

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: Allegra Rose Diamond

Thesis title: Female War Correspondents and Access in Conflict Zones

Reviewer:

Surname and given name: Sandra Lábová, Ph.D.

Affiliation: IKSŽ

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	B
2.5	Quality of the conclusion	A
2.6	Thesis originality and its contribution to academic knowledge production	A

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

Allegra Diamond's research on female war correspondents and their access to conflict zones is both timely and insightful. By exploring the unique challenges and barriers faced by female journalists, this study has the potential to illuminate their crucial role in covering complex global conflicts and contribute meaningfully to the academic discussion.

The introduction briefly outlines the author's intentions, research objectives, and goals. However, to my assessment, it could be further expanded to provide a more comprehensive introduction to the topic and the scope of the author's research. For instance, it could also include some parts of the literature review, such as the texts on page 11 regarding gender and the definition of conflict zones, which do not provide a literature review (the references are missing) but rather definitions of key terms. Moreover, RQ1: "Does being a woman affect how journalists can access, gather, and disseminate information in conflict zones?" appears overly simplistic, as it invites a binary YES or NO response. This may restrict the potential for a nuanced and in-depth interpretation. Similarly, RQ2: "If gender affects accessing, gathering, and disseminating information

in conflict zones, is it positively or negatively?” adopts a reductive dualistic framework. However, as the study’s findings demonstrate, the experiences of female war correspondents cannot be reduced to a simplistic dichotomy of positive or negative outcomes.

The literature review offers an extensive historical overview of female reporters, extending back to 490 BCE. While this historical perspective is undeniably interesting, it is less relevant for studying contemporary trends. Additionally, the broad period leads to a somewhat fragmented presentation. A more focused discussion on the situation of female war journalists from the early 20th century onward and in the present would better align with the study's objectives. Nevertheless, the literature review remains informative and provides a solid foundation for the research.

The thesis does not include a theoretical framework as a separate chapter. However, it is presented within the Literature Review, specifically in subchapter 1.3, where Gender Theory is discussed. Nonetheless, the thesis would benefit from a more detailed exploration of the concepts involved and using a broader range of scholarly sources. Currently, significant attention is given to Judith Butler’s seminal 1990 publication. While this work is foundational, it would be beneficial to include and discuss critical evaluations from other scholars to provide a more comprehensive perspective. Additionally, the thesis should explain why Gender Theory is an appropriate theoretical framework for the research problem.

At times, in the Introduction and Literature Review facts and context are presented with a lack of precision, and Allegra Diamond should exercise greater caution when addressing certain ideas. For instance, on page 8, she asserts that cave paintings depict "war" without providing adequate references or explanations for this claim, especially given that the meaning of such paintings remains uncertain. Additionally, on page 14, she provides a brief background on the role of female reporters during the World Wars, along with a few rather arbitrary historical counterarguments regarding their presence in conflict. However, the paragraph lacks clarity, as it fails to specify these arguments' particular conflicts. This clarification is crucial, given the significant period of over 20 years between the two wars, during which society underwent profound transformations.

Similarly, on page 16, it would be helpful to clarify what specific conflict Eve-Ann Prentice is referencing. To my knowledge, there has not been a significant conflict in Poland since World War II. Is she referring to more recent demonstrations? Similarly, Romania did not experience any major armed conflicts or wars within its borders after 1945. Further clarification is necessary to avoid ambiguity.

In the methodology section, Allegra Diamond discusses some of the limitations of semi-structured interviews on pages 30-31. In this context, it is important to emphasize that responses in such interviews are often highly subjective and reflect the interviewees' opinions. This limitation must be considered when interpreting the analysis results, as it is essential to contextualize the responses and avoid generalizing them. The subjectivity of the responses is particularly evident in the answers provided by the respondents presented in the study. Under the same chapter, the research design appears disorganized and would benefit from restructuring. It lacks clarity, and the author transitions between topics unsystematically. A more coherent and structured approach would enhance the readability and overall effectiveness of the research design.

The research findings present insightful and thought-provoking information, offering an engaging and inspirational read. However, a notable issue is the dichotomous division into positives and negatives, which reflects the research questions. Based on the respondents' answers, the challenges faced by female war correspondents are highly complex and cannot be accurately represented through such a binary framework. While this approach simplifies the interpretation process to some extent, it ultimately results in a somewhat simplistic analysis that fails to capture the nuances of the subject matter. This issue could be addressed with relatively minor adjustments—such as reformulating the research questions, refining the argumentation, and adapting the structure of the thesis—to move beyond this dualistic framing and provide a deeper and more comprehensive analysis.

Discussion and conclusions are well developed and argued.

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	B
3.2	Quality of the argumentation	C
3.3	Appropriate use of academic terminology	B
3.4	Quality, quantity and appropriateness of the citations (both in the theory part and in the empirical part)	B

3.5	Conformity to quotation standards (*)	A
3.6	Use of an academic writing style, and correct use of language (both grammar and spelling)	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):

At times, relevant page numbers are not provided, such as in sections sourced from Judith Butler's book, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*.

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

The research by Allegra Diamond demonstrates significant potential, offering valuable insights into the challenges faced by female war correspondents. The study is engaging and contributes to the academic discussion on a timely and relevant topic. However, there are several critical areas for improvement. The introduction and literature review could benefit from greater depth and precision. Issues with handling key information, methodological shortcomings, and structural disorganization affect the overall clarity and effectiveness of the research. The study is also impacted by factual inaccuracies and an overly simplistic approach to the research questions. Despite these issues, the discussion and conclusions are well-developed. Based on the review, I would suggest a grade in the range of B-C.

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

5.1	How can the study's findings be used to develop more effective policies or practices for supporting female correspondents?
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	Turnitin indicates an 18% similarity score; however, all citations appear to be correctly attributed.
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7. SUGGESTED GRADE OF THE THESIS AS A WHOLE (choose one or two)

- A Excellent (excellent performance)
- B Excellent (excellent performance)
- C Very Good (above the average standard but with some errors)
- D Very Good (above the average standard but with some errors)
- E Good (generally sound work with a number of notable errors)
- F Fail (unsatisfactory performance)

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

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Date: September 10, 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.