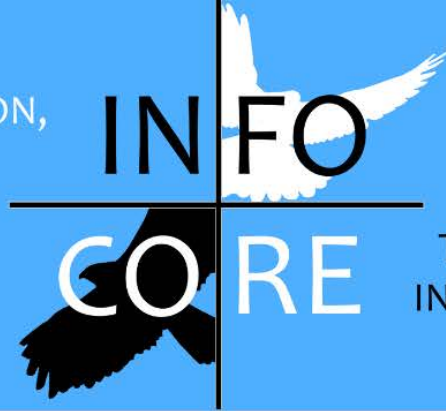


(IN)FORMING CONFLICT PREVENTION,
RESPONSE AND RESOLUTION:



THE ROLE OF MEDIA
IN VIOLENT CONFLICT

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INFOCORE Working Paper

Theoretical/conceptual framework for the gender-sensitive perspective of
INFOCORE (WP 1 – WP10)

Romy Fröhlich

Ludwig Maximilians University Munich



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Theoretical/conceptual framework for the gender-sensitive perspective of INFOCORE¹ (WP 1 – WP10)

Introduction and Definitions

Nearly 20 years ago (1995), at the Beijing Platform for Action during the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women, "stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media" was named one of the 12 most "critical areas of concern". Article 13 of the "Action for Equality, Development and Peace" states: "The media have a great potential to promote the advancement of women and the equality of women and men by portraying women and men in a non-stereotypical, diverse and balanced manner, and by respecting the dignity and worth of the human person". Five years later, in October 2000, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution, in which, for the first time in its history, the Council dealt specifically with the consequences for women of armed conflicts. The resolution determines that women's contributions to conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacekeeping is under-valued, and that – overall – too little use is made of (alleged) female skills in this area. It also calls for the active and unlimited global involvement, on equal footing, of women in peace and security measures. Resolution 1325 marked a turning point in the Security Council's handling of this issue, as it subsequently dealt with it three more times: In June 2008 the Council adopted Resolution 1820, which for the first time established an explicit connection between sexual violence and sustainable peace and security. Resolution 1888 followed, in September 2009, with additional concretisations for the implementation of Resolution 1820, thereby again noting with great concern the "underrepresentation of women in formal peace processes". Only a few months later, in October 2009, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1889, which dealt with how Resolution 1325 can and must be implemented from the year 2000, especially during post-conflict and peacebuilding periods. The issue of "gender, war and violent conflict", therefore, has been at hand at the highest supranational level for almost two decades now.

We *theoretically* and *empirically* understand gender as an analytical category. Along with Peterson (1992), we define gender as "a socially imposed and internalized lens through which individuals perceive and respond to the world"; as a result, we assume that "the pervasiveness of gendered meanings shapes concepts, practice and institutions in identifiable gendered ways" (p. 194). With Sjoberg (2010), we act on the assumption that "(...) gender is a system of symbolic meaning that creates social hierarchies based on perceived associations with masculine and feminine characteristics" (p. 3). And we are convinced that even organisations and states are or can become gendered (Sjoberg, 2011, p. 110). Thus, our project concludes that media organisations (media corporations, TV stations, editorial departments/offices, PR firms, etc.) are also gendered entities. Furthermore, our project also assumes that political, social, economic, ecological and even technological dimensions of war and violent conflict are or can be gendered (cf. Sylvester, 2010, p. 24).

Concerning the following terms and concepts (Table 1), we adapt the Toolkit Gender in EU-Funded Research for all of our project's approaches (Directorate-General for Research, 2009, part 1.3):

¹ The decision on the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) states that "the integration of the gender dimension and gender equality will be addressed in all areas of research" (Decision n° 1982/2006/EC of 18/12/2006, OJ L 412, 30/12/2006, p. 1).

