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‘Dangerous Beauty’ⁱ

A feminist analysis of the U.S. and the U.K. media’s portrayal of female soldiers
through the case of Private First Class Lynndie England

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Human Rights Studies
Department of History
Course Code: MRSK62
Semester: Spring 2018
Supervisor: Lina Sturfelt
Number of words: 10550



Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to understand how, and why, the media is sustaining traditional gender norms in their portrayal of female soldiers. The primary material of the study consists of articles published by newspapers in the United States and the United Kingdom, describing PFC. Lynndie England and her actions in the Abu Ghraib scandal. To meet the purpose, the thesis addresses the following research questions: In what ways are Lynndie England and her actions portrayed by the U.S. and the U.K. media, and how can this be understood from a feminist perspective? What kind of gendered images are constructed of female soldiers through this portrayal, and are there any differences or similarities between the media narrative in the selected newspapers? To answer these questions a qualitative content analysis is applied together with a theoretical framework consisting of Laura Sjoberg's feminist theory of war, and Cynthia Enloe's concept of militarised femininity. By analysing the source material, I have been able to confirm earlier scholars' results about how female soldiers are victimised, trivialised and demonised by the media. This result demonstrates that traditional gender norms and perceptions of women's roles in the military specifically, and in the society in general, remain intact. Additionally, my study has revealed that social class intersect with gender in the media's portrayal of female soldiers. This study has also concluded that the selected newspapers' media narrative is similar, but that the British has been worse when it comes to sustaining traditional gender norms.

Key words: Military, female soldiers, Lynndie England, U.S. media, U.K. media, militarised femininity, deductive content analysis, victimisation, demonisation, trivialisation

Dangerous Beauty – en feministisk analys av amerikansk och brittisk medias porträttering av kvinnliga soldater genom en fallstudie av menig Lynndie England

Syftet med denna uppsats är att förstå hur, och varför, media upprätthåller traditionella könsnormer i deras porträttering av kvinnliga soldater. Studiens primärmaterial består av artiklar publicerade av tidningar i USA och Storbritannien, som beskriver menig Lynndie England och hennes handlingar i Abu Ghraib-skandalen. För att uppnå syftet med denna studie ställs följande frågeställningar: På vilka sätt porträtteras Lynndie England och hennes handlingar av amerikansk och brittisk media, och hur kan detta förstås ur ett feministiskt perspektiv? Vilken typ av könsspecifika bilder av kvinnliga soldater konstrueras genom denna porträttering, och finns det några skillnader eller likheter mellan media narrativet i de utvalda tidningarna? För att besvara dessa frågor tillämpas en kvalitativ innehållsanalys tillsammans med ett teoretiskt ramverk som består av Laura Sjobergs feministiska teori om krig, och Cynthia Enloes koncept militariserad femininitet. Genom att analysera materialet har jag kunnat bekräfta tidigare forskares studieresultat om hur kvinnliga soldater trivialiseras, demoniseras och framställs som offer av media. Detta resultat visar att traditionella könsnormer och uppfattningar om kvinnors roller i militären specifikt, och i samhället i allmänhet, förblir intakta. Utöver detta har min studie även visat att klass sammanstrålar med genus i medias porträttering av kvinnliga soldater. Denna studie har även nått slutsatsen att de utvalda tidningarnas narrativ liknar varandra, men att den brittiska har varit värre när det gäller att upprätthålla traditionella könsnormer.

Nyckelord: militären, kvinnliga soldater, Lynndie England, amerikansk media, brittisk media, militarised femininity, deduktiv innehållsanalys, victimisation, demonisation, trivialisation

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1 Introduction

In 2004 during the war in Iraq, a prison abuse scandal commonly referred to as ‘Abu Ghraib’ shocked the world. Photographs of American soldiers abusing Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison were discovered by the United States army, and three and a half months later published by the media.¹ Sensational photos of abusive treatment, rape, torture and murder of detainees by American military personnel was exposed. Torture in wartime is not a new phenomenon, even though there is an international norm against it. Militaries around the world have been involved in several torture scandals, as has the United States military been, particularly in conflicts related to the War on Terror.² What was different, and perhaps most disturbing about the photos from the Abu Ghraib prison, was the faces of the abusers.³ Traditionally, the faces of war criminals have been male. Out of the eleven U.S. soldiers that were convicted of crimes relating to this prison abuse scandal, three of the soldiers were women.⁴

Presumably, there were still more images of men abusing men, yet the female soldiers, specifically Private First Class Lynndie England who was pictured sexually humiliating male detainees, became the focal point of condemnation and the one who attracted the most attention by the media.⁵ By adopting a feminist perspective, the media’s representation of PFC. Lynndie England in the Abu Ghraib scandal becomes interesting to examine as a case study. As feminist scholars have argued, a soldier can engage in torture, but a *female* soldier can never be a torturer.⁶

¹ Iraq Prison Abuse Scandal Fast Facts. *CNN*. 2018-03-18.

