findings, although an intricate assimilation process has resulted in the confluence of traditionally "feminine" and "masculine" stereotypes.

**Related theses and dissertations (list of B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. theses defended at Charles University or other academic institutions in the last five years):**

-PATZNER, Dominik. *Válečný fotožurnalismus a násilí ve světových fotožurnalistických soutěžích*. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Lábová, Sandra. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky, 2022.

**Date / Signature of the student:**

Shirsha Chakraborty (11/12/2023)

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**I confirm that I have consulted this research proposal with the author and that the proposal is related to my field of expertise at the Faculty of Social Sciences.**

**I agree to be the Thesis supervisor.**

.....  
Surname and name of the supervisor Date / Signature of the supervisor

**Further recommendations related to the topic, structure and methods for analysis:**

**Further recommendations of literature related to the topic:**

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## Introduction

*“It is an oversimplification, of course, to equate the presence of men with war and that of women with peace”* (Barker-Plummer, Boaz 2005, p. 371)

Decades of research and time have gone into meta-journalistic studies, analysis of mass media coverage, reporting practices, understanding wars, and predicting conflicts by various scholars, cultural critics, and media workers. But rarely questions of gender and war photography have been answered (Fleming, Chambers, and Steiner 2004; Palmer, Melki 2016; Campbell, Critcher 2018; Zarzycka 2016; Allan 2019). Gender stereotypes, discrimination, and role expectations have always been a part of society and journalism alike, in some fields more evident than others. For centuries, the battlefield has been portrayed as a breeding ground for men, where they fight and win innumerable battles (Sontag 2003; Mohanty, Riley, and Pratt 2008; Rosenblum 2010; Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2011). This results in perpetuating the connection of glory, weapons, victory, power, death, and blood to men or the “male” gender. Similarly, Barker-Plummer and Boaz (2005) talk about the ‘masculinist’ war coverage having genuine relations of power and authority which excludes the female voice. A similar imagery has been reinstated with militarism time and again ie; the female is the “weaker sex” or “consumer” and the male is the “fighter” and “martyr”. For example, Hallmark veteran cards, Kodak girl advertisements, and Abu Ghraib. The list goes on.

However, the faces and bodies of women on the battlefield have broken some of the familiar images of war such as grieving over loved ones, tending to the wounded, and confronting soldiers. As Robyn Wiegman (1994) argues during the first Persian Gulf War in 1990, women stepped onto the battlefield as combatants for the first time in history *“threatening to undo war as the privileged location of masculinity’s performance,”* (p. 176). When it comes to photography, women’s commitment to war itself is not new.

Research shows the contributions of women have changed the course of war photography quite literally - whether it was Gerda Taro, the famous German photographer who died while covering the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, American Lee Miller's agonizing representation of World War II, or French photojournalist Catherine LeRoy's coverage of the Vietnam War during the late 1950s that made her class apart from her male contemporaries (Solomon, 2019). These women photojournalists with their bravery, intimacy, and empathy stood strong with soldiers as they fought battles that would go on for years. Commendable, is their proximity to the action, coverage of raw tragedies, and inclusivity of everyone's struggles involved in war. All have worked alongside big-shot male photojournalists such as the famous Robert Capa, Surrealist photographer Man Ray, and David E.Scherman who was then the only photographer to become an editor at a magazine. While some women photojournalists had rumors about being favored over others not for their talent but because of their bodies, they kept fighting against the resistance from the people around them to get accreditation to document wars for the world to see.

As these women set an example for the rest, more women slowly could gain access to battlefields and document conflicts without feeling obligated to just heal wounds. It was Sultze (2003), who said: *"Put cameras in the hands of women, and you get a power shift and a different, feminine vision,"* (p. 274). This shift from being in front of the lens to behind the camera made women feel powerful and included to showcase a different perspective of the war that did not just include guns, violence, and tanks but so much more. Although women photographers brought an imaginative and new reporting style for war coverage, they kept being forced to cover similar types of stories because of sex stereotyping. Fleming, Chambers, and Steiner (2004) point out that the Vietnam War in 1975 witnessed a surge in reluctance among women to be confined to covering human-interest stories. As and when time passed, women instead of being held back because of their gender, started to use their it as an advantage in getting assignments or accessing areas where men did not have easy access (Rouvalis and Schackner 2000) such as Afghanistan during the Taliban regime in 1994, and Somalia during the time of unrest in 2009. Despite the increase in female conflict reporters, many women worked twice as

hard to even make it to the front lines as compared to their male counterparts because for some reason or the other women photographers were and still are being limited in their scope and coverage.

While there is early research about women war reporters getting minimal access to the battlefield (Wagner 1989; Fleming, Chambers, and Steiner 2004), the other side of the coin talks about how during recent times, talented women journalists like Lucy Morgan Edwards, and Shumaila Jaffery are chosen more by their editors because of their privileged access and unique storytelling techniques (Storm and Williams, 2012). Women photographers have pointed out that their gender could work in their favor. *“A foreign female journalist automatically has much better access to local women and their stories than a man. In many countries, a male reporter cannot always approach a local woman to speak to her, film, or photograph her. But as a foreign woman, I have always found it much easier to talk freely to both men and women,”* (Storm and Williams, 2012, p.37). Thomas (2007) points out that women can access places where men are not allowed, and have subjects perceive them as *“non-threatening and someone not to be taken seriously”* (p. 167). This shows that women due to their appearances and stereotypical reputation can be considered less harmful leading them to have access to better sources. This might also be the reason for women possessing a different or “humanistic” approach to stories. Geertsema (2009) points out that *“acknowledging and recognizing this gendered nature of photographic tropes might increase understanding of gender differences in news production”* (p. 151). More importantly, having a deeper sense of the gendered nature of practices and perceptions can aid one in comprehending the role these play in concepts like power, agency, and actions in photojournalism. Hence, this research attempts to find out the differences in practices of male and female photojournalists that contribute to the nuances of news coverage specifically in a war setting like Russo-Ukraine (2022-present)

War coverage to this day is viewed as a male-dominated profession. The pending success of young women behind the lens has recently risen to the surface after the tragic, horrifying events in Egypt in 2011 involving South African television journalist Lara

Logan who was sexually assaulted and beaten, and again with the March 2011 abduction of veteran conflict photojournalist Lynsey Addario in Libya (Morris, 2012). Studies show that there is a large disparity between male and female photojournalists whether it is their presence in the newsroom or the conflict zones. *“Women journalists struggle to succeed in one of the toughest, roughest, and most stubbornly male-dominated areas of reporting”* (Fleming, Chambers, and Steiner 2004, p. 199). This affects the motivation and reproduction of conflict photos. Although there is hardly any research done to evaluate the role of gender in war photography (Campbell, Critcher 2018), the research on encoding of images done by Allan in 2010; and shape-shifting in conflict zones by Melki, and Palmer in 2018 has inspired this research in several ways. Consequently, using Thematic Analysis and Social Role Theory, this research highlights the ways gender plays a role while covering wars that stand out like Russo-Ukraine(2022-present).

With the help of 14 qualitative semi-structured interviews, the photojournalists highlight unique practices and experiences of covering the Russo-Ukraine war (2022-present). The author attempts to view and present these experiences through a gendered lens to see whether the experiences of an ongoing conflict in 2024 can be explained or even aligned with Social Role Theory by Eagly and Wood (1999). It should be noted that this theory points to a traditional and binary form of gender that includes male and female gender. Unfortunately, the research does not cover gendered nuances that are beyond this binary way of looking at gender.

Hoping that this research will shed some light on the Russo-Ukrainian war experience of photojournalists and the determination of the role of gender in it, the research questions are stated accordingly:

***RQI: According to male and female photojournalists, how does gender affect their work in the Russia-Ukraine war?***

***RQII: How do practices related to the production of photos vary for male and female photojournalists in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?***



## Russo-Ukraine War

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which started in February 2014, is known as the Russo-Ukrainian War. In the wake of Ukraine's Revolution of Dignity, Russia helped pro-Russian rebels battling the Ukrainian military in the Donbas war and captured and annexed Crimea from Ukraine. In addition, there were cyberattacks, increased political tensions, and naval mishaps during the first eight years of the battle. Russia initiated a full-scale invasion of Ukraine's air, land, and sea in February 2022 and started to annex additional territory. This resulted in Russian war crimes by attacks through missiles, drones, shelling, and tanks in various regions of Ukraine such as Avdiivka, Donbas, Bakhmut, Mariupol, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv among others destroying private and public properties, killing civilians, and animals, forcing displacement of millions of people from their homes leading to a humanitarian crisis.

According to the Center for Disaster Philanthropy *"In 2024, 14.6 million people need humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, about 40% of the population. Some 6.3 million people have fled the country and remain refugees, mostly across Europe,"* (Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis, 2024).

According to the UN Refugee Agency, before the latest increase in violence, *"nearly 1.5 million people were internally displaced within Ukraine. Half were over the age of 60 – making it one of the 'oldest' crises in the world,"* (UNHCR, 2024).

The Russo-Ukraine war is a unique war that has serious implications throughout the world. Shifting alliances in the European Union, risks of returning nuclear weapons, grave energy, and food crises (Coles et al., 2023) are some of them. Giving rise to AI tools (Bergengruen, 2024), facial recognition devices and drones with high-quality cameras that can kill using state-of-the-art technology have significantly transformed the dynamics of warfare. With no reporting on the Russian side of the conflict, the urgency of documenting this ongoing conflict falls on the side of Ukraine. Since the full-scale invasion is two years old, this conflict has a multifarious scope of research concerning

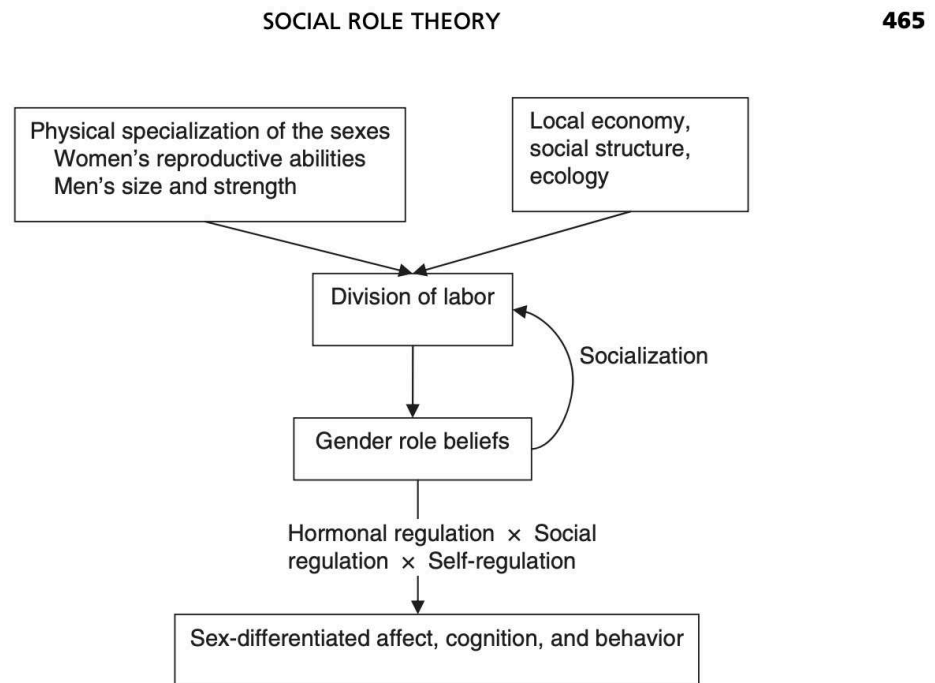
war photojournalism (Fernández-Castrillo, Ramos 2023; Stępniaak 2023; Young, Omosun 2023; Jonisová 2022).

However, the aforementioned array of research focuses mainly on framing analysis, social media coverage, information war, content analysis, and conflict reporting with little to no attention paid to studying the Russo-Ukraine war in the light of gendered war photography. Hence, this research understanding of this grave necessity has focused on this ongoing conflict that will serve as the focus of research for generations to come.

# 1. Theoretical Framework

The chapter consists of two parts **Situating Social Role Theory in Journalism** with a subchapter **Gender Representation and News** and the second chapter **Women in War Photojournalism**. In the first chapter, as the name implies the research investigates the theoretical framework of Social Role Theory Theory by Eagly and Wood (1999) in the context of journalism extending its arguments to photojournalism. The subchapter discusses the way these roles pave the way for Gendered representation in news coverage highlighting on the concepts of hard news and soft news. The second chapter deals with identifying the gender roles in the history and practices of war photojournalism.

Social Role Theory suggests that individuals socially identified as males and females are inclined to perform socially acceptable or predefined roles (Eagly and Wood, 1999).



**Figure 49.1 Gender roles guide sex differences and similarities through biosocial processes**

(Eagly and Wood, 2000, p. 465)

Before the explanation of Social Role Theory is continued, it is important to know the difference between sex and gender. Gender is thought of strictly as social and sex as biological (Johnson; Repta, 2012). When one thinks about sex, it focuses more on the anatomy and the way bodies are built whereas gender deals with more about society's interpretation of these two sexes and focuses on expectations and roles that emerge from the anatomy to some extent. "Sex" can be referred to as the biological characteristic of being male and female. "Gender" typically refers only to behavioral, social, and psychological characteristics of men and women" (Pryzgoda and Chrisler 2000, p.554). In simple terms, it can be said that due to physical differences in men and women, some activities can be better performed efficiently by one sex or the other depending on several environmental and social factors. These activities give rise to the concept of division of labor in society. For example, traditional instances would be men are more engaged in hunting, sports, and warfare whereas women are associated more with lactation, and childcare due to their reproductive capabilities. It should be noted that the concerned social theory deals with a binary form of gender (male and female) and the research does not speak beyond the boundaries of this binary idea.

## **1.1 Situating Social Role Theory in Journalism**

Eagly (2012) mentions that the origins of men's and women's social duties are essentially located in humans' evolved physical sex differences, such as "*men's physical size and strength*" and "*women's reproductive activities of gestating and nursing children*". These result in communicating with society's situations and culture to make some activities better performed by one sex or the other. From the very beginning, journalism has been established and talked about as a gendered profession and cannot be comprehended without a theory of gender power (Lont, 1995; McRobbie, 1996).

This idea of gendered power can be situated in journalism whether it is the selection of topics, types of news (hard or soft), assignment of duties and responsibilities, and even

story angles are decided based on the role theories because of the societal expectations of the powerful (male) and the weak (female).