Table 1: Definitions

| | |
|--|---|
| Sex | <i>Sex</i> refers to the biologically determined characteristics of men and women in terms of reproductive organs and functions based on chromosomal complement and physiology. Sex is globally understood as the classification of living things as male or female. |
| Gender | <i>Gender</i> refers to the social construction of women and men, of femininity and masculinity, which varies in time and place, and between cultures. The notion of gender appeared in the seventies and was put forward by feminist theorists who challenged the secondary position of women in society. It departs from the notion of sex to signal that biology or anatomy is not a destiny. It is important to distinguish clearly between gender and sex. These terms are often used interchangeably while they are conceptually distinctive. |
| Gender equality | <i>Gender equality</i> refers to the situation where individuals of both sexes are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations imposed by strict gender roles, and the different behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally. |
| Equal opportunities for women and men | The term ' <i>equal opportunities</i> ' indicates the absence of barriers to economic, political and social participation on the grounds of sex. Such barriers are often indirect, difficult to discern, and caused by structural phenomena and social representations that have proved particularly resistant to change. <i>Equal opportunities</i> , which is founded on the rationale that a whole range of actions are necessary to redress deep-seated sex and gender-based inequalities, should be distinguished from <i>equal treatment</i> , which merely implies avoiding direct discrimination. |
| Gender-sensitive research | <i>Gender-sensitive research</i> consistently considers gender throughout the research cycle. |
| Gender-specific research | <i>Gender-specific research</i> focuses on gender as a subject matter. |
| Gender-blind research | <i>Gender-blind research</i> does not take gender into account, being based on the often incorrect assumption that possible differences between men and women are not relevant to the research at hand. |
| Gender bias in research | <i>Gender bias in research</i> is the often unintentional and implicit differentiation between men and women by placing one gender in a hierarchical position relative to the other in a certain context, as a result of stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity. It influences both the participation of men and women in research (hence the underrepresentation of women) and the validity of research. An example is research that focuses on the experiences and perspectives of either men or women while presenting the results as universally valid. |

Source: Fröhlich (2015, in press)

Research and management-related consequences

We are convinced that "(...) gender hierarchy is a normative problem, the failure to recognize it presents an empirical problem" (Sjoberg, 2010, p. 4). Following the EC recommendations for a systematic and visible strategy to promote gender equality in science and research, our project takes actions relating (1) to the participation of women in research (improving women's participation in research) (see 2.1) and (2) to the gender dimension of research (addressing the gender dimension of research) (see 2.2).

Women's participation

From the outset, we sought to include female researchers in all teams and at all levels. We have achieved this aim: Our project consortium's gender balance has been thoroughly safeguarded in its procedures, objectives and composition. Thus, five of the project's eight Principal Investigators are women, with a slight majority of women also in the extended team. Thus, we easily fulfil the target of "40% women's participation at all levels" set by the EC for FP7. Furthermore, our project coordinator commands a decades-long experience in managing university gender relations and has done extensive research on gender mainstreaming strategies and policy as well as on gender-related aspects of media and communication.

We sought to offer and maintain a gender-sensitive working culture and working conditions. In doing so, our project uses the following procedures to guarantee gender sensitivity in project management:

- Fostering awareness of subtle gender bias throughout the consortium, for instance, by providing a list of available evidence/scientific sources/findings about sex and gender in research management. This Working Paper is part of this.
- Establishing *gender bias and gender sensitivity* as a permanent agenda item at all meetings of the consortium and its bodies. All consortium partners and members will be committed to addressing women's and men's realities equally as an integral part of their actions and discussions.
- The project and all its Work Packages will participate in existing career-relevant, qualitative and quantitative home institution data collection processes.
- Fostering awareness for the gender-biased encoding of leadership behaviour; promoting a female model of leadership; encouraging women's leadership aspirations (especially the mothers in the team).
- All consortium partners need to make themselves familiar with the UN Resolutions on Gender, Science and Technology from March 2011, as well as Women and Science: Mobilising women to enrich European research (EC, 1999).
- Each of the consortium partners is required to develop and apply a gender equality plan according to the basic requirements and standards listed here.
- Fostering awareness for and applying gender-sensitive hiring policy/processes; for instance, recruiting beyond networks, since recruiting through networks usually disadvantage women.
- Commitment to equal salaries for male and female staff (applying legal and regulatory frameworks for salaries in a gender-sensitive manner).
- No frequent or intense travel requirements for female team members with children.
- Encouraging and supporting female team members' publication activities.
- We aim to use gender impartial language.

Further options at LMU (similar offers exist at partner institutions):

- LMU Dual-Career Service – www.en.uni-muenchen.de/scholars/services/dual_career
- Child Care and Family Service of LMU – www.frauenbeauftragte.uni-muenchen.de/kindwiss
- Gender Support Fund; Equal Opportunities Fund, LMU Mentoring for young female scientists; lump-sum subsidies to bridge maternity leave – www.frauenbeauftragte.uni-muenchen.de/mentoring
- Lifelong learning programme LMU-EXTRA for female academics – http://www.frauenbeauftragte.uni-muenchen.de/weiterbildung/lmu_extra1/index.html
- Free lifelong learning programmes Gender and Diversity in Teaching and Gender Sensitive Didactics – <http://www.frauenbeauftragte.uni-muenchen.de/genderkompetenz/index.html>
- The project participants will contribute to existing Gender Studies Programmes at home institutions (at LMU: interdisciplinary Gender Studies Lecture and Study Programme), advertise gender-related or gender-sensitive findings to relevant stakeholders worldwide, and provide a website for those findings.

