

**The coverage of war, security, and defense policy: Do Women matter?
A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Broadsheets in Germany.**

Romy Fröhlich

Gender is a socially constructed category which produces asymmetries and differences and which determines the distribution of power between men and women. One can even assume that the media has a significant role in the construction of gender roles. Media coverage of war is no exception to this, all the more since gender has played a central role in media's coverage and promotion of war (e. g. Cloud 1994; Enloe 1994, 2000a, 2000b). Theoretical studies claim the following: In order to legitimize war, the military and political decision-makers foster and exploit the image of the peaceful yet powerless woman in need of protection as well as the image of the powerful/strong man, who is principally willing to go to war and protect and defend women, children, and the elderly (e. g. Stabile & Kumar 2005). It would seem plausible to assume that gender-stereotypical media reports become particularly recognizable in war coverage. However, until now this question has not been investigated empirically in a broad quantitative and representative way. Although numerous content analyses of coverage of specific wars have been carried out (for example Aulich 1992; Bennet and Paletz 1994; Zelizer 1992), gender-specific questions were not always part of the research agenda so far (see Jaeger 1998; Kassel 2002). Hence, our project attempted to generate the first reliable empirical data for a gender perspective of war coverage on a broad longitudinal basis. The focus is on the representation of women in German coverage on war, security and defense policy between 01/1989 and 12/2000. The main purpose is to empirically scrutinize the popular and prevalent assumptions on women in war coverage – at least for German media coverage – like for example the accusation that gender-stereotypical war coverage essentially reduces the experiences of women during war to an emotionalizing function or the impressionistic observation that men are depicted as advocates of war and women, instead, are portrayed as such people who disapprove of military and violent confrontations, and who are made to suffer (e. g. Elsthain 1987; Tuchman 1979).

We analyzed the politics sections of Germany's two most respected daily newspapers, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The longitudinal approach was chosen to investigate whether or not there is any difference between different wars and any

change in the course of time. In total 10,104 articles on international wars and 3,193 articles on the German federal security and defense policy (N = 13,279 articles) have been identified and analyzed (complete inventory count). Surprisingly, the frequently made claim that women are mainly portrayed in the role of the victim in war coverage cannot be fully confirmed by our study. However, the results show that women in war coverage are almost always without an individual voice. This kind of marginalization might result from a gendered „unofficial/official“ news source dichotomy. As Del Zotto (2002: 148) wrote in her study of media representations of the war in Kosovo, ‘the „unofficial/official“ news source dichotomy is gendered because so much of women’s political agency is conducted through “non-official” channels’.

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