The following is a table of perceived male and female dimensions of journalism by Djerf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson in 2004. (p.8)

<b><u>MALE</u></b>	<b><u>FEMALE</u></b>
Hard news	Soft news
Public sphere/macro level	Private sphere/micro-level
Male sources and perspectives	Female sources and perspectives
Distance/neutrality	Intimacy/empathy
Detachment	Audience orientation
Newshounds	Pedagogues
Professional ethics	Personal ethics
Competition/individualism	Cooperation/collective
Hierarchical and formal organization	Horizontal and informal organization

(Djerf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson, 2004, p.8)

This table gives a clear distinction of the way responsibilities are distributed in journalism based on gender roles. The male gender should focus on hard news with some sort of detachment while the female gender should be assigned soft news concerning emotions such as empathy or intimacy. To support this, studies on the identities of journalists show that journalists must negotiate between at least three identities when

making decisions – their gender, and their organizational and professional identities (de Bruin, 2004).

Similar studies on gender reveal that gender is important in the sense that it explains that the purpose for constructing gender is for power allocation, duties, responsibilities, statuses, and roles (Ogbuagu 2005). This proves that gender to a certain extent has implications in journalism whether one talks about top positions, choosing topics, and storylines. Hence, it can be said that the role theories and expectations that are pertinent in societies can be transferred to the journalism industry as well. Keeping this in mind, Steiner (2017) argues that women continue to be stuck in low-status media outlets and beats: they dominate community, small-town, and regional news organizations, and they produce “soft news,” human-interest stories and features.

Janebova (2008) asserts role theory is an incentive for exploring gender and role stereotypes which are very often strengthened and reproduced precisely in terms of roles of women, males, breadwinners, mothers, fathers, etc. Similar notions have been pointed out - men and women each have a different set of expectations placed on them by their culture (James and Drakich, 1993). This stereotypical environment plays a role in men and women being concentrated in specific roles, failing to cross boundaries and render refining news coverage and representation in journalism.

### **1.1.1 Gender Representation and News**

D’heer et al. (2019) argue that women are underrepresented, and represented in the news in a stereotypical way reflecting traditional domains and roles in society. For example, in hard news like politics and sports, there is less visibility of women than men (Craft and Wanta 2004). Similar emotions have been echoed by Rodgers and Thorson (2000), who after researching gender portrayal in the media, concluded that “*in a study of news photographs of the Los Angeles Times women are more likely to be seen in stereotyped sections, topics, and occupations*” (p.9). These practices hinder female journalists from

contributing qualitatively to their news outlets and result in gender subordination and a lack of female visibility across several realms of journalism.

For example, *“females (4%) were majorly underrepresented in the Sports section, as compared to males (23%), and were majorly overrepresented in the Lifestyle section (17%), as compared to males (6.5%). Women serve more as eyewitnesses in the news and not as an expert (mostly men) who provides knowledge to news audiences”*(Rodgers and Thorson, 2000, p. 9). This uneven distribution of hard news and soft news is one of the biggest concerns in journalism depicting systemic gendered discrimination and if not challenged can lead to a harmful and discouraging work environment for journalists.

Damean (2006) states that women's reputation in the journalism sector mirrors social prejudices regarding women's most suitable roles in society. These representations give rise to a distorted worldview of men and women in society. MacBride & Sean (1981) posit that in every society, public attitudes regarding the role of women in society are a major factor in deciding the status of women. Since the media has indispensable power to influence society, women are often reduced to soft positions such as receptionists or housewives, and men are classified as examples of lawyers and construction workers working with tools. To support this, Obioha & Chima (2009) add that the general belief is that the role of women starts and ends with running the home and nothing more.

Not only in theory but practical research on the gendered labor market by Hadland and Barnett (2018) suggests that the idea that women may not be suited to certain occupations is evident in the wider literature on labor. Similarly, the conflation of women, femininity, and gender issues also relies on a problematic notion of men and women as opposites, an unhelpful dichotomy that ignores gender minorities and, with reference to journalism, overlooks the impact of professional socialization (Steiner, 2019). This has counterproductive implications not only in journalism but on various levels of society and other professions thereafter.

In a study of gender stereotypes in magazine advertisements, Goffman (1976) classifies relationships between men and women based on anticipated roles and the underlying expansion of gender stereotypes. These gender stereotypes include women portrayed in subordinate positions whereas men are in dominant positions. These visuals that are recurrent in the form of advertisements in magazines, newspapers, social media platforms, and billboards not only perpetuate the social expectations of men and women but also interact and normalize behaviors portrayed in these images. Some images can include, a woman serving drinks to a man, over-sexualized women portraying ageless beauty, men trying to be masculine by smoking cigarettes, and women doing household chores. Lorber and Farrell (1991) aver that these stereotypes tend to complement historically constructed ideas of gender roles and are perpetuated repeatedly in the media. These repetitive images further the stereotypes of men labeled as the providers and women as just a thing of beauty dependent on the men.



## 1.2 Women in War Photojournalism

The definition of “photography” has undergone major transformations across gendered relations with media on both sides of the camera (Hayes, 2005; Callister, 2008; Allbeson & Oldfield, 2016; Parry, 2018). According to Zarzycka and Kleppe (2016), photographic tropes can be referred to as the recurrent significant visuals or themes in photographs. Gendered tropes in photography on the other hand talk about looking at these tropes through the gendered lens to comprehend gender roles. Since war coverage started, several gendered tropes in photography have been visible resulting in defining gendered roles in war as well. For example, the tropes of female mourners; protesters; young girls; female corpses; and women refugees (Zarzycka, 2016). These gender tropes (*the male “Just Warrior” and the female “Beautiful Soul” in the tradition of the Christian jus bellum iustum*) (p. 110) represent the damaging stereotypes in war broadcasting in the West, in spite of the developing climate of politics of involvement in warfare (Adelman, 2007; Der Derian, 2000; Elshain, 1987). These cliches can also aggravate the gendered ways of seeing war such as the case of mourning mothers that might reduce them to an entity that is present for grieving of loss and support and not for participation in the war.

Tensions and discourses over war as a macho culture and questions over gender and power remain an interesting topic to date- whether women should take part in the process as soldiers like Elizabeth Klocker, Milunka Savić, or as photographers like Catherine Leroy, Lee Miller or “just provide motivation” (Andersen 2005) or just stay back at home while men go to work (Sanusi & Adelabu, 2015).

Masculinities and militaries have been intertwined in the history of events (Enloe 1989; Dawson 1994). War remains a highly gendered ideology where men’s political and social dominance has been framed as given (Ashe, 2007): the notions of “war,” “citizenship,” “nationalism,” and “manhood” are deeply integrated into Western culture and invested with traditions of individuality, selfhood, and autonomy. Along similar lines, feminist scholars have argued that gender norms and practices reproduced in representations of war are grounded in underlying structures of representations of sexual difference

(Hutchings, 2008; Kronsell and Svedberg, 2011). For example, protests that took place in the Arab around 2011 were anti-feminist and did not have sufficient traces of independent women agencies targeting to modify dominating patriarchal gender relations. Barker-Plummer and Boaz (2005) point out particular characteristics of masculinism aligned with war or war news such as stressing right and wrong, talking about the majority and not minority with less representation (such as women or marginalized groups), and a persistent discourse about the war in terms of gendered language such as sports, hunting, and so on.

The personal resources necessary to negotiate gendered inequalities were considerable for women photographers—recurrently patronized as “girls” amongst the men—compelled to endure discrimination allegedly justified as “a natural state of affairs” grounded in gender essentialism (Oldfield, 2016). Robinson (2005) says *“In a patriarchal system, women are members of a minority, facing an intractable male-oriented social structure”* (p. 90). Robyn Wiegman (1994) argues during the first Persian Gulf War, women were present as combatants for the first time in history *“threatening to undo war as the privileged location of masculinity’s performance.”* (p. 176).

There are uncountable instances where women often are worried on the battlefield because they are looked at more like ‘the other sex’ than journalists. Lynsey Addario (2015), in her memoir, confesses *“I didn’t want to be the cowardly photographer or the terrified girl who prevented the men from doing their work,”* (p. 10). Caroline Wyatt, a renowned English journalist who has reported from dangerous locations in Afghanistan during and after the rule of the Taliban has encountered derogatory questions such as follows: *“Why are you not married and does your father know you are here? And did he and your brothers let you come on your own?”* (Storm and Williams, 2012, p.8).

Research into gender and war photographers shed light on the nuances of gender that have been integrated into the process of photographing. Gallagher (1998) says *“how attention to gender makes us re-envision what we know about war, as well as how war illuminates and recasts the workings of gender”*(p. 2). Similarly, talking about her

experience photographing the Taliban in Afghanistan a female photojournalist says “*..And perhaps we brought a different perspective to the war: a little less focus on the bombs and bullets, and more on what the end of the Taliban’s rule in the north would mean for the families we met, and for their future.*” (Storm and Williams, 2012, p.8) In this context of conflict photography, this research will attempt to find whether this Gender Role Theory is relevant in the current scenarios of conflicts such as the Russia-Ukraine war(2022-present)

## 2. Literature Review

The Literature Review is divided into two main chapters delving deep into looking at the primary keywords of this research: *Gender*, *photography*, and *war* from different perspectives. The first chapter **Gender Gap in Journalism** explores the gendered disparities in journalism laying a foundation to support the photojournalistic arguments that follow. It comprises four segments *Journalism in Newsrooms*, *Glass Ceiling Effect Still Exists?*, *Gendered Disparity in News Coverage*, and *Gender Inequalities*. These subchapters explore sensitive topics such as the Glass Ceiling Effect, the masculinist nature of newsroom culture, vertical segregation, and positions of men and women in the journalism industry. The second chapter, **Women and War Photojournalism** narrows down on the research problem at hand elucidating the relations between women and their ever-changing dynamics with war photojournalism. It has four segments namely *Women Photographers in the War Zone*, *Are War Stories Gendered?*, and *Gendered Difficulties While Covering the War* which deals with critically analyzing topics such as the role of women photographers in the war zones, tackling gendered stereotypes and challenges and coverage by war correspondents. Following that, the segment on *Addressing the Research Gap* portrays the way this research attempts to bridge the gap and contribute to the existing knowledge system of gendered photojournalists in war zones.

### 2.1 Gender Gap in Journalism

The research on the gendered gap in journalism in terms of disparities and inequalities is evident from the 1990's. Various scholars and researchers have highlighted the persistent issues with gender in journalism that can also be extended to photojournalism. For example, masculine-dominated newsroom culture, the absence of women in top management positions like editors, vertical segregation, gender socialization, the glass ceiling effect, and so on. Although research on gender and photography has been thin in

the war zone (Zarzycka 2016; Palmer and Melki 2018) there is relevant literature that sheds light upon urgent issues such as harassment, resistance faced by women war correspondents, and harmful stereotypical roles that will be discussed in the following sections.

### **2.1.1 Journalism in Newsrooms**

It is certainly clear from previous research that women often have a marginal presence in newsrooms (Beam and Cicco 2010; Briscoe 2012; Grabe et al., 2011; Weaver 1997). Gender-related challenges and limitations in journalism have been highlighted time and again (eg. Briscoe 2012; Fleming 2013).

Although, some research claims that currently, a vast majority of journalism graduates are female (Kodwo Jonas Anson. Boateng 2017), the numbers say otherwise in a professional setting. Byerly's (2011, p. 9) report on the survey of more than 500 news companies in nearly 60 countries found that only 27% of the top management jobs (publishers, chief executive officers) around the world are occupied by women. Similarly, according to a 2023 Reuters study of women and leadership in the news media, "*only 22% of top editors and media personnel across 240 outlets are women*". This points to the absence of women in top management and editing roles in markets. This masculine-dominant newsroom culture leads to male journalists making important decisions regarding the assignment of stories, news coverage, career advancement, and hiring of other journalists to media agencies. Even in the 21st century, women still comprise a minority in journalism as a whole (Beasley and Gibbons 2003; Craft and Wanta 2004).

Additionally, researchers have found that it can be challenging because people often feel as if their work is devalued when they constitute the minority in their work environment (Kling et. al 1999; Lawless and Fox 2005). This devaluation of work might also explain the reason for women working harder to get recognition as compared to male

counterparts or women not feeling motivated enough to be in journalistic jobs even though they comprise a majority in undergraduate programs and educational levels.

Linda Steiner (2009) as one of the greatest protagonists and researchers on gender studies in journalism has persistently emphasized the gender gap in newsrooms. She also says *“In journalism and mass media, women have been regarded as the intruder, the exception, the problem”* (2012, p. 201). Similarly, Gray & Hessel (2014) observe that journalism was coded as the most masculine practice, and women were generally held as being unable to handle either the physical or moral demands of work in the newsroom.

Eiman and El-Hassan (2010) point to prejudices where more women are at the bottom of the hierarchy whereas far more men are at the top which might point to inequalities in the media sector. This hierarchical order of men and women journalists in the newsroom can stem from gendered coverage of news where men are expected to cover hard topics such as war, investigations, and sports whereas women are stuck covering soft news such as lifestyle, entertainment, and health issues that are given less importance in a newsroom environment. This can also reflect the scenario in societies where women and men are limited to socially perceived roles such as men joining sports as a career whereas women are more visible in the position of nurses. These results point to one of the persistent issues such as vertical segregation where due to the gender of an individual career opportunities and progression in the career ladder are hindered (North, 2016).

Not only gender but age and race can also harm an individual's career progression and be limited in scope. For example, the Employment Tribunal court case where the British public service broadcaster, the BBC, encountered accusations of prejudice on the basis of both age and gender (Spedale et al., 2014). One instance can be in broadcast journalism where practices such as not hiring women after a certain age (after 49 years) are normalized because they want the women presenters to look a certain type and possess specific physical features. (Ross et al., 2018)

Statistics prove that stories with bylines are more likely to have a male than female byline (Mitchelstein et al., 2020). Additionally, research also shows that articles written by female journalists were often deemed less credible (e.g., Philip Goldberg 1968). Not only the gender disparity in numbers but beyond that the absence of female leadership, sources, and lack of decision-making power have created a biased environment in newsrooms across different countries especially in Africa, South East Asia, and the Arab region. Elmore (2007) interviewed fifteen women who quit journalism because of a patriarchal newsroom atmosphere that included men making more decisions owing to sex, encouraged assertiveness and toughness, and inclined towards saving women from masculinist tasks, such as covering wars.

Shumaila Jaffery, a Pakistani Senior journalist working with BBC News in an interview points out that “*over the years in Pakistan we have seen a greater interest in females in the media industry and for sure their number has been increased, but still, the industry is male dominant*” (Storm and Williams, 2012, p.43). She further says that in the top level of management, there are hardly any women whereas the maximum positions in the junior level are filled by women in media. Gallagher’s (2001) explanation about women in newsrooms indicates that it might take a long time to achieve gender balance in workplaces such as by 2030.