Gender-sensitive dimension of research

We conduct *gender-sensitive* research – our scientific interest, research question and approach are not gender-specific. Throughout our research, we constantly ask: (1) What knowledge exists on the roles and effects of gender and which parts of this knowledge need to be considered, why,

and in what manner for the theoretical foundation of our research (work packages)? (2) How exactly do we need to link the gender-sensitive character of our theoretical foundation to an appropriate empirical design? In doing so, we address gender aspects throughout all the project's work packages (including management and dissemination!) rather than addressing gender aspects in a specific work package or as a task within a work package. Our project is distinct in this regard.

We use the following procedures to guarantee gender sensitivity in research:

- Fostering awareness of subtle gender bias throughout the consortium, for instance, by providing a list of available evidence/scientific sources/findings about sex and gender as analytical categories of research in the social sciences and humanities.
- Fostering awareness that gender is considered a “key analytical and explanatory variable in research. If relevant gender issues are missed or poorly addressed, research results will be partial and potentially biased. Gender can thus be an important factor in research excellence” (Directorate-General for Research, 2009, part 1.4).
- Developing and fostering constant awareness for the following question: Where, when and why do we explicitly and implicitly apply (or not apply) theoretical and empirical assumptions or interpretations about sex and gender (including research questions), and what are the consequences for our research process and findings?
- Fostering efforts to generate gender-related or gender-relevant findings and to present/publish these in high-ranking publications and at international conferences. In particular, we will:
 - ▶ ... formulate gender-sensitive research questions and/or hypotheses;
 - ▶ ... choose gender-sensitive methodology and design, where appropriate; and
 - ▶ ... gather, analyse and report data in gender-sensitive ways;
 - ▶ ... use gender-impartial language in research material (e.g. in questionnaires), in ethics material (e.g. informed consent templates) and in reports and dissemination material.

Background of our project's gender-sensitive perspective (cf. Fröhlich, 2015, in press)

In accordance with traditional social perceptions of gender, media coverage on war tends to construct men as active participants in wars and conflicts (fighters, aggressors, offenders, active defenders, warrantors of security); men (in particular the military) are also even considered as promoters of war (Fröhlich, 2010). In contrast, women are perceived (not only by the media) as a “pacifying influence” (Sjoberg et al., 2007, p. 2) – as if they naturally oppose war, are peace-loving and resistant to violence, suffer from violence, need protection, etc. This notion is criticised, particularly in feminist security studies, as being a masculine, authoritarian idea, since the appeal for protection and/or shelter (of women and children) often serves as a political and/or humanitarian justification for military intervention and war (cf. Tickner, 1992, 2001). The one-sided and stereotypical thematisation and representation of women and men in the coverage of wars and conflicts is substantiated in several theoretical works and supported purely by narrative single-case analysis (for a synopsis, see Fröhlich, 2015). However, to date, nothing is available on gender bias in the material/messages of the political actors, military public relations, intelligence and other sources of media/journalists reporting on wars and conflicts. Furthermore, we know little about gender bias in the lay public discourse on war and conflict. In general, most of the numerous empirical studies on the media coverage of wars and violent conflicts do not provide empirical gender-sensitive data. However, there is a vast body of gender-sensitive theoretical work from disciplines such as political science and sociology, among others. The overwhelming

majority of these theoretical works originate in the context of political science security studies, within which feminist security studies constitute a special area.

In her classic late 1980s work *Bananas, beaches and bases*, Enloe (1989) states that “(...) the conduct of international politics has depended on men’s control of women’s lives” (p. 4) (see also Enloe, 1994). This context might cause a scenario of mass media’s gender bias in war coverage. Several empirical studies – mainly qualitative – studies found evidence that media coverage of wars and conflicts assigns to women the subordinate role of the peaceful, passive victim, the vulnerable and powerless dependent and survivor, and the sexual object – all in need of security, protection and relief (cf. Cloud, 1994, 2004; Del Zotto, 2002; Elsthain, 1987; Elsthain, 1982; Enloe, 1994; Fröhlich, 2013; Rabinovitz 1994; Stables, 2003; Wiegman 1994). Lemish et al. (2000) are convinced that, in doing so, the media simply “reinforce and reproduce the existing social order” between men and women (p. 150). This also applies to female soldiers. If they are taken as prisoners of war, they transform from acting subjects into passive, protection-seeking objects as was made most clear in the prominent case of Jessica Lynch, who was imprisoned and liberated in 2003 during the war in Iraq (cf. Froula, 2006; Kumar, 2004) as well as in other similar but less well-known cases (see also Nantais et al., 1999). Other researchers strongly question the myth of the peaceful and innocent female victim (Zur & Morrison, 1989; Sylvester, 1987, 2010; Sjoberg et al., 2007).² These authors advocate a model of security policy that recognises the violence of women as well as the gendered nature of violence (and security) in general.

