

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

MA THESIS REVIEW

NOTE: Only the grey fields should be filled out!

Review type (choose one):

Review by thesis supervisor Review by opponent

Thesis author:

Surname and given name: Shirsha Chakraborty

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

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Barbora Součková

Affiliation: IKSŽ FSV UK

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

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

COMMENTARY (description of the relationship between the research proposal and the thesis. If there are problems, please be specific):

2. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS CONTENT

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

| | | Grade |
|-----|--|-------|
| 2.1 | Quality and appropriateness of the theoretical framework | C |
| 2.2 | Ability to critically evaluate and apply the literature | C |
| 2.3 | Quality and soundness of the empirical research | B |
| 2.4 | Ability to select the appropriate methods and to use them correctly | A |
| 2.5 | Quality of the conclusion | B |
| 2.6 | Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production | A |

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

The author presents a comprehensive theoretical part of the thesis, which consists of a theoretical framework and a literature review. She outlines here an extensive range of issues that her chosen topic presents and also brings a critical reflection on it. It has to be said that the chosen topic is not easy to frame theoretically. Unfortunately, this is also evident in the text, although it has dramatically improved.

The author tries to problematise the topic in a vast scope, but this often distracts her from the core themes, which are superficially described. For example, the core concept of Social Role Theory is explained only by a diagram from the publication; it would be better to explain or contextualise this diagram in the text. Overall, the text would benefit from a better structure that focuses on a smaller number of topics discussed (that are directly related to the research) but develops them in more depth, especially in terms of argumentation, and builds and layers the arguments logically to create a solid theoretical foundation for the thesis. Due to that, the description of individual topics is superficial in some places - it outlines many of them but does not develop them fully. The author is mixing some topics in some parts of the text. One example is the chapter Gender Representation and News. It is unclear what the central perspective that the author is trying to develop is.

First, we start with the role of women journalists. However, then there is the representation of women in the media, then the division of the labour market, then the gendered stereotypes. Same with the chapter Women in War Photojournalism - the gendered tropes, the topic of ideology, then the Arab spring - too many particular topics, which would deserve at least its own chapter.

On the other hand, the author presents an appropriately prepared research design and methodology. I would appreciate only a more concrete description of the methods themselves and their limitations and also the exact way how the interviews were conducted (e.g. if the environment where they were conducted influenced their quality, a precise description of the thematic analysis and its implementation...).

Subsequently, the author presents a comprehensive analysis with many interesting interpretations and findings. She divides them into a basic typology that is original, logical and supported by interview quotes. However, I see a problem, as I mentioned during our consultations, that the individual presented statements under each topic are more decontextualised quotes than examples from the interviews, which are only meant to illustrate the described issues. At the same time, their critical confrontation is missing. The author does not really expand on them; she just inserts fragments of participants' answers. There is also a lack of in-depth description of the identified categories (although the author was able to describe them in detail during our consultation very well, in the submitted text, more comprehensive grounding is lacking).

Unfortunately, my objections are also directed at the chapter on Discussion, which is thematically fragmented and, in some places, significantly diverges from the main topic of the thesis. The Discussion is presented too extensively and, at times, confusingly - it should be more of a condensed summarisation in which a comparison to theoretical framework and other literature is presented. It should also clearly demonstrate how the RQs were answered.

3. EVALUATION OF THE THESIS FORM

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

| | | Grade |
|-----|--|-------|
| 3.1 | Quality of the structure | C |
| 3.2 | Quality of the argumentation | C |
| 3.3 | Appropriate use of academic terminology | A |
| 3.4 | Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part) | B |
| 3.5 | Conformity to quotation standards (*) | B |
| 3.6 | Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling) | A |
| 3.6 | Quality of the textual lay-outing and appendices | A |

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

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

As is outlined above, the structure of the thesis is confusing in places, often deviating from the main themes defined by the chapters - it would be better to stick to the themes and deepen their description. This also affects the quality of the arguments, that appear to be weak because the text is often thematically fragmented and thus unable to build a strong line of argument that would anchor the most important central theoretical concepts of the chosen topic.

However, the author uses appropriate and correct academic language with a minimum of errors, cites carefully and maintains the citation standard (the only discrepancies in citation - (Wagner 1989) vs. (Storm and Williams, 2012) - but only in a few places). The thesis is formally prepared very carefully and precisely.

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

Shirsha Chakraborty presented a thesis on a very interesting topic close to her heart, which is evident in the final piece. It is also necessary to reflect on her overall functioning during the thesis preparation because she was conscientious and precise. That is why it is evident that the work has significantly improved during its writing. It also presents very interesting and important findings that seek to reflect on whether and how gender factors influence the practice of war photojournalism. I very much appreciate that she was able to recruit very interesting research participants for interviews. She assembled a unique sample of very experienced photojournalists whose accounts were highly relevant to the topic.

The most significant issues in the text are mentioned above. They are related mainly to the overall structure, which has undergone significant changes but still needs improvement. The author presents theory and literature review in a few comprehensive chapters, where she often combines various concepts without the space to properly explain and reflect upon them. Moreover, some concepts (e.g. core Social Role Theory, photographic tropes, glass ceiling, vertical segregation, wage gap...) are not even sufficiently grounded in theory.

In terms of methodology, the research is appropriately designed and well-implemented. The analysis brings interesting findings, which the author divides into her typology of factors that influence the photojournalistic experience. She concludes that gender is one factor that influences it and reflects this in the text. Unfortunately, as suggested above, the presentation of the results could have been more detailed, precise and critical in the confrontation of the results with other research. Considering the abovementioned objections, I suggest a grade of B or C.

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

| | |
|-----|--|
| 5.1 | |
| 5.2 | |
| 5.3 | |
| 5.4 | |

6. ANTIPLAGIARISM CHECK

The reviewer is familiar with the thesis' score in plagiarism analysis in SIS.

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

| | |
|-----|--|
| 6.1 | The score is higher, but everything is properly cited. |
|-----|--|

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

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F

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

| |
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|--|

Date: 17. 6. 2024

Signature:

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

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