Sapiro (2003,) notes, that scholars have not identified a historical or contemporary society in which gender is irrelevant to dividing up social, cultural, economic, and political tasks. Again, the denial of gender being a systemic or structural issue is persistent in photojournalism. Howell and Singer’s research in 2016 reveals that only in broadcast journalism the ratio of women was more than men “*On Sky News, women presenters outnumbered men*” (p. 1070)

On the contrary, Burks & Stone (1993) mentions that women and men television news directors managed their newsrooms in similar ways. Not only that, the research proves that men and women have similar workplace behavior, management styles, and career

views. Similarly, Hanitzsch & Hanusch's (2011) research which includes interviews with eighteen journalists from around the world proves that disagreement among professionals regarding journalism's normative and actual functions have nothing to do with their gender. This research highlights more on performing emotional detachment, providing factually correct information, and minding ethical boundaries, which are requisites for surviving in journalism sectors. This hints at gender not being an essential factor in terms of newsroom behavior. But how much of that is true?

### **2.1.2 Glass Ceiling Effect Still Exists?**

Olsen & Walby (2004) argue that gendered wage inequality is one of the most persistent features of the labor market. Robinson (2005) argues that the glass ceiling has an economic side that can act as an obstacle to the speed of promotion. This can lead to women being stuck in lower positions and being paid less at the same time which is unfair. There is much research showing that men tend to earn more than women and that they have greater job stability and greater opportunities for promotion (e.g. Blau & Kahn 2006). The Glass Ceiling Commission at the end of the 20th century observes while 73% of CEOs speculate that the glass ceiling no longer exists, 71% of women said it is persistent in media agencies.

It continues even in the 21st century ie; The Central European Labour Studies Institute and Wage Indicator Foundation (2012) reported that in spite of decades of legislation and awareness, benefits and wages among male and female journalists are highly unequal. Surprisingly even famous broadcasting agencies like BBC have faced allegations denying equal payment after hundreds of women employees complained that they wanted the company to value men and women employees equally. Padovani et al. (2019) argue that in January 2018, "*Carrie Gracie, BBC China editor, left the company after discovering she had been, for years, paid much less than male colleagues occupying similar positions*" (p. 160). Similarly, Galletero-Campos et al. (2019), after studying various reports confirm that the glass ceiling and wage gap for women journalists are still in force



today (De Miguel et al., 2017; García-Saiz, 2018). When prestigious news and broadcasting agencies like BBC deny equal rights to wages even after having a sufficient budget, it is easy to deduce the practices of small-scale media agencies.

Steiner (2017) also adds, *“The glass ceiling continues to stymie the promotion of women to key decision-making and governance positions in print and broadcast news organizations”* (p. 1). These figures and reports might explain the contrast in the numbers of women in news agencies and women in journalism studies that have progressive feminization (Rivero et al., 2015). This chain of events forms a long enduring process of women journalists being denied equal respect and wages in their workplaces. Although they have been highlighted by the media time and again, there is a sense of normalizing the gendered wage gap in the journalism sector.

### **2.1.3 Gendered Disparity in News Coverage**

When it comes to gender and journalism, it is important to understand the way gender plays a role in news coverage. It is significant to notice whether there are patterns of a specific gender covering a specific type of news. This aids in identifying stereotypical news coverage in journalism.

In the journalism sector, hard news is hailed as the most prestigious type of journalism and it is mostly covered by male reporters (Ross and Carter 2011) while soft news has lesser “informational value” and more “human interest” (Brooks et al., 1985). Researchers find gendered patterns in coverage, especially in politics and sports (Steiner, 2017). Louise North (2016), in her survey including 577 female journalists concludes that *“while more female reporters appear to be covering hard news rounds like politics and business, the majority are still assigned to cover the bulk of the soft news areas of features, the arts, education, and health”* (p. 1149). This might result in journalists stuck in a specific beat depending on their gender.

Again, gender socialization has been linked to communication differences between women and men (Wood, 1994). This also leads to the fact that they would produce different stories. Women journalists' approaches to the nature of stories differ significantly from their male counterparts. Maria Caballero (2004, p. 3), for example, reports that in a survey of international women journalists, 92% said they took a more “human” approach to news. One aspect of this issue is the gender of top editors who are mostly men who keep assigning soft news to women journalists perpetuating gendered subordination and discrimination. Scholars have shown that “*there can be differences in news coverage between newsrooms run by women versus those run by men*” (Beam and Di Cicco 2010; Shor et al., 2015; Byerly and McGraw 2020).

#### **2.1.4 Gender Inequalities**

Gender inequalities have been researched and debated in media and journalism for several years (Padovani et al., 2019). According to the Global Media Monitoring Project in 2020, not only there is inequality in the number of women, but they were also highly underrepresented as subjects and sources of news even in the stories concerning them such as #MeToo. Women were only 13% of subjects and sources in the television newscast tracked and 21% of the digital news stories and tweets collected from several national media. Furthermore, just 1% of the stories in the total sample were coded under the “gender and related” major topic which includes news on various forms of gender violence against women and girls, for example, when gender violence crimes such as rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment were on a surge during COVID-19. (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020).

It cannot be denied that there has been progress over the years, but it is incredibly slow. For example, “*in Portugal, the number of women in decision-making in general interest news outlets is low- in 1995, there was one female executive director, and 20 years later there are two*” (Lobo, et. al, 2017, p.1149). The ratio between time and development towards an inch of equality is highly unbalanced. Similarly, Nordicom's (2018) study

highlighted that *“male dominance crosses national borders and is visible in all types of media corporations. On average, 80% of directors are men, 17% of top management officers are women and there are only six female CEOs leading corporations on the top-100 list”* (Nordicom, 2018). These gendered inequalities impact the power relations in journalism and have an effect on the deeper social structures of the world as well. *“All things remaining equal, it will take at least a further 67 years to close the average gender equality gap in traditional news media”* (Global Media Monitoring Project, 2020, p.4).

## 2.2 Women and War Photojournalism

For several decades, war has been a dramatic holy grail for news and politics around the world, sometimes hashing and rehashing similar elements to attract curious viewers and evoke deeper emotions among news audiences. The dynamics of war journalism are ever-changing. Since the end of the Cold War, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, and after the terror attacks of 9/11, the definitions of international justice, conflict, human rights, warfare, and peace kept transforming, as well as the emotions attached to it. The relation between women and war photojournalism is closer than one thinks. Women's involvement in conflict is nothing new. But without a doubt, visuals from the battlefield have been proof of the evolving roles of women- from victims to nurses to photographers to combatants- they have been present in every inch of a battlefield. Then why is it that the numbers on the frontline say otherwise? To answer this question, this chapter discusses the contributions of women photographers, their challenges, their working conditions, and their representation in war news.

The inequalities and disparities in the newsrooms can also be extended to the context of war photojournalism due to its similar “masculinist” culture. There are similar challenges that women face both in the newsroom and the battlefield such as harassment, difficulty and comparison with colleagues on group projects, sexism, being denied credentials, and lack of confidence in editors who sent them (Chambers et al., 2004).

The war zone has traditionally been conceptualized as a space in which the masculine reigns supreme (Mohanty, Riley, and Pratt 2008; Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2011). Rachel and Claire (2017) in their research of the military as a gendered institution echoed the following sentiment “*rich literature on military masculinities and their hegemonic and dominant status shows, which looks not only at the role of gender identities (primarily masculinities) within military contexts but also at the wider reach of these*

*archetypes and ideals socially and culturally*” (p.4) . Tylee (1997) points out that British women especially were being warded off “*from ever glimpsing even the corner of a real battlefield*” (1997, p. 66). Conveniently, this discouraged women from participating in specific professions in the war zone such as warriors, drivers, fixers, combatants, and photographers.

There have been many instances in the past where women’s voices have been partially or completely left out of the picture as writers, sources, and even actors such as the coverage of the Iraq war in international news magazines (Barker-Plummer, Boaz, 2005). Connell (1995) remarks that the military has been aligned with hegemonic masculinity in American and European cultures.

Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn (2011) argue, that women have historically been expected to perform some very specific roles in the war zone. Segal (2008) points out that warfare has never been solely the domain of men; women have been present in military contexts as nurses, ammunition carriers, army cooks, civilian contractors, and sex workers—functions rarely given the legitimacy and status of fighting on the battlefield. During the Second World War, approximately 11,000 military women (nearly all of them volunteers) were stationed in Vietnam during the conflict and 90 % served as military nurses (Ette, 2013).

### **2.2.1 Women Photographers in the War Zone**

Even though women photographers have been reporting from war zones since the 1930s, they have been victims of prejudices, and physical bodily challenges, denied equal rights and opportunities, worked with skeptical male colleagues and editors who had no confidence in them. But they kept fighting against the resistance and gendered stereotypes with movements and protests struggling to adapt to masculine battlefields where hardly any women could be placed within miles. Female journalists have a reputation for being more vulnerable than men in conflict zones which was documented

during the Iraq War of 2003 (Al-Rawi 2010). Women both in front as objects that need protection (Weiss et al. 2011) and behind the camera as photographers have struggled whether it was the Vietnam war in 1955, the Afghan war in 2001, or the Russo-Ukraine war in 2022. Even though women photographers have been overlooked for decades, their contributions to documenting battlezones cannot be removed from history. In this milieu, the following section deals with women photographers who have been visually capturing the essence of war, their advantages and disadvantages, and role perceptions.

Lewinski (1978) in his book *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1848 to the Present Day*, mentions that “*war, a man’s game, seemed destined at the start to be recorded by men alone,*” (1978, p. 26). Many women photographers covering war have expressed deep frustration when their demands for equal treatment with their male contemporaries were resisted, trivialized, or ignored (McCusker, 2006; Steiner, 2016; Tucker, 1975). History mentions uncountable instances where women photojournalists like Jenny Mathews, Tina Sussman, Christina Broom, Margaret Bourke-White, and Georgette M. Dickey Chapelle have to argue and fight with their editors to send them to the ‘macho’ or ‘masculinist’ war zones for assignments or even demand equal rights as their male contemporaries. They are eminent female photojournalists from around the world whose contributions were considered remarkable.

Conversely, Korte (2009) argues that there is a constant increase in the number of female correspondents. Although the presence of female correspondents on the frontlines is not new, their numbers have increased since the 1990s. According to a survey by the European Federation of Journalists, “*the average number of women journalists in European news media in 2006 was almost equal to that of men: 47.7% and significant numbers of those women were reporting from the heart of military conflicts*”(European Federation of Journalists, 2011)

And the numbers have increased ever since.

According to one woman BBC reporter: *“I did my first trip in 1990 ... I have a lot of women friends in the business, some of whom work for the BBC, some of whom work for other organizations, both European and American. There are a lot of women correspondents... I’m one of the growing numbers. There are [also] a lot of women producers who do frontline work. There are a significant number of highly accomplished, incredibly brave, and talented women camerawomen and editors. I’m happy to say when I go places, I see more and more women. And I think more and more women are getting the opportunity to do this.”* (Prentoulis, Tumber, Webster, 2005, p.375)

Another woman journalist said: *“Well I’ve heard that now there must be something like 60% men and 40% women which may have made a difference. But then journalism’s less macho,”* (Prentoulis, Tumber, Webster, 2005, p.375)

Even though there has been a relentless emphasis on “war being war for everyone” in almost all plethora of war research, the practical scenario on the battlefield says otherwise. *“It may be premature to talk about gender equality in frontline reporting, but according to the correspondents we interviewed, the increased number of women has created a new environment for women correspondents”* (Prentoulis, Tumber, Webster, 2005, p.375).

There might be other reasons for the inequality of women photojournalists such as harassment or violence. Research points out that women photojournalists have historically encountered sexual harassment, and exploitation in their universities, internships, and workplace (Prentoulis, Tumber, and Webster 2005; Melki and Mallat 2013, 2014), which might be reasons for them quitting the field of photojournalism either early on during internships when women photojournalists face discouraging behavior or such as when they face physical intimidation during assignment (Storm and Williams, 2012)

### **2.2.2 Are War Stories Gendered?**

In previous studies, women have been shown to focus more on the impact and aftermath of wars, (like in newsrooms) to “humanize” and explore the consequences of events (Christmas 1997,) and to give voice to women and non-elites (Beam and Di Cicco 2010). Williams (1986) argues, that women photojournalists are often given stories by mostly male news editors about the aftermath of war and are expected to portray war in a positive light. This can be related to the early roles/actions of women as ‘attending to the wounded’ and ‘praying for peace’. The focus of women journalists on more "human nature" of war can also be seen as a structural and power-related issue, resulting from the editorial hierarchy, as Williams (1986), points out. He argues, that the editorial positions with decision-making power are held exclusively by men, who decide on the choice and distribution of topics. Thus, female war photojournalists are assigned these more "soft" topics that focus not on the war itself, but rather on its aftermath portraying war in a more positive light. As discussed earlier, a parallel to the similar idea of soft news practiced in the newsrooms assigned to female journalists can be drawn here. Some of the examples are the pictures of injured soldiers taken by Christina Broom. Rodgers and Thorson's (2003) research on men and women deduced that women drew on a greater diversity of sources, stereotyped less, and wrote more positive stories. This might result from women photojournalists having better access to sources or having the capacity to empathize with them more than male photojournalists.

However, according to Alex Westcott Campbell and Charles Critcher (2018), men can no longer be exclusively equated with “hard” angles and women with “soft” angles in conflict reportage, and such damaging generalizations and stereotypical angles must be avoided.



### 2.2.3 Gendered Difficulties While Covering the War

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) (April 19, 2024), a nonprofit organization that promotes press freedom around the globe confirms that 1570 journalists have been killed between 1992 and 2024. Among this, at least 15 journalists and media workers have been killed covering the Russo-Ukraine war. The casualties of journalists have been rising steadily after the Israel-Palestine conflict- since October 7, 2023, 97 journalists and media workers have died (CPJ, 2024). Some of the reasons that have been labeled include crossfire, murder, and dangerous assignment.

Apart from the barbarous and risky nature of war encompassing all journalists, there are a few scholarly studies that deal with challenges that women war correspondents face every day while covering war (Prentoulis, Tumber, and Webster 2005; Melki and Mallat 2013, 2014). These challenges include getting caught in regional crossfires maybe in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, kidnapping of female photojournalists like Tina Susman in Somalia, physical intimidation and attack from higher authorities who do not want documentation of any events such as in Russia, getting sexually assaulted and beaten on duty such as Lara Logan in Cairo. Others include Jineth Bedoya who was tortured in Columbia (according to CBS News in 2021), and Lynsey Addario who was kidnapped and raped for simply doing their job as photojournalists on the battlefield.