Despite there being very little empirical evidence, some authors (feminist researchers in particular) conclude that the media are largely used to promote wars and to obtain public support for military interventions, in particular by conveying stereotypical pleas for military intervention to protect and/or free innocent women and children and to re-establish security (e.g. Cloud, 2004; Klaus & Kassel, 2005; Orford, 1999; Stabile & Kumar, 2005). For instance, Young (2003, p. 2) argues “that an exposition of the gendered logic of the masculine role of protector in relation to women and children illuminates the meaning and effective appeal of a security state that wages war abroad and expects obedience and loyalty at home”. Brownmiller (1994, p. 38) argues that the transformation of women’s bodies by national actors into a symbolic battlefield of virtual conflicts is a crucial prerequisite for such a process.

However, other authors argue that, especially during armed conflicts or other violent crises and conflicts, female actors leave the public (= media) stage – a place where they are under-represented even under normal circumstances. They are “pushed to the margin and perceived as peripheral to the events” (Kumar, 2004; Lahav, 2010, p. 263) (see also Lachover, 2009; Turpin & Lorentzen, 1998). Although there are few quantitative studies with a broad scope on this question, the few that do exist (Fröhlich, 2010, 2013; Harp et al., 2011) all come to the same conclusion. In the most recent of these studies, Harp et al. (2011, p. 211) summarise as follows: “(...) the exclusion of women’s experiences [in/through war coverage; R.F.] is the norm instead of the exception”.

The few cases where women are significant actors in war and conflict coverage are cases that represent deviance from the usual gender-stereotypical expectations. One example being female suicide bombers³; another is the relatively prominent case of the former U.S. Army reserve soldier Lynndie England and the abuses against male Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison

² For instance, Sylvester (2010, p. 31) points out that more than 3,000 Rwandan women have been tried, and many sentenced, including in international trials, for their contributions to genocidal acts.

³ For an overview of research on female suicide bombers in the media, see Naaman (2007).

in 2004. But because, as Sjöberg (2006) writes, “current gender stereotypes are incompatible with these women’s behavior, (...) their stories are marginalized [in the U.S. media; R.F.] and their realities are buried even deeper” (p. 195). Such marginalisation processes play an important role in military communications, since the narrative of weak women who need to be protected, defended and liberated by male heroes (as the case of Jessica Lynch illustrates) only works if female brutality is ignored by the media and does not enter public perception (cf. Froula, 2006; Privedear et al., 2006; Virchow, 2005).

Thus, even deviance from the expected *normality*, which usually results in high newsworthiness, does nothing to change the consistent marginalisation of the reality of women in wars and violent conflicts. In the case of Lynndie England, a suitable and different gender stereotype was quickly found: That of the *fallen woman*. The use of this stereotype reduces the issue’s complexity. In turn, the reduction of complexity is an important function of the mass media, which is undoubtedly why journalists willingly picked up the military’s interpretation of the events as a case of a *fallen woman*. This example clearly shows how amplification effects occur in war reporting (almost unconsciously): Owing to journalistic war reporting’s dominant alignment with military elite sources, in combination with the power of culturally effective gender stereotypes. Journalists have great difficulty shedding the latter, and shrewd military PR knows how to exploit this.

Taken together, it seems plausible to assume that media coverage of wars, conflicts, defence policy, and security is full of gender stereotypes. However, to date, the empirical evidence is missing. This is why our project applies a gender-sensitive approach. With its potential to analyse large data sets generated in an international context, it will, for the first time, provide quantitative empirical data on the actual gender-stereotypical character of war coverage (content analytical work packages 5 to 8). Furthermore, we have the opportunity to also apply a gender-sensitive approach to our surveys on journalists, political actors, intelligence, and lay publics (work packages 1 to 4). It is one of the declared project goals to link the content analyses to the surveys, and vice versa. In doing so, we will also be able to generate new and more profound empirical results on the question why and how gender stereotypes (if at all) are to be found in war coverage, where they derive from (whether they are promoted by strategic communicators, for instance, and for which purposes), whether communicating actors as well as lay publics are aware of gender stereotypes in discourse on wars and violent conflicts, and so on.

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