² Sjoberg, Laura & Gentry, Caron E. *Mothers, monsters, whores: women's violence in global politics*. London: Zed Books, 2007, p.58.

³ Sjoberg, 2007, p.58.

⁴ Iraq Prison Abuse Scandal Fast Facts. *CNN*. 2018-03-18.

⁵ Sjoberg, 2007, p.58.

⁶ Sjoberg, 2007, p.59.

1.1 Thesis statement, purpose and research questions

The aim of this thesis is to understand how, and why, the media is sustaining traditional gender norms in their portrayal of female soldiers. To meet this purpose, the thesis analyses the way in which PFC. England and her actions in Abu Ghraib are depicted by the media in the United States and the United Kingdom. Women entering the male arena, in this case the military and its hyper masculinity, can be said to be challenging entrenched gender norms and patriarchal structures of power. However, earlier research concludes that assumptions about traditional gender roles still exist and are reproduced by the media.⁷ Even as a soldier, there is still a notion that a woman should act like a ‘real woman’. Idealised notions of femininity are problematic because they trap women into traditional roles based on gender, which ultimately pose a threat to gender equality and women’s rights and opportunities in social and political life.⁸ When the media narrative is marginalising women in the military, they are in fact marginalising all women in the society, which is an argument that I will develop further in the theory section. Therefore, the primary concern of this thesis is to analyse the way in which the media portray female soldiers, by examining the coverage of Lynndie England. To meet the purpose of this study, the thesis addresses the following research questions:

- In what ways are Lynndie England and her actions portrayed by the U.S. and the U.K. media, and how can this be understood from a feminist perspective?
- What kind of gendered images are constructed of female soldiers through this portrayal, and are there any differences or similarities between the media narrative in the selected newspapers?

To answer these questions, a qualitative deductive content analysis is applied. The theoretical framework of the thesis is based on Sjoberg’s feminist theory of war, which is further developed through Enloe’s concept of militarised femininity.

⁷ Ette, Mercy. “Gendered frontlines: British press coverage of women soldiers killed in Iraq”. *Media, War & Conflict*. Vol. 6 Issue 3. (2013): 249-262.

⁸ Sjoberg, 2007, p.222.

1.2 Material and delimitations

The primary material that is examined for the purpose of this study consists of news articles published by selected newspapers based in the United States and the United Kingdom. In the following section I will clarify the process of searching for the primary material, and the demarcations that have been necessary to make. Secondly, I will reflect on the validity and the potential weaknesses of the specific sources.

1.2.1 Primary material

The data for this study consists of news articles describing Lynndie England and her actions in the Abu Ghraib prison. By using the LexisNexis news database, I retrieved articles from two American newspapers and two British newspapers that were published between the dates of the exposure of the prison photos, and when PFC. England was sentenced. Hence, when the heaviest coverage occurred. England was found guilty of four counts of maltreating detainees, one count of committing an indecent act and one count of conspiracy September 26, 2005, and she was sentenced the following day.⁹ The specific dates used for this study were April 1, 2003 – October 1, 2005. I am aware of the fact that the data is published almost 15 years ago, therefore it may not necessarily reflect the current media narrative. This study can not answer if the media narrative has changed during this period of time, and if so, in what direction it has changed. The key word used in the study is ‘Lynndie England’, which generated in 134 stories published by the four selected newspapers, *The Washington Post* (37 articles), *The New York Times* (33 articles), *The Guardian* (35 articles) and *The Sun* (29 articles). I selected these sources because they are popular news outlets that are easily accessible to the general public in the United States and the United Kingdom. I decided to examine specifically the U.S. and the U.K. media because both of the countries are military global powers that participated in the war in Iraq (in a coalition). Hence, there is a reason to believe that selecting the U.S. and the U.K. media will result in a great amount of data. Because the data is in English, it can easily be analysed without any translation.

⁹ Iraq Prison Abuse Scandal Fast Facts. *CNN*. 2018-03-18.

1.2.2 Validity of the source material

In a research study it is essential to critically assess the validity of the material and the sources, in this section I will therefore introduce some information about the advantages and the limitations of the selected newspapers. *The Washington Post* is an American daily newspaper published out of Washington D.C. since 1877. The broadsheet paper, which political stance is left leaning, is considered to be one of the nation's most respected and influential newspaper.¹⁰ The second American newspaper in my study, *The New York Times*, resemble *The Washington Post*. The daily newspaper that has been published since 1851, is also regarded as a left leaning highly respected and influential broadsheet newspaper in the country.¹¹ The first British newspaper that will be examined is *The Guardian*. The newspaper which was launched in 1821 is considered one of Britain's more trustworthy newspapers, and their investigative journalism some of the best.¹² The British newspaper is, as the two American newspapers, a broadsheet paper on the left-wing. *The Sun* on the other hand, is a British tabloid newspaper published since 1964. This right-wing tabloid is Britain's most-read newspaper, and it is said to reflect the mainstream of British public opinion.¹³

I am aware of that in contrast to the other newspapers, *The Sun* is on the right-wing and not the left, and instead of a broadsheet paper it is a tabloid paper. Tabloid papers are known for being geared towards sensationalism, which will likely have an effect on the result in my study. I argue that selecting a different type of newspaper which takes a different political stance than the others, is a benefit to the study and not a weakness, since it makes the study more multifaceted. I want to highlight that my study is only drawn upon an analysis of four specific newspapers, two per country, thus it can not represent the views of all American and British media. Due to the limited amount of sources, my conclusions will only represent the selected newspapers.