It is significant to note that in war photography, similar results have been concluded as compared to the newsrooms (as mentioned above) when it came to gendered exploitation and sexual harassment. Women reporters of the Great War era from 1914-1918 experienced various forms of sexual harassment and obstacles, particularly from US military officials, who systematically refused to allow them access to important events and scenes (Wagner 1989). The following is a statement by Lauren Wolfe, a senior editor for the Committee to Protect Journalists who worked on CPJ's special report "The Silencing Crime: Sexual Violence and Journalists". She said: *"I talked to more than four dozen journalists from the Middle East to South Asia, Africa to the Americas. About half*

*were local journalists, the others foreign correspondents. Seven had been raped, while many more were sexually penetrated by hands or objects, violently groped, and threatened with rape” (CPJ, 2011)*

Along similar lines, Fleming, Chambers, and Steiner’s (2004) research thoroughly historicizes the gendered and hostile environments that US and British women war reporters have faced in the past century. Apart from having gendered challenges on the battlefield, there are difficulties related to the female body that are rarely talked about in the coverage of women war correspondents and photojournalists such as toilet facilities, menstruation, and pregnancy. It is challenging for female reporters to urinate or menstruate comfortably without feeling shame and guilt (Tumber and Webster 2006). Tumber (2011) argues that *“training programs, then, should take into account gender differences, since they may provide insight into the motivation and pressures of journalists in war zones”* (p.330).

In contrast to this in a recent study, Nicole Tung reflected: *“In my generation being a woman is an advantage. I never see my gender as a hindrance,”* (Campbell and Critcher 2018). *“If anything, it’s weird how in some deeply conservative and patriarchal societies it gets you further as a journalist”* (Fremson 2015, p. 1543). Similarly, Bay Fang says being a woman, especially in vulnerable conflict zones like Iraq and Afghanistan, makes it easier to go undetected or have a low profile (Storm and Williams, 2012). They also confessed that these experiences are viewed as positive and sometimes an editor might send a woman journalist because they might appear harmless and can easily blend with the crowd in these zones.

## 2.2.4 Addressing Research Gap

Although there is hardly any research dedicated to the influence of gender in conflict zones, Campbell and Critcher (2018) offer empirical evidence of how gender is embedded into the photojournalistic process. They assert that women photographers “*may allow marginalized subjects ... to be represented in a way that does not see them as ‘objectified’ and ‘depoliticized’*” (p. 17). The same sentiment is echoed by Tumber (2011) who highlights the gender is a factor and points out that gender differences often shape the form of competitiveness among war journalists.

Again, the presence of women on the frontline may hint at a change in war topics, coverage, and storylines. “*A female perspective is allowing for greater engagement with the lives of the victims of war rather than its technical and strategic aspects*” (McLaughlin 2002, p. 172 – 173). On the other hand, some studies found no correlation between gender and news content (Gallagher 2006) which can be contradictory.

Craft and Wanta (2004) argue that, despite continued obstacles for women, a “feminization” of news has gradually eroded gendered distinctions in news production. There has been some research on the “emotionalization” of stories and portraying compassionate narratives by women photojournalists (Ricchiardi 1998, 29; McCusker 2006, 16) but Tuchman’s work on “symbolic annihilation” (Tuchman 1978, 2009) has shed some light on the explanation of the gender gap and inequalities. However, it is unclear without sufficient empirical research whether gender has any role that plays in producing conflict photos. Hence this research attempting to bridge this gap dives deep into the experiences of photojournalists to explore whether the role of gender if at all plays any role in the day-to-day lives of photojournalists who are covering an ongoing war that is one of a kind in history - Russo-Ukraine war (2022-present)

### **3. Data Collection and Methodology**

This study attempts to find the way gendered differences (if there are any) work among photojournalists who are covering the Russo-Ukrainian war and whether there are discernable differences in practices regarding the production of conflict photos. The research questions that concern this study are as follows:

***RQI) According to male and female photojournalists, how does gender affect their work in the Russia-Ukraine war?***

***RQII) How do practices related to the production of photos vary for male and female photojournalists in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?***

The data collection for this research has been done via snowball sampling and qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews which have been chosen to articulate detailed experiences of photojournalists that have aided the author to dive deep into the nuances of gender in war photojournalism that are discussed as follows.

For many feminists, qualitative methodologies are better suited to give voice to the personal, everyday perspectives of individuals and to understand how they make sense of their own lived experiences (Fisher and Embree 2000; Larkin, Watts, and Clifton 2006). Similar notions have been evoked by Uwe Flick, Ernst von Kardorff, and Ines Steinke (2004) who argue that qualitative research claims to describe lifeworlds ‘from the inside out’, from the point of view of the people who participate. Hence, this research employs the qualitative research method in a way that it highlights daily life both including professional and personal experiences of the photojournalists in the field of war photography.

### 3.1 Semi-structured Interviews

*“Semi-structured interviews are defined as an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena”* (Brinkmann&Kvale, 2015,p.6). Semi-structured interview falls in between structured and unstructured interviews in the interview spectrum, meaning that the amount of control exercised is balanced- in this case, both the author (interviewer) and the interviewee have control over the discussions of the interview.

Semi-structured interviews are often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to thoroughly understand the answers provided (Harrell; Bradley, 2009). A primary advantage of the semi-structured interview is that it allows the interviews to be focused while still giving the researcher or author the autonomy to explore potential ideas that may come up over the course of the interview, which can further enhance understanding (Adeoye-Olatunde; Olenik, 2021). Therefore, semi-structured interviews have helped the author to have a set of basic questions and then follow up depending on the content provided by the interviewee. In this way, the research questions are answered while allowing in-depth discourses about experiences, notions, and perceptions surrounding war photography.

The research about gendered experiences in war photojournalism is driven by semi-structured in-depth interviews of male (7) and female photojournalists (7) covering the Russo-Ukraine war. It is important to note that the research does not only attempt to have a feminist approach itself but is equally interested in the experiences of both genders. The questions for the interviews have been prepared keeping in mind to bring both male and female perspectives and their journalistic perceptions of each other, their working conditions, payment, and career opportunities. Hence, the research has an equal number of male and female participants and they identify as the same. Therefore, the total sample size of this research is 14 photojournalists which is justified for this level of research because they provide valuable information for accurate results. Additionally,

there is a theoretical saturation of answers, where further interviews did not bring any radical new perspectives.

### **3.2 Snowball Sampling**

The research employs a snowball sampling method by Parker, Scott, and Geddes (2019) that aided in choosing these photojournalists. In this method, *“the research starts with a small number of initial contacts (also, called seeds) who fit the research criteria (in this case, the requirement is the participant either has or is covering the Russia-Ukraine war in any sense) and is invited to become participants in the research. The agreeable participants are then asked to recommend other contacts who fit the research criteria and who can become potential participants and so on”* (Parker; Scott; Geddes, 2019, p. 3)

In this particular research, a similar approach to the above-described snowball sampling method has been employed. It should be noted that in this particular research, unfortunately, gender is considered in the binary form. The author started by emailing photojournalists whose photos were highlighted in leading news agencies such as Time, The Washington Post, New York Times, Getty Images, and others. One of the significant criteria to participate in this research was that the photojournalists must be (or have been) ‘actively’ covering the Russo-Ukraine war (including the full-scale invasion from February 2022). In this case, the word ‘actively’ means the photojournalists are physically present on the battlefield capturing photos, and videos and writing stories. The sample does not include journalists who are working in the newsrooms assembling war content. Secondly, the sample size was furthered by the interviewees suggesting or referring the author to other photojournalists (networks, friends, colleagues) who would (according to the interviewee) be able to answer the research question. These photojournalists were invited to participate in the research. The same process is repeated again till the time the sample size is completed ie; 14 participants.

It should be noted that the author has considered the disadvantages of employing the snowball sampling method because since it is a “network-based convenience form of sampling” (Parker; Scott; Geddes, 2019), the interviewees might have similar backgrounds, opinions, and experiences in the field they are working and therefore end up giving similar answers. To overcome this bias, the author has tried to reach out to some of the interviewees on her own such as the *seeds* participants, or has asked to be referred to photojournalists who are from different countries to have a broader perspective of the Russo-Ukraine war in the essence of the research.

The sample of this research is unique experienced professionals who have or are covering the Russo-Ukraine war. Keeping in mind the sample diversity, the photojournalists interviewed are from different backgrounds, countries, cultures, and ethnicities—preferably experienced photojournalists who can explain their craft confidently. In this way, the reader can peek into the war experiences of the interviewees and comprehend the thoughts that went into capturing their pictures.

**The following is an overview of the interviewees:** (Table n. 1)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>PROFESSION</u>	<u>EXPERIENCE</u>
<b>Oksana Jóhannesson</b>	39 years	Ukrainian photojournalist specializing in war photography, and ethnography	Oksana has been a conflict photographer since 2008 and has worked at AP, Getty Images, and others.
<b>Katya Moskalyuk</b>	41 years	Ukrainian documentary photographer and journalist.	Katya has been a journalist and reporter for local Ukrainian media for more than 5 years.
<b>Laurel Chor</b>	33years	Hong Kong freelance journalist, photographer, and filmmaker	Laurel Chor is an Emmy-nominated journalist working in all sorts of media for nine years and has worked for Soba Images, Huffington Post, and others.
<b>Vasilisa Stepanenko</b>	24 years	Ukrainian staff video journalist for the Associated Press	She works as a freelancer video producer in Mariupol for a documentary, in 2014 which won the BAFTA Awards, Oscar 2024.

<b>Oksana Parafeniuk</b>	34 years	Ukrainian freelance photojournalist based in Kyiv, Ukraine	Oksana has worked for The Washington Post, The New York Times, Le Monde, Al Jazeera, and TV2 Denmark.
<b>Elena Tita</b>	45 years	Ukrainian freelance documentary and reportage photographer.	Elena started doing documentary photography because she lives in the Ukrainian frontline city of Zaporizhzhia. She works for Getty Images.
<b>Alina Smutko</b>	32 years	Ukrainian documentary photographer and photojournalist	Alina has 8-9 years of experience covering conflicts in Azerbaijan and Georgia. She has worked for Reuters.
<b>Marek Berezowski</b>	40 years	Polish photojournalist, documentary photographer, and portrait photographer	Marek is the Winner of the BZ WBK Press Photo Prize in 2014 and 2016, the Leica Street Photo Contest in 2016, the IPA Photography Award in 2016 - 10 Honorable Mentions, and others.
<b>Wojciech Grzedzinski</b>	43 years	Polish photojournalist, reportage, and portrait photographer	Wojciech covered the Lebanon War. Apart from that, he has done stories on Iraq and Afghanistan, Georgia in 2008, and Gaza
<b>Slava Ratynski</b>	34 years	Ukrainian documentary photographer and photojournalist.	Slava has been working as a photojournalist for more than 10 years in Reuters, Wall Street Journal, UNICEF,
<b>Yevhenii Zavorodni</b>	44 years	Ukrainian freelance photographer	Yevhenii worked in New Voice of Ukraine, Getty Images, Reuters, and the Financial Times
<b>André Luis Alves</b>	36 years	Portuguese freelance photojournalist	André has been a photojournalist at The Guardian, BBC Ukraine, and others
<b>Valery Melkinov</b>	51 years	Russian documentary photographer and photojournalist based in Moscow.	Valery's work has been awarded by World Press Photo, Magnum Photography, Pictures of the Year International, Sony World Photography, and others.
<b>Alex Babenko</b>	25 years	Ukrainian photo and video freelance journalist for	Alex has been covering the war for two years since the full-scale invasion for the Associated Press.

Table n. 1: Own research of the author of this thesis

The semi-structured interviews are about an hour long. It should be noted that every photojournalist verbally consented to use their names and interviews for the purpose of this research. In each interview, the photojournalists faced a variety of questions in a



semi-structured way, focusing on several aspects of their professional lives. During the interviews, the author focused on several specific themes such as gendered differences, gender privilege, the glass ceiling effect, structural autonomy, and perception of differences.

The interviews (audios) are recorded consensually and then transcribed in a transcription software called Otter. Multiple readings and corrections of the transcriptions are done to match them with the audio.

### **3.3 Analysis Method: Thematic Analysis**

The research uses thematic analysis which is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail which will aid the research to summarise the accurate results into codes from in-depth discussions concerning the role of gender in conflict images.

The six phases of thematic analysis that are suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006,p. 87-93) are as follows:

**Phase 1:** Familiarisation with the data – interview transcriptions were actively read and reread to draw meanings and patterns within the text.

**Phase 2:** Generation of initial codes – organizing the data into meaningful groups, highlighting quotes in the interviews or words identified as potential patterns in each transcription.

**Phase 3:** Searching for themes – sorting the different codes into potential themes to form two dominant inductive themes or codes which is elaborated upon in the analysis section.

**Phase 4:** Reviewing themes – The author listened to the interviews again to confirm that the themes (both dominant and sub-themes) worked in relation to the audio and coded additional data within themes that may have been missed. Re-examined both inductive and deductive codes.

**Phase 5:** Defining and naming themes – This process dealt with characterizing what each theme was about and why it was included in the codebook. Particular attention to overlaps was given. For each theme, I wrote a detailed analysis, portraying definitions from each theme while mentioning what it was not and the reason why specific themes were excluded.

**Phase 6:** Producing the report – Findings were written in relation to the empirical evidence.

Thematic analysis is appropriate for in-depth interviews as it gives the researcher the freedom to identify similarities and dissimilarities among the interviews and sketch out relevant themes that provide a concise and clear understanding of the data to the readers. Thematic Analysis provides some flexibility on the part of the researcher when they have to make conscious decisions and in this way, their thought process, theoretical judgment, and social positioning are considered. The practice of identifying several emerging themes in research is not new (eg Singer and Hunter 1999). Thematic Analysis is the first qualitative method of analysis that researchers should learn, as it provides core skills that will be useful for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

This method has been used for similar research before (Campbell and Critcher 2018). Hence, it is an appropriate method to analyze in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews from which themes can be extracted and relevant conclusions can be drawn.

The interviews deal with the extraordinary experiences of these photojournalists, their assignments, training, the equipment they use on the frontline, and their communication with war soldiers rather than their photos themselves. These interviewees serve as the ideal sample for the study because they capture the dynamics of covering a war of this scale such as Laurel Chor an Emmy-nominated journalist who has worked for more than nine years in this industry. Wojciech Grzedzinski has experience covering conflicts worldwide in vulnerable areas such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Gaza, and Georgia. Vasilisa Stepanenko, although just 24 years old, her contribution to the documenting of Russian war crimes in Ukraine has led to winning BAFTA awards and Oscars in 2024. With Portuguese journalist André Luis Alves, this research also has attempted to record the perception of international journalists who provide a whole different perspective on the Russo-Ukraine war. This research strives to view the experiences of these journalists through the gender lens- whether it is their physical challenges, mental exhaustion, wage gap, or communication with sources among others. The interviews will add some sort of character to the research and allow the reader to peek into one of the most brutal and daunting ongoing full-scale wars that are in the process of rendering new meaning and motives to war photojournalism.

## 4. Analysis

Several dominant themes and sub-themes emerged from the interviews suggesting significant results and topics that need to be discussed in journalistic circles and society alike. Along the similar lines of research of North (2009), gender issues are tricky to navigate especially when the method of data collection is in-depth interviews. The following sections comprehensively discuss various interesting practices and experiences of photojournalists from different parts of the world who are covering the Russo-Ukraine war. These interviews point to the advantages and disadvantages of photojournalists on the battlefield and peculiar interactions with their male and female counterparts in this field attempting to identify any gender factor.

Six phases of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis revealed two dominant themes namely "Gendered" and "Other factors". Under the *gendered* themes, relevant sub-themes emerged such as disparity, parenthood/family, and inequality. On the other hand, *other factors* included sub-themes such as negation, individualism, environment, and emotions.

### 4.1 Is There Something "Gendered" About It?

When asked whether there are gendered tropes or differences in the way war photos are produced, some photojournalists talk about women photographers photographing the war differently than men. Laurel Chor, a photojournalist, and filmmaker from Hong Kong said:

*Laurel: Some Ukrainian women photojournalists are photographing the war differently. Julia Kochetova for example, if you see her work, her stories are deeply personal. Her work is strikingly different from others. But I*

*certainly do not want to peg women into cliched stereotypes. It is just that topics such as plastic surgery during the war, suppose, are not something a straight white guy would be interested in.*

When asked if she remembers any arguments or disagreements with her colleagues or editors of even the same gender Laurel answers the following

**Laurel:** *Umm. Yes actually. Earlier I remember having an argument with a male colleague because I wanted to do a story on women on the frontline getting their nails done during the Ukraine war. But he refused because he thought it was silly and demeaning and he asked “Aren't we perpetuating stereotypes?”. But I thought it was empowering. So I think men sometimes overlook stories that are inherently female because they think it is vain or frivolous.*

On the other hand, talking about whether men and women are covering different types of stories, André Luis Alves, a Portuguese journalist echoes the following sentiment

**André:** *I would say that women do more frontline and more aggressive, like more dangerous topics, I would say-I don't know if they feel that they need to prove something or but I see more like, I see a lot of women that I've really liked going to the frontline and staying with soldiers. And it's not uncommon.*

The above statement shows the way women have been trying to destroy stereotypes and have been avoiding being aligned with very specific angles and stories in war photography. They might not be content with being tagged as a “savior” or “protector” anymore. It is evident that women in the current wars keep fighting against resistance and try new imaginative and intuitive styles of reporting more than what their perceived roles in society are.

#### 4.1.1 Disparity

A sub-theme of *disparity* (differences among genders) emerged from similar conversations as well. Most respondents emphasized gender differences when the topic of ‘accessibility’ arose. Wojciech Grzedzinski, a Polish photojournalist who has experience over 20 years as a photojournalist says:

**Wojciech:** *As far as sensitive cases are concerned, I think that females, all women are privileged because they are treated let's say in a softer way which many of the journalists or women in general don't like, but this is a huge privilege and they can use it to their advantage. A sensitive man would not be treated in the same way a sensitive woman would. But I would surely say that it is a huge privilege when it comes to recording sensitive images and stories because there is some sort of understanding.*

The above statement talks about how different genders are treated differently when photographers are on the frontline approaching sources or soldiers. A similar opinion was discussed with Yevhenii Zavorodnii, a Ukrainian photojournalist who works for Getty Images

**Yevhenii:** *People are more open with female journalists. They get more care on the frontline than men. Umm, you know I have seen soldiers making food or snacks such as tea for women photographers- men were also offered but the number of times women were offered was more.*

Alex Babenko, a Ukrainian who is currently reporting for the Associated Press says the following:

**Alex:** *Soldiers are happier to see women since the frontline is filled with men and they constantly see men around. They are more open to talking to them as well.*

The above mentioned statements might highlight the reasons for women photojournalists having better sources in their stories because they might appear harmless and in general approachable. On the battlefield, soldiers (who are mostly men) might crave human affection and interaction (of the opposite sex) which is why women photojournalists are sometimes preferred over their male counterparts for stories dealing with sensitive issues.

Valery Melkinov is a Russian photojournalist, who has won several awards from World Press Photo, Magnum Photography, Pictures of the Year International, and Sony World talks about a similar notion:

**Valery:** *Empathy is easier for women, it comes naturally to them. Men are more cold-blooded and their approach to things is also in a cold way. I am thinking about it and maybe women can do better in photojournalism.*

He furthers on to talk about gender when it comes to accessing specific areas and sensitive sources. The following quote can be coded under both disparity and inequality (explained later). There are a few cases of overlap of codes such as follows:

**Valery:** *In religious places like Afghanistan for example, women have several restrictions. They do not have the same rights as men. But again there are places where men are not allowed to enter. So there are restrictions for both genders, I would say. Once I saw a very strong photo project dedicated to women survivors of violence during the conflict, it was a special shelter and a kind of rehabilitation center. It was a woman photographer who was able to gain access there and tell this important and dramatic story.*

Similar notions have been uttered by both male and female photojournalists where they speak of their gender both as a bane and a boon. Talking about some advantages men might have, Alina Smutko, a Ukrainian photojournalist who has been covering conflicts in Azerbaijan and Georgia points out the following:

**Alina:** *My male colleagues have access to someplace when you have to communicate with the military guys, especially the top level, I don't have that. Because I usually prefer to work like, you know, with ordinary people.*



### 4.1.2 Inequality

The sub-code inequality refers to language that suggests that there is some sort of inequality of gender in the production of conflict photos.

*André: I know a particular case of a photographer, of course, I will not take names. I know of a female in Ukraine who got the position because she was a woman. The office was outside Ukraine and they needed to have a woman there because those were the rules of the agency. Sometimes when companies are not satisfied with the work, they will ask a freelancer to fill in the gaps. Maybe they needed a woman because of this rule. I mean, it's not that she's a bad photographer, but there was a man available who was a much better photographer in general.*

This proves that due to policies, or rules of organizations, sometimes women photojournalists are hired over men because of their gender. But in this case, proximity to the war or prior knowledge about a topic might also determine decisions while distributing assignments to photographers.

On the other hand, during the interview, a couple of brave women photojournalists spoke up about *inequalities* that they have encountered over the years with editors, male counterparts, and media organizations. Vasilisa Stepanenko, a 24-year-old Oscar and BAFTA-winning photojournalist talks about having difficulty wearing men's uniforms in Ukraine because all uniforms are made catering to the physical body proportions of a man.

**Vasilisa:** *From the military perspective, in the beginning, we (Ukraine) had no women's uniform, especially for women soldiers and it would be dangerous because bullets can just pass through. Same for photojournalists as well, I always had trouble finding the right size for trousers and it was always big because they were for men, and trust me I am not the smallest girl in Ukraine, there are girls much smaller and thinner than me. But recently, Ukraine started providing some special vests for women and they are planning to do the same for journalists.*

Katya Moskalyuk, a Ukrainian photojournalist, recalls a conversation with the editor of a local organization in Lyiv, Ukraine about the payment of an assignment. In this case, her perceived role of being a mother and a wife were hindering equal payment in her professional setting. This points to the persistent overlap of personal and professional duties when it comes to a woman, challenges that a male photographer might not encounter.

**Katya:** *About the payment, I remember the editor saying "So, she's a woman, so she has a husband, and we shouldn't pay her equal money" but I said that I'm a professional and that my job will be to give them quality products and I want the equal payment.*

Oksana Jóhanneson, a Ukrainian photojournalist who has covered wars in conflict regions such as Iraq, and Afghanistan says,

**Oksana J.:** *I was 26, and applying for some position in Europe, I was clearly told already at the interview and*

*when I passed several steps, they said you're 26, and you're a woman and you think you can be a director? And my answer was, of course, because I have an MBA at the age of 23 and I already have experience. What is the problem?*

Talking about similar challenges, Oksana Parafeniuk, a female photojournalist whose husband is also a photojournalist has often faced comparisons with him leading to derogatory comments about her capabilities on the field even after working with prestigious outlets such as The Washington Post and The New York Times.

**Oksana P.:** *I was working in the field with my husband and another friend. He directed a statement towards me comparing me with my husband which he did not even realize was so offensive. He said something like oh you're such a professional photographer now with two cameras because it was only my husband who used to carry two at a time. He definitely did not see me at the same level as himself.*

**Valery:** *I know recently Vladimir Putin, President of Russia mentioned that all women journalists who were covering the war zones should be retracted from Ukraine.*

Valery, who is based in Moscow was hesitant to say the above statement because it might get him into trouble, but the ban on women photographers documenting a crucial ongoing conflict is proof that women war photographers even in the 21st century are facing hostility from higher authorities and are fighting for their journalistic rights.

**Laurel:** *Some things are very hard to quantify or pinpoint in any particular direction, but I think I am more punished*

*for being more assertive and for, asking for what I want and or for fighting for myself a lot of the time in ways that men aren't and honestly, in the context of Ukraine, I have actually felt like I was punished for standing up for myself especially when the full-scale invasion had just started.*

### **4.1.3 Family/Parenthood**

The subcode parenthood/family refers to language that suggests that being a parent/having a family has an influence in practices related to in the production and representation of conflict photos. Family-related discussions and obstacles were expressed by almost all the respondents giving rise to the sub-theme of *family/parenthood*.

**Vasilisa:** *When I was young, my family told me that this is not the job of a woman, and I needed to stay away from the war. Earlier, people used to think women should stay at home, cook, and raise the children, and the men should go out, work, and provide for the family, but now it is different. Ukraine had problems with gender but it is becoming better. However, we still have these gender problems in Ukrainian societies and not only specifically with journalists.*

**Katya:** *I think now in Ukraine, we have so many good female photojournalists such as Anastasi Taylor Lind, Paula Bronstein, and other press officers who work in the field. They're also women. But for me let's say, it's harder*

*because I have a family. I have a daughter, she's 11 now. It's hard to organize my business trips or assignments. But of course, when I analyze my Instagram, when I see my friends they are mostly male photographers such as Slava Ratynski, Danylo Antoniuk, and others.*

The above statements by Katya and Vasilisa are also examples of the overlap of sub-themes such as *parenthood* and *inequality*. These statements hint at the gendered upbringing of women in Ukraine who are discouraged and restricted from the beginning affecting their motivation and perceptions of being a photojournalist limited to men.

Not only women, but some men also prompted discussions about family as an obstacle when it comes to the industry of war photography. Some talked about the difficulties of work-life balance while others have made peace with irregular communication with family.

**Wojciech:** *I don't know if I would be able to do photojournalism if I had a family or 'kids'. I don't think so. So I think finding someone who will understand it and explain it to your kids as well would be difficult. I know many of my colleagues quit this job when they started to have kids and family.*

**Alex:** *Whenever they see my articles I know they are proud, but I have not spoken with my family for a long time. I remember them being nervous when I went to the Donetsk district for the first time but for me I became the decision maker after I turned 18 so, I go wherever I want to go.*

## 4.2 Beyond the Gender Factor:

While the *gendered* influencing factors were talked about at length, it was nothing compared to the *other factors* influencing practices on the frontline that came up continuously and had nothing to do with gender. In this, the most prominent sub-themes were *individualism* and *environment*.

### 4.2.1 Individualism

The subcode individualism refers to language that suggests individualistic characteristics (and not gender) has an influence on the production and representation of conflict photos. In this section, male photographers have repeatedly talked about famous women photographers like Lynsey Addario and Paula Bronstein stressing their talent to deny any role gender has to play in this industry.

**Wojciech:** *When it comes to the production of conflict photos, it depends on your character, preference, and abilities. Since Poland is a neighboring country of Ukraine, I know the Ukrainian language. It helps me to talk to soldiers.*

Viacheslav Ratynskiy or Slava, is a documentary photographer who has been in the business for more than ten years dealing with projects in association with UNICEF, Reuters, and the Wall Street Journal. When asked about whether gender is any factor in the production of war photos, he puts it in a straightforward way. He says that whoever likes this profession and is good at photography can do this job. He thinks it is a profession for everybody.

**Slava:** *Famous female photojournalists who are covering the war in Ukraine, such as Lynsey Addario, and Nicole Tung are much more experienced than I am, it is not about gender but having the experience and being good at it.*

Elena Tita is a Ukrainian freelance documentary and reportage photographer. She talks about her experience and says that since she is not so sensitive, and has more “male character” that is why she can be a photographer on the frontline. She stresses on politeness and patience as key characters of war photographers.

**Elena:** *In the war zone, when it comes to photography, the person who has the patience, confidence, and strong legs, will automatically spend more time finding the right picture.*

Oksana P., a female photojournalist says that the type of stories is dependent on so many environmental factors and not gender. She insists that luck has something to do with pictures especially when one is on the war field. She expresses that the stories one ends up working on are sometimes not on one’s hand, it depends on the place one is shooting. Some of her pictures that she prefers or likes are a happy accident.

**Oksana:** *It depends more on the person and how they grew up and their view of the world. People have different backgrounds, but the more diversity of different people you have, then the more diverse the pictures they're doing will be there. Yeah, that's more or less what I think.*

Alex, a Ukrainian photographer who has been covering the Russo-Ukraine war since the full-scale invasion talks about the way his photos and stories differ depending on the years of war and what he thinks needs to be shown to the audience. As a Ukrainian himself, he says I have more things on the line when it comes to this war than other international photojournalists.

*Alex: The topics I cover are pretty different. For the first year, I was covering more civilian-related stories but now it's really dangerous to come by yourself to the town on the frontline because drones could kill you. In the last year, I have switched to the stories of servicemen because our Ukrainian servicemen are serving for like, the third year and most of them are volunteers with just like the same people as us that just want to defend our country. I'm trying to be focused on the war and being near the war to show what it really looks like and when I'm far away from the frontline, I'm covering the topics that are related such as soldier funerals, especially their stories of recovery.*

#### **4.2.2 Negation**

The sub-code negation refers to language that suggests the refusal of gender influence on the production and representation of conflict photos. Some photojournalists firmly denied any gender role in the production of these photos that resulted in the sub-theme **negation**. They were quick in their reaction and felt comfortable acknowledging their strengths.

*Oksana: For me, there is no gendered difference in war because I can do everything a man can. I can go very close to the frontline. I can be in the trench view two meters from*



*the enemy position. And I can survive for a week without a shower.*

In this section, Oksana's statement can point to the way women have been adapting to the 'masculinist' nature of war coverage and the way male photographers have been viewed as a benchmark that needs constant comparison with their female counterparts.

**Alex:** *I do not think war coverage has anything to do with gender, look at Paula Bronstein, she is 70 and she has been covering the war since the 2000s, there is Carol Guzy, who won the Pulitzer Prize four times in 1986, 1995, 2000, and 2011. There are so many young female photographers covering the war in Ukraine who are around their early 20s. I love all of them and they are very good examples of women who do dangerous things.*

The denial of gender having any influence in the photographic process in this war is slightly higher in men than women. When asked about training and the gender wage gap, Oksana Parafenuik says the following:

**Oksana:** *I am trying to think if I or anybody I know have faced a difference in payment. I do not think so or if it is the case, I might not be aware of the fact that I am being paid less than somebody. But in my experience, my gender has never been the factor in me being paid less.*

When asked if men and women cover the war differently, Valery Melnikov says that a war is war for everyone and photojournalists, no matter male or female might have the same survival instincts and work in a similar way on assignments because the ultimate goal is to tell the truth.