¹⁰ What news sources are left-leaning, centrist, or right-leaning? *University of Michigan Library*. 2018-04-28.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Black and White and Read All Over: A Guide to British Newspapers. *Oxford Royale Academy*. 2016-03-28.

¹³ Ibid.

1.3 Research ethics considerations

According to the Swedish Research Council, ethics guidelines and considerations play a vital role in the implementation and quality of research, and in how research findings can be used to develop our society. Researchers have a specific responsibility not only towards the people participating in their research, but also towards all those who may be effected indirectly, negatively, or positively by their results. As stated by the Research Council, ethical considerations in research are largely a matter of finding a reasonable balance between various interests that are legitimate. When it comes to the relationship between the value of the project and any burdens or risks which it might entail for the subjects of the research, its value must be judged to outweigh the risks. Both internationally and in Sweden there are several existing laws and acts with the purpose of protecting the individual person, and ensuring respect for human dignity. Personal data, including data relating to criminal convictions as is relevant for this thesis, may only be collected for one or several of the stated purposes: that they shall be fit for purpose, relevant, necessary for the purposes for which they are handled, and not stored for longer than necessary. For the purpose of examining the portrayal of Lynndie England by the media, I argue that it is both relevant and necessary to name the individual, even though she has been convicted of crimes. This study and its research questions can not be answered or completed without the individual's name. However, I have chosen to not include the infamous photographs of PFC. England abusing detainees, seeing that it is not necessary for the study.¹⁴

¹⁴ Vetenskapsrådet. Good Research Practice. *Vetenskapsrådets rapportserie*. (2017).

2 Previous feminist research

Images of war and violence horrify, yet fascinate us. Research shows that we are obsessed with physical and emotional violence that people inflict on one another, even more so when the perpetrators are women.¹⁵ The photographs of Lynndie England captured the public attention and made headline news throughout the media, they even inspired the band Rolling Stones to write a song specifically about PFC. England (which they named ‘Dangerous Beauty’). Women’s place in the military and in the media have engaged the attention of many, including scholars from different academic disciplines. Some of the questions that have been discussed, especially by the scholars who adopt a feminist perspective, include issues relating to the marginalisation of women in war narratives. For the purpose of this study I have chosen to focus on two relevant topics from previous feminist research: women in the military and violent women in the media. In the following sections I will identify and discuss some of the feminists’ core concerns within these fields.

2.1 Women in the military

Women play important roles at every stage of wars – in war justifications, in war preparations, in war-fighting and in peace-making.¹⁶ In a number of recent wars women have been a significant part of the fighting forces, and their presence as combatants is on the rise across the globe.¹⁷ However, much of the scholarly work on war and gender suggests that war is still associated with men and masculinity, and therefore women can never be ‘real soldiers’.¹⁸ Men are assumed to possess traits associated with masculinity

¹⁵ Hendin, Josephine. *Heartbreakers: women and violence in contemporary culture and literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004, p.2.

¹⁶ Sjoberg, Laura. *Gender, war and conflict*. Cambridge: Polity press, 2014, p.21.

¹⁷ Sjoberg, 2014, p.45.

¹⁸ Cohn, Carol (red.). *Women and wars*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013, p.145.

such as strength, aggression, independence and the ability to protect, while women and femininity are associated with peacefulness, weakness, passivity, innocence, need for protection and beauty.¹⁹ Characteristics that are all supporting the belief that the ideal soldier is male. As emphasised by Cynthia Enloe, one of the first feminists of IR to discuss war in critical ways, while women may serve the military, they can never be permitted to *be* the military.²⁰

Feminist scholars, such as Laura Sjoberg, have argued that societies privilege traits associated with masculinity over traits associated with femininity, therefore gender is not merely a way to differentiate between people, it also creates a power relation between them.²¹ When men are valued over women, the women become unequal, not only in the military and its hyper masculinity but in every social and political situation. Women's capabilities are trivialised and their roles in social and political life are being limited, because of traditional notions of gender.²² For that reason, when women are occupying positions from which they have been previously excluded, such as the military, it can be said that they are progressing to equality. However, feminists have some different opinions relating to gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of more women in the military. While some argue that if more women join the armed forces, and achieve high-ranking positions, their presence can change the military institution and make it less masculine, others argue that the institution will change the female soldiers themselves, they will adapt.²³

What has also been noticed is that an increased number of women combatants do not necessarily equate more equality, throughout history women and their bodies have been used as weapons precisely because of their femininity. Militaries and insurgents' groups have employed women as spies and suicide bombers because of the advantages, women (who are seen as naturally peaceful) are less suspicious.²⁴ The female body has also been used as a weapon of torture, as the events at Abu Ghraib demonstrate. PFC. England has explained this by stating that having a woman on the

¹⁹ Sjoberg, 2014, p.13.