**Valery:** *I despise seeing war in a gendered way, I do not like this attitude at all. Human traits are more important in climbing up the ladder or going to the frontline. I know a young female journalist who is really focused on her career and despite being very young, she knows precisely what to do, when to do and how to achieve her goals. When I compare her with myself, I was never like that at that age- it is more about passion.*

### **4.2.3 Environment**

The sub-code environmental refers to language that suggests environmental (and not gender) factors such as organization and geography have an influence on the production and representation of conflict photos.

Yevhenii talks about war being a war for everyone rejecting any role gender is playing. He focuses more on other factors such as connections or the trust one has in the community.

**Yevhenii:** *The working conditions are the same for both genders. When I work with others, we work like a team. When police say some areas are insecure, it is the same for males and females, it does not depend on gender. When it comes to the access to the frontline and communication it is pretty much the same. More than gender what matters is trust and how the journalists communicate with their press officers.*

The importance of press officers has also been pointed out by others when it comes to photojournalism in Ukraine. André, a Portuguese photojournalist brings forth discussions relating to the challenges of photojournalists, especially as an “outsider” in Ukraine. He thinks access to sources and good stories has very little to do with gender but with other things that an international journalist has to take into consideration.

**André:** *Since I am an international photojournalist, getting access to good things and ultimately good photos takes time. I have to contact fixers and press officers. They are essential if one is covering the military aspect of Ukraine because press officers are the ones who communicate with the brigade. One also needs accreditation to cross various checkpoints... Sometimes I feel that it is based more on human trust than work trust. They care more about which press officer brought you there.*

These concerns have been reflected in various studies about foreigners reporting parachuting in conflict or vulnerable areas that have limited access: *“The problems associated with parachute journalism—unfamiliarity with the history and culture of a place, no established sources on the ground, logistical complications that cannot be anticipated before a trip and handlers who may or may not be less than helpful”* (Erickson and Hamilton, 2006)

**Oksana J.:** *The question of autonomy depends on whether you work for a news agency or a magazine.*

#### 4.2.4 Emotions

The subcode emotions refers to emotional reactions, evaluative statements, and descriptions in relation to the production and representation of conflict photos. A couple of photojournalists concluded their interviews by focusing on the human aspect of the war.

**Wojciech:** *War for me is not about gendered angles and frames but of feelings and emotions.*

**Marek:** *The main story of the war is about humans, animals, and their suffering*

### 4.3 Two sides of the coin in Gendered Photography

Since this research is attempting to portray grey shades of gender research in conflict photography, it is significant to mention that some photojournalists, both male and female talked about what it can be called ‘two sides of a coin’.

Coming from Russia, Valery Melnikov thinks that overall war photojournalism is not a female-friendly profession both in Russia and Ukraine and it is not easy surviving in war conditions and is not a lucrative option as well. He confesses that he knows very few female photojournalists personally. Moreover, he talks about sexism that exists in photography both in a positive and negative way. The positive side would be when women get assignments because their physical appearances are given more importance and the negative can be when opportunities are gender-based.

Alina Smutko, on the other hand, talks about the hypocrisy that she has faced in her 9-10 years of working in this industry. She says that being a female and a Muslim, her life has not been easy. She explains that with women photojournalists, there are more expectations. They have to be more patient and put in more effort than others to get everything but it is also frowned upon for women to be assertive. Again, when women do well in this industry, people think that it is because of their gender and not talent. There are various important decisions women have to make when they are active in the war photojournalism industry; especially in the Russo-Ukraine war; whether to leave, document the war, or protect one's family. She knows several talented women photojournalists who had to leave because of their pregnancy and the safety of their children because going to the frontline in that situation would have been dangerous whereas the children of the male photojournalists are safe with their wives abroad.

These findings might initiate nuanced and further discussions about both genders having their pros and cons in the field depending on the situation in the war field.

#### **4.4 Complexities of Gendered Photography**

It should be noted that when asked about the gender distribution of photojournalists on the battlefield, most respondents (both male and female) talked about the presence of more male photojournalists than women. However, then when it came to TV journalists or broadcast journalism, they witnessed more women with the microphone in front of the cameras.

*André: I would say that I see a lot of women reporters and a lot of women reporting from the frontline. I don't know if it is 50-50. Probably not. But for instance, there are more women TV reporters that report in Ukraine, maybe even more than men.*

**Vasilisa:** *In Ukraine, if you're going to a press conference, there are more men with cameras, but usually the presenters with microphones are mostly women sometimes even more than men.*

Further, when talking about the gendered disparity in the war field, one keen observation that should be brought to attention is that male photojournalists kept bringing up the works of a few famous women photographers such as Paula Bronstein and Lynsey Addario to defend any question of gendered inequality in the war field.

**Slava:** *There were maybe 30 men and maybe less than 10 women photojournalists during the full-scale invasion. But then there are quite famous ladies like Lynsey Addario or Paula Bronstein in liberated cities and you know them because they are working for the New York Times or Getty Images.*

André Luis Alves, a Portuguese journalist talks about the recent war documentary 20 Days in Mariupol (2023) which documents the war crimes of Russia and got the BAFTA and Oscars for 2024,

**André:** *We sometimes forget that Vasilisa Stepanenko is a part of this because maybe people associate her more with her previous profession of being a model.*

Keeping the above statement in mind, The Washington Post's coverage of the Private Jessica Lynch capture-and-rescue sensation is essential in this particular research. The coverage highlights Jessica's femininity and her being an "ultra-feminine-beauty-pageant prom girl" instead of recognizing and respecting her as an American soldier who does not fit into the traditional definition of soldier or warrior. (Ross, Moorti, 2005).

## 5. Discussion

In this section, the research with the aid of the interviews either proves or disproves previous studies whilst discussing salient topics related to the production of conflict images such as gendered privilege, communications with sources, autonomy of photojournalists, physiological differences, and gendered inequality in the war zones. The interviews reveal multiple answers, sometimes contradictory statements that were provided by the respondents which point to the confusing, sometimes reluctant attitude and diplomatic nature of the respondents. The relationship between the dominant themes is closer than anticipated. One of the limitations of this research is that there has been an overlap of both the dominant themes in a couple of cases that need more critical attention.

It should be noted that ‘gendered privilege’ is acknowledged by all respondents irrespective of their gender whereas the gender pay gap is only addressed by women photographers. Interviews suggest that there is no specific way of communicating with sensitive sources but one of the genders has the upper hand. Jennifer Griffin, a famous American journalist who currently serves as a national security correspondent for FOX News Channel said in an interview “*We can say things our male colleagues can’t. We have access to more than double the population in conservative societies just by being women ourselves. And we can tell stories with greater empathy*” (Storm and Williams, 2012, p. 51). Similarly, women have access to places where men are not allowed, and subjects perceive them as “*non-threatening and someone not to be taken seriously*” (Thomas 2007, p. 167). This was proved by almost all respondents in this research being inclined towards women photographers having an advantage in sensitive stories, especially about women and children. Marek, a Polish photojournalist talks about how sensitive issues with victims like sexual crimes can be difficult for a man because most offenders are men. This also supports Campbell and Critcher’s research in 2018 - “*women have a sense in...gaining access unique to the world of women, women photographers have intimate access to subjects which would otherwise remain under-represented*”(p. 1541).

On the other hand, for the gender pay gap, only female respondents spoke up. For example, Katya, a Ukrainian photojournalist, had an argument with an editor who refused her equal payment because she is a woman and has a working husband in spite of her submitting quality photographs. This aligns with Olsen & Walby (2004) who argue that gendered wage inequality is one of the most persistent features of the labor market which is evident in this research for some of the participants as well and in most cases, the determinant of it is gender.

For the working conditions, differences can occur depending on the basis of profession such as whether a journalist is a photographer, or videographer or just working with text for a particular news agency. It is important to note that there are little to no gendered differences regarding the training of photojournalists. During the interviews, the female photojournalist mentioned that there is no separate safety training for women photojournalists. This corresponds to research from previous studies where women journalists covering conflict zones have confessed that they have not received any training from organizations that recruit them, but they have to undertake personal initiatives to train themselves before war assignments for hostile environments, and defense training (Storm and Williams, 2012)

It is important to note that as far as autonomy goes, most respondents especially freelancers confess to providing suggestions for the topics because they have more awareness of the situation from where they are reporting. Sometimes the stories that the photojournalists end up working on are often a collaboration of both the news agency and the photographer on the ground. Oksana Parafeniuk who works with Getty Images talks about the freedom of autonomy of photographers in Ukraine. She mentions that most of the time, stories are a product of both her and the publication's suggestions keeping in mind some standards of the news agency. Some photojournalists say the requirements of news agencies changed over the years. For example, initially, when the full-scale invasion started, they wanted frontline stories but things might have changed in recent



times, especially after the earthquake in Turkey, and the Israel-Palestine war. Sometimes, the requirements change with respect to various media agencies. When it's newspapers, the Polish journalist Wojciech says that he has less autonomy over the selection of stories.

The results from the thematic analysis of this research have more or less aligned with the gender encoding themes such as individualism, glass ceiling, and motherhood from previous research. (Campbell and Critcher 2018). Wojciech, a male photojournalist confessed to making jokes with his female colleague about urination on the battlefield and he acknowledges that this is difficult for women photojournalists (Tumber and Webster 2006). He talks about how women while photographing have to go behind the car or in the field to urinate. Additionally, Oksana stresses the physiological differences and the absence of toilet facilities on the frontline that corresponds to the research of Chambers et.al in 2004 and Tumber and Webster in 2006.

It should be noted that although Social Role Theory was used to analyze the research questions, the results for the most part contradict the theory when it comes to war photography. This research to some extent also contradicts Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn's (2011) research that suggests women have historically been expected to perform some very specific roles in the war zone because it is evident from the interviews that women are equally capable and have been working on the frontlines alongside male soldiers.

Although research shows that society is changing and women are given more freedom in their choices the numbers on the field say otherwise. The following discussion by the Ukrainian photojournalists highly contradicts Korte's (2009) research which argues that there is a constant increase in the number of female war reporters.

Oksana, a Ukrainian journalist while speaking to Lynsey Addario concluded that the frontline of Ukraine especially during the first year was a boy's club - "*there were hardly 20 female photojournalists*". Such findings were consistent throughout the interviews and were acknowledged by a couple of male photojournalists as well. Slava, a male photojournalist confesses that there are more men than women, especially on the

Ukrainian frontline. The ratio of men to women can be 3:1. Vasilisa, a female, agrees with him giving an example of a local TV station in Kharkiv, where the mentality of the small station was narrow-minded in the sense that the men working there could never imagine a woman with a camera. However, workplaces like the Associated Press have an international outlook having women journalists across all types of journalistic roles. Keeping the above findings in mind, it should be noted that gender inequality might be lower in international agencies like the Associated Press but it very much exists in local media. Consequently, research supports the fact that women still comprise a minority in journalism as a whole (Beasley and Gibbons 2003; Craft and Wanta 2004).

Keeping in mind the statistics provided by the interviewees, as stated before there were photojournalists who thought there were more women in a particular field. Both local and foreign journalists of different ranges of age, such as Yevhenii, Vasilisa, and André have mentioned the dominating presence of women in broadcast journalism. This supports the research on journalistic disparities “*With the exception of the BBC Radio 4 program, which had a 3.5:1 ratio of men to women presenters or anchors, there was broad parity across the televised newscasts. On Sky News, women presenters outnumbered men...*” (Howell, Singer 2016, p. 1070). Similarly, the aforementioned statements from the respondents aid in the sustenance of previous research - “*Women television journalists....and their high visibility in television broadcasting*” (Steiner, 2017, p 1)

Previous studies suggest that in broadcast journalism, “*one major and ongoing problem is the emphasis on women’s physical attractiveness, which determines who gets hired, how their talents get used, and how long they last*” (Steiner, 2017, p.10). Additionally, mass media undermine women’s achievements with their physical appeal (Famy, 2004). The same notions are observed in the field of war where according to André, the female journalist Vasilisa Stepanenko’s physical attractiveness is highlighted more in journalism than her contributions.

Soldiers who are mothers in armed, militarized space wrestle with a cultural dichotomy between the figures of the “good mother” giving life in childbirth and the “brave soldier”

taking life in war (Zarzycka 2016). One of the topics that many female photojournalists discussed in this research was the consequences of being a mother while navigating a full-time career as a war photojournalist. In this case, traveling and safety are two big concerns on their minds. Some even talked about not having kids because of their careers. When it comes to journalism, there is a widespread norm among executives hinting at women's incapability to break through the glass ceiling, which is linked to the challenge they face while combining family and work (Pollard, 2005).

**RQI) According to male and female photojournalists, how does gender affect their work in the Russia-Ukraine war?**

**RQII) How do practices related to the production of photos vary for male and female photojournalists in the Russia-Ukraine conflict?**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the evidence of gender in the perceptions and practices of war photojournalists. As the research suggests, gender can work in multifarious ways in war journalism (Famy 2004; Prentoulis, Tumber, Webster, 2005; Ross, Moorti, 2005; Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn 2011; Palmer and Melki 2016; Zarzycka 2016; Campbell, Critcher 2018; Allan 2019). It is not always straightforward or black or white, but there are profuse factors and variables that need to be considered with complex qualitative research such as the concerned one.

Consequently, this research has addressed the research questions in various ways with concrete evidence in the form of a literature review, theoretical framework, and interviews- their coding, analysis, and discussion of the same. Each of the aforementioned statements backed up with arguments answers the research questions but also invokes a few more. It is evident from this research that gender plays a role in the work of war photojournalists covering the Russia-Ukraine war in certain cases that have been mentioned in the chapter Is There Something Gendered About It? There is strong evidence that gender affects the access to sources on the battlefield, job opportunities for photojournalists, their wages, and family decisions. The gendered codes of the research

such as *Inequality, Disparity, and Parenthood/Family* shed light on the way gender affects the work of photojournalists covering the war answering RQ1.

Apart from gender, there are '*other factors*' that affect the work of male and female photojournalists such as *Negation, Individualism, Environment, and Emotions*. The arguments mentioned by the interviewees in the chapter *Beyond the Gender Factor* highlight the ways practices vary for male and female photojournalists. These practices have nothing to do with gender but with their worldview, different editing techniques, and different storylines depending on the time of the war that are different for male and female photojournalists. Environmental factors like organizations, news agencies, and magazines with their respective standards and requirements take center stage in making crucial decisions on the news coverage of staff photojournalists. They decide on the type of storylines, topics to focus on sometimes having underlying motives, and angles of the stories. Freelance Photojournalists, on the other hand, might have more freedom in their practices. They stress the knowledge of language, individual abilities, patience, and connections with press officers that determine the quality of photographs and access to good stories on the battle zone that can vary across male and female photojournalists. For example, even a male photojournalist can have better communication with sources than a female photojournalist which can affect his work leading him to craft emotional stories. On the other hand, a female photojournalist in spite of physiological differences can carry more photographs and safety equipment than her male counterparts if she has the patience and experience to get quality photos. These codes occur more frequently than the gendered codes that help the author answer RQ2.