²⁰ Enloe, Cynthia H. *Does khaki become you?: the militarisation of women's lives*, London: Pluto Press, 1983, p.15.

²¹ Sjoberg, 2014, p.14.

²² Sjoberg, 2014, p.14.

²³ Cohn, 2013, p.145.

²⁴ Sjoberg, 2014, p.45.

scene is a way to heighten the humiliation of the detainees.²⁵ In this way, women are not employed because of their great combat skills or physical and mental strength, but because they possess a feminine body. Hence, it is not a progression towards gender equality.

2.2 Violent women in the media

Scholars like Kelly Oliver have argued that critically reading and analysing representations by the media is important in order to understand how we see ourselves and others, it can teach us about the desires and fears that motivate our thinking and behaviour.²⁶ Earlier research show us that when women are not being excluded from war stories, they are often framed differently than men, and in some limited role.²⁷ Enloe has noted that the media representations of war focuses on women's gender - they are not soldiers but *women* soldiers.²⁸

Several studies from varied countries, for example the U.K. and Finland, have concluded that media coverage of women in the military sustain traditional gendered discourses by constantly trivialising them and highlighting their femininity.²⁹ Women are associated with their feminine traits, their appearance and their relationships, thereby their identity as soldiers is almost forgotten by the audience. Feminist scholars argue that this stereotypical portrayal of women is problematic because it has social consequences. The media coverage strip away the women's professional identity, it marginalises them and detract attention from their accomplishments as soldiers.³⁰ The inaccurate representation minimises the women and their roles in war, which is also contributing to assumptions about women's capabilities (or incapability) in social and political life more generally.

²⁵ Phillips, Stone. Behind the Abu Ghraib Photos. *NBC News*. 2005-10-02.

²⁶ Oliver, Kelly. *Women as weapons of war: Iraq, sex, and the media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. p.13.

²⁷ Sjoberg, 2014, p.11.

²⁸ Enloe, Cynthia H. *The morning after: sexual politics at the end of the Cold War*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p.202.

²⁹ Berrington, Eileen. & Honkatukia, Päivi. "An Evil Monster and a Poort Thing: Female Violence in the Media". *Journal of Scandinavian Studies in Criminology and Crime Prevention*. Vol. 3 (2002): 50-72.

³⁰ Ette, 2013, p. 249.

Studies from the U.K. and Finland show that when women commit acts of violence, her sex is the lens through which all her actions are understood. Violence is male and therefore an expected behaviour by men, while violence by women is aberrant, it transgresses normative gender expectations.³¹ A violent woman is explained in two ways, either she is an innocent victim who did not make a conscious choice to resort to violence, or she is a rare exception who is unnatural and deviant compared to other women.³² She is victimised, or demonised. The second way of trying to explain women's non-conforming behaviour leads to sensationalised media reporting where women are constructed as inhuman, monsters and witches. The first way, to victimise women, is commonly done by denying the agency of the women. The feminist scholar Laura Sjoberg has emphasised that in the stories of the female torturers at Abu Ghraib, the agency of the women involved is continuously denied. She argues that who led the abuse is still unclear and debatable, but nevertheless it is undeniable that the women, who allowed the photographs to be taken, who was smiling for the camera, who did not report the abuse, had some agency in their own actions.³³ Sjoberg claims that because these soldiers interrupted gender stereotypes, their stories are marginalised.³⁴ The abuse that took place at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq shakes the inherited images of women, something that the media and the public simply was not ready for.

2.3 Placing the thesis in the research spectrum

Many studies on the issues regarding war, gender and the media have been conducted, especially by feminist scholars. The majority have concluded that the military is an institution built on traditional notions of masculinity, which makes it difficult for women to become a part of it, and that the media's representation of female soldiers reflects problematic assumptions about femininity and women's capabilities. In sum, women in the military have been victimised, demonised and trivialised by the media.

³¹ Berrington, & Honkatukia, 2002, p.50.

³² Ibid.

³³ Sjoberg, Laura. Agency, "Militarized Femininity and Enemy Others". *International Feminist Journal of Politics*. Vol. 9 Issue 1. (2007): 82-101.

³⁴ Ibid.