This strong evidence has urged the author to conclude that gender is *one of the many factors* that play a role in the production of conflict photos for male and female photojournalists and there are other factors that result in variations in their practices in the Russo-Ukraine war. But without further analysis, it is difficult to say the extent to which gender will have an effect on the production of conflict images especially in a different conflict or war. For example, Israel-Palestine (2023-present).

## 5.1 Limitations and Scope for Future Research

As far as the findings are concerned, the interviews speak for themselves but again these results cannot be generalized to a wider population. Additionally, the relationship between what the research strives to prove and the sample size to do so is unbalanced. One of the problems in this research is that not all photojournalists are of similar age and have the same experience of reporting on war zones. Hence, it becomes tricky to analyze to what extent gender has an influence on the representation of the photos while keeping the other variables such as age, experience, and career opportunities constant. Lastly, my topic of research is highly gendered, the author being a woman might have potential personal bias.

Some topics that were not a part of the core of the research initially made their way to the interviews and might require further analysis. A handful of respondents while talking about news coverage mentioned differences between foreign photojournalists and local photojournalists, the practice of Parachute Journalism in Ukraine, and Ethics in War Photojournalism among others. These discussions highlight differences in payment, news coverage, insurance, and emotions surrounding the Russo-Ukraine war.

Other respondents especially the local Ukrainian photojournalists think that their pictures are “calmer” than other male and female Western photojournalists. Some say “*they can catch more emotions*” and their ways of working or practices might be more formal involving fewer conversations. However, some respondents extended this discussion to highlight the concept of “Parachute Journalism” which serves as a gripping research topic considering the recent debate over their roles and the effect of journalistic ethics. According to Ukrainians, foreigners are just parachuting to Ukraine for a quick dramatic story. Local photographers stress that this war is significantly different for them than outsiders who do not have to live with the war every day, protecting their families and going through the horrors. These statements accentuate the gravity of full-scale wars and

the way they are perceived by journalists both local and foreign, their practices, and their assignment requirements from international news agencies.

A few respondents spoke about differences not only among the binary but also among women photojournalists who are using social media as a powerful platform. Julia Kochetova is the perfect example, a young Ukrainian photojournalist in her 20s who started to document the war after the full-scale invasion, and her photos from isolated locations that do not have easy access made her famous on Instagram. Her personal captioning style combined with blue color temperature conflict photos serve as some sort of brand identity for her online community consisting of more than 45k followers

## **5.2 Is There a Bigger Purpose in Conflict Reporting?**

In the age of social media, photojournalists are gaining popularity and millions of followers with the help of rising views on their photos and videos of the war field. In these detailed pictures that are defining war every day, emotions are always heightened, destruction highlighted, and people on edge profusely commenting on posts. Keeping this in mind, one of the foreign photojournalists focused on the concept of agenda. This finding from this research cannot be overlooked and highlights factors way more significant than gender for conflict photos. André Luis Alves, a Portuguese photojournalist talks about how sometimes in both the local and international media, there is a narrative that needs to be pushed forward and this is done with the help of some very influential journalists. He gives an example of the controversial stories of Ukrainian soldiers where there are conveniently no names mentioned and the same for every polemic thing that comes up. No one wants to give a face to this kind of reporting. The narrative keeps getting changed from time to time to gain some sort of support. But the question is how much of the narrative that is portrayed in the media is the truth? This discussion provides a bigger perspective on war coverage that is currently happening around the world which has been eye-opening in this research.

## Conclusion

Two years have passed since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian occupation in 2022, but the conflict does not seem to end any time soon. With this ongoing war, the future of the geo-political landscape of Europe hangs in the balance. With the evolvement of new tools and technology that can kill people, concepts like war and peace are being challenged like never before. Photojournalists are important agents in this war who are witnessing the unimaginable horror and documenting the war having implications on European policies, history of events, and ultimately the fate of the war.

This study has provided solid empirical evidence of how gender plays a role in the practices and perception of photojournalists who are covering the Russo-Ukraine war (2022-present). The 14 semi-structured interviews of photojournalists that have been analyzed with the help of thematic analysis show that it is only in a few cases such as privilege, parenthood, sometimes payment, and career opportunities that the question of gender is relevant as highlighted in themes such as *Parenthood/Family*, *Disparity* and *Inequality* that answers RQ1.

Overall, it can be said that although there are subtle gendered differences in relation to the production of war photos, in this day and age, Social Role Theory cannot dictate practices and perceptions of war photojournalism. It is hard to cling to stereotypical roles and gendered angles. To summarise, this research finds strong evidence for practices that do not align with the Social Role Theory ie; both male and female photojournalists work on stories that can be considered “emotional”. Women photojournalists even though having different physiological integration can perform tasks similar to men

photojournalists in war zones. Such findings are consistent with previous research by Alex Westcott Campbell and Charles Critcher, in 2018.

According to the interviewees, the Russo-Ukraine war has witnessed more local female photojournalists covering frontline stories than before but the numbers in the war zones are far from reaching equality any time soon. Themes such as *Individualism*, *Environment*, and *Negation* serve as superior agents in the production and practices of conflict photos. The participants urged that in war photojournalism, styling techniques, access to sources, timing of the war, personal world-view, and type of news agencies play major roles in the practices related to the production of photos that vary for male and female photojournalists that answer RQ2.

One of the core findings that is significant in this research is the inequality issue which was somehow raised by only the women photojournalists and was denied by some of their male counterparts. This somewhat corresponds to the previous study by Lobo et al. in 2017, saying that there should be equal representation of quality and not gender. Laurel, a Hong Kong photojournalist expresses concern over the inequalities that are persistent in the hiring attitude of journalists, “*When it came to the biggest story, where there are high levels of risk and perceived risk, they do end up just hiring men for the most part*”. On the other hand, Wojciech a male photojournalist after agreeing that there are more men than women on the frontline, says that “*there should be an equal representation of quality apart from gender*”. As far as career opportunities are concerned, he feels that especially during the Ukraine war, “*more assignments are been given to female photographers*”. The stark difference between the two statements cannot be overlooked.

It is essential to note that apart from gender there are multiple other factors that are highlighted in this research that have added nuanced discussions to the existing knowledge of *gender*, *photojournalism*, and *war*. These might help future researchers. However, more in-depth research regarding practices on the frontline should be encouraged. Future research can look into marginalized communities covering the war. In



one of the interviews in this research, a photojournalist made a statement that spoke volumes.

**Laurel:** *“Have you seen any black photojournalist on the news who is covering the Russo-Ukraine war yet?”*

## **Summary in Czech**

Tento výzkum se snažil zjistit, jakým způsobem může gender ovlivňovat práci válečných fotožurnalistů a fotožurnalistek a jak se může projevat ve válečných fotožurnalistických postupech a vnímání rusko-ukrajinské války. Pro zodpovězení výzkumných otázek poskytla tato studie důkazy o tom, jakou roli hraje gender ve fotografiích z konfliktu, a to pomocí kvalitativních polostrukturovaných rozhovorů se 14 fotoreportéry a fotoreportérkami, kteří pokrývají válku, jež změnila geopolitickou krajinu Evropy. Tato studie ukazuje, že otázka genderu je relevantní pouze v několika málo případech, jako jsou privilegia, rodičovství, někdy plat nebo výše finančních odměn a kariérní příležitosti. Celkově lze říci, že sice existují jemné genderové rozdíly ve vztahu k produkci válečných fotografií a novinářskému vnímání, ale v dnešní době je těžké lpět na stereotypních postupech a genderově podmíněných úhlech pohledu. Existují totiž významější faktory, jako je třeba individualismus a prostředí, které hrají při produkci válečných fotografií významější roli.

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## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Appendix1

Interview Transcript of Laurel Chor, an Emmy-nominated freelance photojournalist and filmmaker.

**Laurel:** Hey. Hi Shirsha, How are you doing?

**Shirsha:** Hey Laurel, I am fine. How are you doing? Is it okay for you to give the interview now, like at the airport?

**Laurel:** Yeah, no it is not a problem. We haven't even started boarding, someone is sick on the plane here, so I think it might be a little while. I think we have time and if not we pick up where we left off later on if needed.

**Shirsha:** Okay. Okay, great. So is it okay if I record this interview? Because I would have to transcribe it and stuff. Just let me know if at any point you feel uncomfortable or want to say something off record I can pause the recording so no worries.

**Laurel:** Of course. Okay. Okay.

**Shirsha:** So just to elaborate on the topic. So my topic is how practices related to the production and representation of photos vary for male and female photojournalists who are covering the Russo-Ukraine conflict.

**Laurel:** Okay, so there are not that many woman photojournalists anyway?

**Shirsha:** oh yeah I see. So can you just start by introducing yourself and what is your profession? And how do you identify yourself? whether as a staff or freelance photojournalist and stuff like that.

**Laurel:** My name is Laurel Chor, and I am a freelance journalist, photographer, and filmmaker.

**Shirsha:** Do you work for any media outlet? Or are you an independent journalist?

**Laurel:** Yeah, I've been freelance. So I've worked for different media outlets, depending on you know, wherever, I get a job where. And I'm also independent. I'm also making an independent film, so.

**Shirsha:** Oh filmmaking that is so creative. And like which media outlets have you worked for before? If you don't like mind naming a couple of them?

**Laurel:** Like, ever or for the war? A war?

**Shirsha:** Oh, yeah like overall.

**Laurel:** I worked for an agency called Soba Images, Huffington Post, an immediate company called Project Braves, and NPR. And publication called The New Humanitarian. There's Getty Images and, the Washington Post. That's kind of all that I can think of right now.

**Shirsha:** Okay. Okay. Amazing. That is like so many companies and a variety of them. And, like, how long have you worked as a photojournalist?

**Laurel:** I've been a journalist, doing all sorts of media for nine years.

**Shirsha:** Okay. Yeah, that's a lot. You have quite the experience.

**Laurel:** Yeah yeah I guess.

**Shirsha:** And like, how do you think like, your experience covering the Ukraine war is different from like, have you covered? Like conflict zones or war before?

**Laurel:** No, I've covered like, disasters and purchase? Not War.

**Shirsha:** Okay. Like, how is the Ukraine war different from the previous protests or disasters that you've covered?

**Laurel:** I guess it's the level of danger that is quite different. The area that you need to cover is so vast, you know, 1000s of kilometers long. And the nature of the danger is, was very different from anything else. It's quite a high-risk thing to cover. There are a lot of unpredictable things. You know, even though I haven't covered other wars, this is a peer-to-peer war. So you're not necessarily embedded with the winning side with overwhelming superiority in the air or land or anything. So it's, it's a very dangerous thing to cover.

**Shirsha:** Yeah I feel this war stands out for so many reasons. It is full scale, the weapons that are being used are so insanely dangerous, there has been so much loss of life and property already and unfortunately, there is no stopping it any time, but I hope sooner than later.

And like, oh, like how you were mentioned previously, like, do you see a lot of female journalists like on the field with you who are like covering the same thing?

**Laurel:** I mean, there are certainly women journalists covering the war. But I think especially in freelance it's mostly men, majority, vast majority men for freelancers. And then with staffers, honestly, I'm not so sure it still kind of feels like it's all men. But yeah,

definitely. I rarely don't often come across other women journalists. Not as much as male journalists, for sure.

**Shirsha:** Yeah, like in the article. also for suppose like CNN or TIME if I see photojournalists, it's like out of 10 hardly there are like two or three are female and the rest are male photojournalists.

**Laurel:** Yeah, no, for sure. I actually think publications have done a really bad job of hiring women to cover the Ukraine war, it kind of feels like, you know, obviously, this is not based on hard data. But it feels like a lot of, you know, the media industry in general talks a big game about diversity and inclusion and having more women or even nonbinary photographers. But when it came to the biggest story, where there are high levels of risk and perceived risk. Yeah, they do end up just hiring men for the most part. And I think women photograph data in 2022 found that there are actually fewer women photojournalists that are covered on the front pages of newspapers. So yeah, seems like for the last year too, the numbers are not going in the right direction in terms of women photojournalists being hired by publications.

**Shirsha:** And do you think like, there is a gender factor when, as far as like the representation or the reproduction of conflict photos are concerned, like for the Ukraine war, basically?

**Laurel:** What do you mean?

**Shirsha:** Like, do you think a female photojournalist would cover a different thing from a male photojournalist or can we align certain angles to certain pictures?

**Laurel:** I mean, there are so few women that it's almost pointless to generalize because it feels like you know, there are individual data points as I can speak for myself, and I can speak for specific women, but it's probably not necessary, you know, representative, all we're going to address I would say that actually, general No, that's not the case that there

is that woman photographed the war differently. But that said, I think there are women photojournalists who are photographing the war differently than men. And that is a unique and needed perspective that men aren't doing if that makes sense.

**Shirsha:** Okay, can you describe how is it different? Can you elaborate on it with examples?

**Laurel:** like, for me, you know, one photographer, I mean, there's a few actually, actually, yes, you know, there's Julia Kochetova I think her work is very emotional and symbolic and covers the war. I would say, like, almost all the male photojournalists are kind of hard news or documentary photojournalists. Whereas, you know, the women are two but their work tends to be maybe more symbolic, more thoughtful, more. More or less intelligent, but yeah, it's it's it's a different kind of photography. It's not, you know, not saying all the women are doing this, but I think the people who are the people who set out the woman who sent out to me, the voltage switched out to me who are doing that are actually mostly woman. There's Anastasia Taylor Lind, Paula Bronstein, Lyseny Adarrio, Julia as a Ukrainian and you know, her work is super personal, deeply personal. And, you know, in a way not traditional photojournalism at all, you know, she's doing more long-term work. There is a woman journalist, I am forgetting her name she does beautiful pieces for NPR about love and war and her work is just like also very emotional and heartfelt. And for me, as well I think you know, I probably lean more towards like hard news, but I think I'm also more interested in like women's issues or just issues of, of marginalized groups like the last piece, I did was about a drag show. And, you know, I don't think that's the kind of story that men are doing. So, yeah, I do think women, of course, offer a different perspective, I think any diversity, you need a diversity of voices to cover any story. And I don't want to necessarily, like peg women into a cliché or stereotype or say, like, you need to hire a woman because we offer a different perspective. I mean, that's certainly true. But you know, they should hire women, more women, because that's just what they should be doing.