The abuse scandal and the female abusers at the Abu Ghraib prison have been covered and discussed by the media and by feminist researchers. However, as far as I know, none has critically analysed and made a comparison between the U.S. media coverage of the female soldiers and the U.K. coverage, this has left an empirical gap which I intend to fill. I want to test if there are any differences or similarities between the media narrative in the different countries, to see if their perception of women's place in the military specifically, and women's place in the society in general, is the same. By combining a deductive content analysis with Sjoberg's feminist theory of war, together with Enloe's concept of militarised femininity, I will open new analytical pathways for upcoming scholars. Because I am adopting a deductive approach based on previous knowledge and theory my study can extend and refine existing theory, this will be further explained in the following chapter.

3 Theory and methodology

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and methodology that is applied when examining the primary material. To analyse the way in which the media is representing female soldiers, a qualitative deductive content analysis is employed. The theoretical framework of the thesis is composed of Sjoberg's feminist theory of war, which is further developed through Enloe's concept of militarised femininity. A feminist perspective permeates all parts of this study. By adopting this approach, the media's portrayal of female soldiers becomes important to review.

3.1 A feminist theory of war

As explained by Sjoberg, feminist scholars are looking at the ways the world works through gender lenses.³⁵ They believe that gender shapes both our place in the world, and our view on the world. Therefore, I argue that this is an interesting theory to apply on my study on the media's portrayal of women and their perception of women's place in the military. Feminists see gender as an intersubjective social construct, a construct that is necessary and important for understanding international relations, for analysing causes and outcomes, and for finding solutions and promoting positive change.³⁶ Feminist work thinks about gender as gender hierarchy. Being female or male is not the indicator of gender, instead, femininities and masculinities are genders which produce genderings.³⁷ Gendering is about the distribution of power, which is based on the perceived associations with sex-based characteristics.³⁸ Feminist approaches seek to

³⁵ Sjoberg, Laura. *Gendering global conflict: toward a feminist theory of war*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2013, p.6.

³⁶ Sjoberg, 2013, p.47.

³⁷ Sjoberg, 2013, p.46.

³⁸ Sjoberg, 2013, p.47.

identify, understand and deconstruct gender hierarchies in global politics.³⁹ Sjoberg argues that gender and gender hierarchies are necessary analytical categories for the study of war, and in the symbolism, fighting and experience of war.

The feminist theoretical approach to war in this thesis has origins in Sjoberg's theory which suggest that war is productive of, and reflective of, gender norms in global politics. Sjoberg emphasises that gender saturate every level of global politics. By adopting gender lenses while looking at war, we can understand gendered power, experiences, knowledge and values. According to Sjoberg, a work can be defined as feminist if it analyses gender as power and recognises the current gender order as a normative problem. It applies feminist research questions exploring the relationships among gender, genderings, power and politics, and adopts a feminist theoretical methodology. In other words, feminist studies are about making the invisible visible, rendering the trivial important, bringing women as competent actors to the centre, and understanding them as subjects.⁴⁰

On the basis of the results from earlier research, I suggest that analysing the media's representation of women from a feminist perspective is not only relevant, but vital for scholars within the human rights field. Women's rights are human rights. The media's marginalisation and portrayal of women in traditional gender stereotypes has social consequences because of the power of the press to influence and frame public attitudes.⁴¹ Stereotypical portrayals do a disservice to both genders, because they do not challenge gender roles or assumptions about what women and men can do and can not do. When women's capabilities and accomplishments are continuously trivialised, and feminine traits are valued less than masculine traits, women automatically become inferior to their male counterparts, in every situation. By studying the media narrative, we can contribute to positive change and gender equality, which is my primary objective. By making the invisible visible and by questioning the media we can influence the journalists, to make them more self-reflective and aware of how their own gendered portrayal of women is problematic. We can inspire the media to use their power to promote equality, with equal rights and opportunities for women, and to make them aware of how important it is to frame women as competent and rational actors.

³⁹ Sjoberg, 2013, p.46.

⁴⁰ Sjoberg, 2013, p.48.

⁴¹ Ette, 2013, p.259.

3.1.1 Militarised femininity

Cynthia Enloe is the feminist scholar who established the concept of militarised femininity, a theory that is used as an analytical tool in my thesis. This study has been inspired particularly by her work *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. In it, Enloe explains that militarisation is a process that can take place anywhere in the world, far from bombs. It affects employees in the food companies, clothing companies, toy companies, the movie industry, advertising agencies and so fourth. Any employee selling militarised products without questioning it, has been militarised. Militarisation, as defined by Enloe, is a process by which a person or a thing gradually becomes controlled by the military, or becomes dependent on militaristic ideas.⁴²

In many countries around the world, women have been militarised pervasively by military officials and state authorities, not only because they have felt the need to control the women but also to control the very idea of femininity. Those officials and authorities, responsible for waging war, have tried to manoeuvre women and the notions about what constitutes femininity, so that each can serve military purposes while maintaining the patriarchal arrangement of femininities and masculinities.⁴³ Militarised femininity shapes the image of the ideal female soldier, about what she is supposed to do and be, in a masculinised institution.⁴⁴ Female soldiers are depicted in a paradoxical way, they are expected to be as capable as a male soldier and meet the traditional requirements of masculinity, but still remain essentially female and feminine.⁴⁵ In sum, female soldiers are expected to be like men, and at the same time be like women, otherwise they are violating the idealised image of militarised femininity.

I believe that applying this theoretical concept to my analysis will help me to understand the media's framing of female soldiers. It can explain why the media portray Lynndie England in a certain way, for example why she is framed as a victim even though she is convicted of horrible crimes, why a woman can never be a torturer.

⁴² Enloe, Cynthia H. *Maneuvers: the international politics of militarizing women's lives*. Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2000, p.10.

⁴³ Enloe, 2000, p.36; Enloe, 2000, p.199.

⁴⁴ Enloe, 2000, p.261.

⁴⁵ Enloe, 2000, p.265.

3.2 A deductive content analysis method

Content analysis is a method of analysing written, visual or verbal communication.⁴⁶ This method was first used for analysing newspapers, such as the source material of this thesis⁴⁷. It may be used either with quantitative or qualitative data, and in an inductive or deductive way.⁴⁸ The qualitative analysis goes beyond counting words to examining language intensely, in contrast to the quantitative analysis.⁴⁹ Explicit or inferred communication is scrutinised, for the purpose of classifying larger amounts of text into a smaller number of content categories representing similar meanings.⁵⁰ The inductive approach and the deductive approach have similar preparation phases, the difference is that in an inductive content analysis the categories are derived from the data, while in the deductive approach the categories are based on previous knowledge and earlier work.⁵¹ This study applies a qualitative deductive content analysis, through employing this method I am able to better understand the ways that Lynndie England is portrayed. When prior research is incomplete or would benefit from further description, a deductive analysis can be used to retest categories, concepts and hypotheses.⁵² Hence, by adopting a deductive approach this study can extend or refine the theoretical framework.

Despite the advantages of applying a content analysis, there are also some limitations and reasons to critique the method. Firstly, the method is very flexible, which means that there is no 'right' way or systematic rules for analysing data⁵³. Secondly, by adopting a deductive method with predetermined categories the researcher approaches the data with a strong bias.⁵⁴ This places a lot of responsibility on the researcher. Because the researcher already possesses knowledge, she or he might be

⁴⁶ Elo, Satu & Kyngäs, Helvi. "The qualitative content analysis process". *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. Vol. 62 Issue 1. (2008): 107-115.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Hsiu-Fang, Hsieh & Shannon, Sarah E. "Three approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis". *Qualitative Health Research*. Vol. 15 Issue 9. (2005): 1277-1288.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Elo & Kyngäs, 2008.

⁵² Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005.

⁵³ Elo & Kyngäs, 2008.

⁵⁴ Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005.

more likely to find evidence that is supporting the theory.⁵⁵ It is important for me to be aware of these challenges, to analyse the text using the theoretical lenses, to be open-minded about the emergence of new categories, and to be transparent in my interpretations.

3.2.1 Course of action

With a deductive approach, the researcher begins by using prior research as guidance to start identifying key concepts for initial coding categories.⁵⁶ Three categories in the portrayal of Lynndie England serve as an initial framework to identify the way female soldiers are constructed by the media: victimisation, demonisation and trivialisation. These categories are based on earlier research findings about women's marginalisation in war stories and in the media's coverage of violent women, as explained in chapter 2.

The first category, *victimisation*, is based on previous scholar's theories about women who have committed acts of violence. Because women are seen as naturally peaceful, their deviant behaviour needs to be explained. One way to explain this is by arguing that the woman is innocent, either she has not committed the crime at all, or she had no agency in it, she was manipulated by a man. While analysing the data I am searching for both the manifest and the latent language describing PFC. England as a victim. *Demonisation* is the second category, this one also refers to the previous research findings about violent women and the assumption that women are peaceful by nature. However, instead of portraying the women as innocent, this reporting frames them as deviant or inhuman. This category focuses on a more explicit language which is adopting a demonising narrative while describing PFC. England. Lastly, the third category is entitled *trivialisation*, because of the earlier findings concluding that female soldier's accomplishments and roles are continuously minimised. The media is highlighting the women's femininity by focusing on their appearances, relationships, and so fourth, thereby their identity as a soldier is ignored. This category which includes descriptions associated with femininity will be the most comprehensive.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005.

Because research findings should be as trustworthy as possible, and there are multiple ways to approach a text adopting a qualitative analysis, my aim is to be highly transparent in my interpretations. Inspired by Graneheim & Lundman, I have constructed a figure with examples of meaning units, condensed meaning units, sub-themes (or categories) and the primary theme.⁵⁷ This figure has been established to exemplify to the reader what my analysis process looks like. Hence, this figure is not to be found in the chapter of the analysis, it is simply to illustrate the process of interpretation of the material. The theme and sub-themes have been predetermined and inspired by earlier research findings, seeing that the thesis is employing a deductive approach. By scrutinising the primary material, I have selected descriptive quotes, labelled meaning units. These meaning units are firstly condensed to a description close to the text, then finally interpreted adopting a feminist perspective.