**Shirsha:** Yeah, like equal opportunities and stuff like that.

**Laurel:** Yeah, and even just, you know, beyond photojournalist like, I've had this conversation with other journalists, you know, their stories I think men don't think of or dismiss that, actually are legitimate stories. Like I'm talking to one young journalist, she was doing a story about like, plastic surgery during the war, and like, just things that men in general, like straight white men, are really not interested in, you know, like, is like a drag show I did. Yeah, it is. I am sorry, I'm sort of contradicting myself. I think it's like, on one hand, I don't want to like, say that women automatically, all women are doing certain things. But it is true that like, yeah, you need one huge reason why you do need more women is because you are missing a big part of the story. When you're only hiring photographers and photojournalists from the same ethnic, gender, socio-economic, and geographic background.

**Shirsha:** yeah, yeah. Exactly. And like, considering, like, the dangers and the tricky circumstances, like, what would you say your motivation for this job was like, especially like covering the war as a photojournalist?

**Laurel:** I think, for me, you know, it's obviously one of the biggest and most important stories of our lifetimes. It's not this generation, it's not the century. So as a journalist, you have that urge to cover important things to be there to bear witness. And that's what drove me to go there in the first place. And I just got really invested in the story. The more time I spent there, the more people I got to know, and the more I learned. And now it's been a year that I've been covering the war. And I've also realized that I have as a freelancer, as a woman, and as a woman of color, I have a lot to offer, in that my perspective is different. As a freelancer, I can go places that staffers can't, aren't allowed to go to, I can spend lots of time in places that staffers don't go to. So I'm realizing that in such an important story that needs to be told, not just for right now, but also for posterity. It feels like I have a real contribution to make that you know, if I do my part here, like I have a real part to play in this.

**Shirsha:** Yeah. Yeah, exactly. As a person of color myself, I feel like, I'm doing a Master' in Denmark. And I can just see, like, there is like, the difference in the problems that we have, like our thought process and what I bring to the table. It's like completely different.

**Laurel:** And yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And just like by virtue of being there, you offer so much to your peers, I'm sure other than someone else exactly like them. So, you know, the benefit isn't just to the people you're hiring, but also the industry and the community at large.

**Shirsha:** Yeah, exactly. I totally agree. And like, talking about pictures, like how do you decide like, what picture you want, like, in the war zone? Like do you look for specific frames or specific patterns and stuff like that? Like, can you just walk me through like when you're there on the field, like how do you decide and like, whether you shoot landscapes or portraits and stuff?

**Laurel:** I think my work varies widely for freelancers, anything from spot news to daily life to specific stories, character-driven stories. I'm also filming an independent documentary. For me, the stories I want to tell are always human-driven. And I hope to capture and convey the emotions that the people affected by this war feel. And I think my work often tends to be quite narrative and that it's a yeah, for me, it's emotions and actions, it's things happening and how people feel when these things are happening. You know, I think, another one of my strengths as a journalist, and, you know, certainly, the fact that I'm a woman plays a part in this is that I think I, you know, I strive to make people feel comfortable around me and I strive to be unobtrusive. And I think I'm able to capture scenes that other people can't. And I think that is sort of my, strength, to sort of be a fly on the wall and try to capture emotional moments that I hope, foster empathy in people viewing or readers far away. Yeah.

**Shirsha:** Like, do you think like, a male photojournalist, in your place would cover similar things? Or would go in a different direction? Or like, like, in the past, have you had like disagreements over like, what to cover or something like that?

**Laurel:** No, because I can do what I want. I mean, I think one disagreement that I did have with a colleague was like, I really want to do a story about like, women getting eyelashes done. And he's like, No, that's like silly and demeaning. Like are we just perpetuating stereotypes? And he thought it was stupid and I argued, like, no, like, this is resistance, like, it's so badass that women are doing this as I like those are things that I do, it is not sexist to think that it is demeaning to do those things just because they are inherently female. And you know, because they're seen by men as being silly or, or you know, vain and frivolous, but I think it's really cool that if that woman even in the war zones and frontlines are still getting their nails done and getting their hair done. I think it's empowering so I think those kinds of things where you know, or even like direct shows like I hired a local producer for a shoot and he's someone I work with a lot, I work very closely with and that was the second time we had done a story about this specific drag queen and the first time he didn't even know it, he never even heard of that word never even heard of that concept and he thought it was ridiculous. And you know, this drag show he had never seen anything like it and you know just men in general it's not something they would usually consider.

**Shirsha:** Now I am curious, What was the drag show like?

**Laurel:** The drag show, like I think, like I went and had a great time and felt comfortable. I didn't know if I got great photos because the performer is less comfortable around me and I don't think they would have felt comfortable with me, you know. I think also like just the nature of the issue, the nature of conflict and conflict journalism and journalism especially attract certain you know, it's war very male and violent and almost all soldiers are male. You know, there's, it's an extremely male world and it's kind of an environment that attracts men who buy into male stereotypes, right? So oftentimes, conflict attracts men who are attracted to adrenaline. They love I always like, like men who cover the war, like, like, I honestly do not care about like fighter jet models and bullet calibers and different artillery units, different types of tanks and different guns. Like, I don't know anything about those things. Obviously, I've had to learn out of necessity because it's very relevant to what I am covering but like, I do not care. It's interesting, but it's not why I'm



covering the war. And I think that's like a very male thing. It's like men who like to play with toy soldiers. And like, whereas like, I'm gonna do things like drag shows or, you know think about the women and the children who are affected, or, you know, I think we just have, are not just running towards the action and explosions, necessarily, I'm not at least trying to cover the stories that are a bit. So we're, I'm more in-depth and more emotional.

**Shirsha:** Have you noticed any gender privilege while you are working in the field?

**Laurel:** Yeah. Yeah, I think I think, you know, for sure, easier for me to access like, spaces for children or women. You know, I've been in situations where I've seen male colleagues, like, act quite insensitively, in my opinion, you know, being in a hospital where you're photographing victims of shelling, and, you know my college just like asked a woman to like, take off her robe, and like, show her injuries, and she's, completely, naked in a room full of strangers. And I thought that was inappropriate. And I felt uncomfortable. And I felt a bit like I failed a bit as a journalist for not protecting her even though I was a necessary part of that interaction.

Yeah, I mean, for sure. Like, you get kinds of access that men don't, but at the same time, as men love to, men like to highlight that for like, there's a lot of ways in which I don't get access, specifically because of a little and oftentimes, like, again, because Ukraine is quite traditional, and war is, men get overly protective of me and tell me what I can and cannot do. And I've had multiple soldiers telling me like, you know, if I were just some other middle-aged, photojournalist, they wouldn't care. They wouldn't care if they died, whereas, with me, they'd be more inclined to care or not let me in bed with them. Or a lot of things like you are a woman, you shouldn't be here. And there's also again, like wars, they all environment, like in the barracks. Yeah, you know, men again, being overprotective and not wanting to expose me to the craft soldiers and not you know, are being fearful what would happen if I were captured or I would be treated differently. I can add that women and men and women and children are more comfortable around me. There are way more downsides, really. But you know, women, a woman of color. I think

we're all used to just trying to play to our strengths and how people perceive us and then using that for advantages as much as we can.

**Shirsha:** Talking about the differences do you think the working conditions and the payment is the same for both genders? Have you experienced any sort of inequality in the past or something?

**Laurel:** Yeah, I think so. You know, it's all things that are very hard to quantify or pinpoint in any particular direction, but I think I'm more punished and punished for being more assertive and for, asking for what I want and or for fighting for myself a lot of the time in ways that men aren't men get away with.

**Shirsha:** Can you elaborate more with an example suppose?

**Laurel:** Whereas like, I think when you are a woman you have to be extra friendly all the time to not be called a bitch, right? So I think, you know, in general, and honestly, in the context of Ukraine, I have actually felt like I was punished for standing up for myself. So that was a lesson learned.

**Shirsha:** Okay. and like when you're working for a newspaper or news organization, how much influence your editor has in deciding what to cover and what you don't?

**Laurel:** For the newspaper, I, you know, cover what I'm told to that is a bit limiting, and then for the agency, I'll just go and do what I want.

**Shirsha:** like how the concerns about your security, especially your physical and mental security, shape how you approach your job as a photojournalist.

**Laurel:** You know I don't want to die. That's kind of the only consideration really. Generally, that's part of the answer because you're always having to make decisions

yourself. Honestly, again, like, meaning organizations are so diverse that I find their security protocols to be helpful or rational. But yeah, safety. Trying not to die.

**Shirsha:** Do you guys receive some sort of training? And again, like, like, do female and male journalists, like see, like receive different training?

**Laurel:** Yeah, that's a good point. I have had it three times. One time it was as a staffer. The second time it was paid for by a meeting orientation And then the third time. And so I always try to have some of the training that is available. They will vary. They vary widely in quality. It's a weak regulated industry or certification.

**Shirsha:** Is there any gendered training as in a separate training?

**Laurel:** Not particularly, but there were elements that were relevant, like self-defense, I guess. But generally, I think there is a lot of gender-specific training that I consider that is not meant to change. I will ask if I should bring an emergency contraceptive. Like, you know, in the case of like sexual assault, so there's a lot of things that I think I have to think about, that men don't have to and just in general, you're the only woman and war is a highly male environment man you don't know about that. I think in my experience the training was mostly voluntary, you know.

**Shirsha:** Can you just like list three downsides of being a photojournalist and like, how do you cope with them? How do you navigate around these downsides as a freelancer in general like being a photojournalist?

**Laurel:** Yeah. From my my experience I think it's traveling a lot like traveling for content. Never been in one place that's really hard as a freelancer I think it's very stable work or very little. Yeah, interesting. Like a lot. Actually lack of opportunities and money in the industry I think between the neighboring countries that are not doing very well they don't pay very well they don't have a budget so they're not really able to give you such value to ensure that people get paid anything versus giving enough time to do what I do.

**Shirsha:** Lastly, what do you think are the biggest gender issues or inequalities are there for photojournalists?

**Laurel:** I think women especially, to be honest, the lack of support for working with one another, is a concern of mine. I'm not sure what the solution is but I think photojournalism is a very small industry and the loudest, most confident are only being heard, the lack of hiring people of color.

Yeah, the issue of color I feel is everywhere. Another thing that I do want to mention is intersectionality. I think there's a lot of difference, in my opinion, women not only for women but also women of color, maybe. I haven't encountered a single black journalist covering the war right now. And that's not talked about and also the male gaze, the portrayal of women in a certain way, the way that men are usually used to seeing women in the media, in magazines, and in advertisements. A lot of inclusion has to be done. We do the same sort of stories, they attract us but whenever something alien comes, we are not that accepting of it. Also, I get a lot of online harassment about the way I look and everything. So there are a lot of things that need to be talked about in journalistic circles I think.

Shirsha: Yeah true. But all in all, I feel you have answered all my questions. Just wanted to let you know that after I am done with the article, I will send the quotes and have them approved by you. Let me know if you want any changes in the statement or anything. Thank you so much for your time. It was amazing to hear about your experiences in the Russo-Ukraine war, your perspectives, and everything.

**Laurel:** Your project sounds very interesting. I am glad you chose this topic. I would love to hear more about your research. But thank you so much for the interview as well.

**Shirsha:** Thank you so much for your time. Have a safe flight. Thank you. Happy journey. Bye.

## 7.2 Appendix 2

### Codebook for Thematic Analysis

PRIMARY CODE	DESCRIPTION	SUB-CODE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE OF CODING
Gendered	The code <i>gendered (male and female)</i> refers to language suggesting that gender has an influence on reproduction and representation of conflict photos	Disparity	The sub-code <i>disparity</i> refers to language that suggests that there is a gendered difference in general in relation to the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>OksanaJ:</b> 'Being a female', I can get into the circumstances, hospitals or female compounds that of course 'not suitable for the man' or in some Arabic countries, for example, this can lead to some unique shots.</p> <p><b>Wojciech:</b> I think that 'females, all women are privileged' because they are treated in let's say in 'a softer way', which many of the journalists or women in general they don't like, but this is a 'huge privilege' and they can use that to their advantage. I would have done that.</p> <p><b>Laurel:</b> Some Ukrainian women photojournalists are photographing the war differently. Julia Kochetova for example, if you see her work, her stories are deeply personal. Her work is strikingly different from others. But I certainly do not want to peg women into cliched stereotypes. It is just that topics such as plastic surgery during the war, suppose, are not something a straight white guy would be interested in.</p>
		Parenthood/Family	The sub code <i>parenthood/family</i> refers to language that suggests that being a parent/having a family has an influence in practices related to in the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>Katya:</b> I have a 'daughter' who is 11 now and so it is 'harder' for me.</p> <p><b>OksanaJ:</b> I am concerned for my friend who captures photos in the frontline, she has 'two kids' but she has still managed to be a perfect photojournalist.</p> <p><b>Wojciech:</b> I don't know if I would be able to do photojournalism if I would have a family or 'kids'. I don't think so. So I think finding someone who will understand it and explain it to your kids as well would be difficult. I know many of my colleagues quit this job when they started to have kids and family'.</p>
		Inequality	The sub-code <i>inequality</i> refers to language that suggests that there is some sort of inequality of gender in relation to the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>Katya:</b> I had argument with an editor. He said that 'she's a woman, she has a husband and we should'nt pay her equal money.'</p> <p><b>Laurel:</b> When it came to the biggest story, where there are high levels of risk and perceived risk, 'for the most part', publications end up 'just hiring men'.</p>
Other Factors	The code <i>other factors</i> refers to language suggesting that there are other factors (and not gender) influencing the reproduction and representation of conflict photos	Negation	The sub code <i>negation</i> refers to language that suggests refusal of gender influence on the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>OksanaJ:</b> For me there is 'no gender difference' because I 'can do everything' that men photojournalists can do.</p> <p><b>Marek:</b> I 'do not see very obvious gendered differences' in working conditions.</p>
		Individualism	The sub code <i>individualism</i> refers to language that suggests individualistic characteristics (and not gender) has an influence on the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>Wojciech:</b> When it comes to production of conflict photos, it depends on your 'character, preference, and abilities'.</p> <p><b>Elena:</b> In the war zone, when it comes to photography, the 'person' who has the 'patience', 'confidence', and 'strong legs', will automatically spend more time finding the right picture.</p>
		Environment	The sub code <i>environmental</i> refers to language that suggests environmental (and not gender) factors such as organisation and geography have an influence on the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>Slava:</b> Payment and working conditions are different on the basis of 'country and organisation'.</p> <p><b>Yevhenii:</b> The working conditions are the 'same for both genders'. When I work with others, we work like a team. When police say some areas are insecure, it is the same for males and females. When it comes to the access to the frontline and communication it is pretty much the same. More than gender what matters is 'trust and how the journalists communicate with their press officers'</p>
		Emotions	The sub code <i>emotions</i> refers to emotional reactions, evaluative statement and descriptions in relation to the production and representation of conflict photos.	<p><b>Marek:</b> The main story of the war is about humans, animals, their suffering.</p> <p><b>Wojciech:</b> War for me is not about gendered angles and frames but of feelings and emotions.</p>