Theme	Sub-theme	Meaning Unit	Condensed meaning unit Description	Condensed meaning unit Interpretation
Gendered images of female soldiers	Victimisation	‘The family believes that England was ordered to participate in the abuse’	She followed someone else’s order.	She had no agency in her actions. She is therefore a victim.
	Demonisation	‘The evil witch soldier and her actions have brought shame to the US’	She is an evil witch and her actions are shameful.	She is not a regular soldier, because of her shameful behaviour. She is not a regular woman, because she is not peaceful.
	Trivialisation	‘The tiny girl soldier looks so naive and young’	She is a small, naive young girl.	She is not a real soldier, because of her feminine traits.

⁵⁷ Graneheim, U.H. & Lundman, B. “Qualitative content analysis in nursing research: concepts, procedures and measures to achieve trustworthiness”. *Nurse Education Today*. Vol. 24. (2004): 105-112.

4 Analysis

In this part of the thesis, I will analyse the meaning units that are excerpted from the primary material, by following the steps that have been previously explained. The analysis is divided into three sub-themes: victimisation, demonisation and trivialisation, and in each section I will examine data from the selected newspapers in this succeeding order: *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and ultimately *The Sun*. I have chosen to start out with the American media, and then proceed with the British media. After scrutinizing the data which consists of 134 articles, I have selected 30 articles that I find relevant and representative of the categories. This resulted in 9 articles from *The Washington Post*, 5 articles from *The New York Times*, 6 articles from *The Guardian* and 10 articles from *The Sun*. Sjoberg's feminist theory of war together with Enloe's concept of militarised femininity will be put into practice, to meet the purpose of understanding how, and why, the media is sustaining traditional gender norms in their portrayal of female soldiers. The analysis strives to answer the questions of the research, namely: In what ways are Lynndie England and her actions portrayed by the U.S. and the U.K. media, and how can this be understood from a feminist perspective? What kind of gendered images are constructed of female soldiers through this portrayal, and are there any differences or similarities between the media narrative in the selected newspapers?

4.1 Victimisation

The first category to be examined is victimisation. As previous research has showed us, women are seen as naturally peaceful.⁵⁸ When women commit acts of violence they act outside the traditional boundaries of femininity and their prescribed gender role. This deviant behaviour needs to be explained. One way to do this is to not assign agency to a

⁵⁸ Sjoberg, 2014, p.13.

violent woman, since this would corrupt the widely held image of women as innocent.⁵⁹ In this section of the thesis I exemplify how the selected newspapers have turned England into a victim instead of a perpetrator, starting out with *The Washington Post*. In numerous articles published by *The Washington Post*, the reporters adopt a language describing PFC. England as a victim. This is done by using different techniques to question her agency in the abusive treatment of the detainees. Firstly, the newspaper highlights England's family's and friends' opinions about what happened at the prison. Her relatives are convinced that she has been made a scapegoat, that the photographs must have been staged and that she had been ordered to participate.

England's friends and relatives said the photographs must have been staged.⁶⁰
Other soldiers would ask her to pose for photographs, said her father,
Kenneth England. "That's how it happened," he said.⁶¹

England, who relatives said was ordered to pose in the photographs.⁶²

Thus, as argued by the relatives and emphasised by the newspaper, she did not act on her own will, she is a victim. England's abusive treatment of the detainees was not a conscious choice. As shown in earlier research, women are considered peaceful and innocent, therefore the media needs to provide an explanation of their deviant behaviour.⁶³ The media and her family could not accept that maybe PFC. England was guilty. Maybe she even enjoyed the abuse, as witnesses have described it when she was stomping on the detainees' fingers and toes, and laughing while commenting on the sizes of the detainees' genitals.⁶⁴ The public was not ready to hear stories about how a female soldier made a conscious choice to commit abusive acts, because this is incompatible with the traditional understandings of all women as peace-loving, and as the ones who should be protected from war. The purpose of this thesis is not to reveal the truth about what happened at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, or who was in charge. However, as already argued by Sjoberg, it is clear that England had some agency in her

⁵⁹ Sjoberg, 2007, p.96.

⁶⁰ Davenport, Christian. New Prison Images Emerge; Graphic Photos May Be More Evidence of Abuse. *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-06.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Davenport, Christian & Amon, Michael. Accused Soldiers a Diverse Group; Families Defend Seven Charged With Abusing Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib. *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-09.

⁶³ Sjoberg, 2007, p.96.

⁶⁴ Duke, Lynne. A Woman Apart; For Fellow Soldiers, Lynndie England's Role at Abu Ghraib Is Best Viewed From a Distance. *The Washington Post*. 2004-09-19.

actions.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it is easier for *The Washington Post* to explain it away and frame it differently. Her relatives' view on the situation, questioning England's will and authority, is similar to the one that reporters at the newspaper expresses. In a number of articles, *The Washington Post* frames England as a woman who easily gets used by men.

She is the sort of woman who gets used by others, most often men.⁶⁶
But in all likelihood, only theoretically could she have said no. Some women always say yes.⁶⁷

The perpetrator is often also a victim.⁶⁸
But she is, as she says, weak and passive and the sort of woman who is an easy mark for a man with the gift of fibbery.⁶⁹

To explain away what happened at the prison, the media puts the blame on a man, England is not held accountable. Because men are expected to be aggressive, the public is more likely to accept a male abuser. Women are framed as weak and inferior to men; women are supposed to obey and follow orders from their male counterpart. England is not held responsible for her own actions and she is not viewed as a rational actor. As the excerpts from the data exemplified, England is a weak and passive woman who had been manipulated by a stronger man. In this portrayal, she is both victimised and trivialised. The final example of how PFC. England is victimised in *The Washington Post* is the reporting on how she pleaded guilty to seven counts of mistreating prisoners, and still, the military judge ruled that her statements could not be used as evidence at her trial.

Even her judge seemed to express doubt over at least one of the charges levied against her, questioning whether England knew it was a crime to pose for that picture.⁷⁰

The judge [...] thinks England did not fully understand the consequences when she waived her rights against self incrimination.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Sjoberg, 2007, p.90.

⁶⁶ Cohen, Richard. Victimizer and Victim. *The Washington Post*. 2005-05-06.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Cohen, Richard. The Missing Apology. *The Washington Post*. 2005-10-01.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Wiltz, Teresa. Torture's Tortured Cultural Roots. *The Washington Post*. 2005-05-03.

⁷¹ Nation In Brief. *The Washington Post*. 2005-07-09.

PFC. England told the judge that she knew that what she was doing was illegal, and she pleaded guilty. Still, her statements were not enough, the judge did not believe that she was intelligent enough to understand her own guilty plea. Even as a criminal who has pleaded guilty, she remained an innocent victim. In sum, *The Washington Post's* idealised gendered image of female soldiers and militarised femininity tell us that women are not supposed to be violent. *The Washington Post's* victimising portrayal of Lynndie England specifically, and female soldiers generally, sustain traditional gender norms.

The following text scrutinises the American newspaper *The New York Times*. In a few number of articles, *The New York Times* victimise and trivialise England by writing about how she was influenced by a man. Her boyfriend at the time is said to have had a bad impact on her, and in the trial the judge ruled that her plea deal could not be used as evidence, because the ex-boyfriend testified that she had not been capable to understand that her actions were illegal (which is also a way of trivialising England and her intelligence).

The lawyers would also present evidence that Specialist Charles A. Graner Jr. [...] who was her boyfriend at the time, was a corrupting influence on her.⁷²

Pfc. Lynndie England, the most recognizable Abu Graib defendant, also reached a plea deal, but the judge threw it out in early May after Private Graner's testimony contradicted Private England's assertion that she knew her actions were wrong.⁷³

In this portrayal England is not depicted as an intellectual rational actor. A man had a corrupting influence on her, and because she is a woman (who is traditionally constructed as emotional and irrational) she followed his order without understanding that her behaviour was wrong. This gendered image of PFC. England in *The New York Times* denies women their agency, and upholds gender stereotypes and subordination.

In a number of cases, *The Guardian* also focuses on the same issues as the previous newspapers. *The Guardian* highlights that England's family said that she is a good girl who has been made a scapegoat, that she was under the corrupting influence of her then boyfriend, influenced by another soldier and that the judge was not convinced by her guilty plea.

⁷² Zernike, Kate. Plea Deal Is Set For G.I. Pictured In Abuses in Iraq. *The New York Times*. 2005-04-30.

⁷³ AP. Soldier Is Found Guilty in Abu Ghraib Abuse. *The New York Times*. 2005-05-17.

Family says woman who has become face of prison abuse has been made a scapegoat.⁷⁴
She's a good girl.⁷⁵

She was under the corrupting influence of her then boyfriend, Graner.⁷⁶

These are all problematic portrayals that characterise England as a victim, and at the same time reveal the media's perception of women as passive and innocent. Because she is a woman, she is not held accountable for her violent actions.

In contrast to the other newspapers, *The Sun* rarely uses a victimising language describing the soldier. Only when the newspaper has highlighted that the judge 'threw out the case' after the ex-boyfriend testified, can any signs of characterising England as a victim be found.

A judge last night threw out the case against the US girl soldier accused of abusing Iraqi prisoners even though she pleaded guilty.⁷⁷
Graner, who has already been convicted of mistreating prisoners and sentenced to 10 years jail, said England was only following orders.⁷⁸

In this article, the reader may question if England actually is guilty or not. Besides from this example, *The Sun* does not victimise the soldier, instead they demonise her, which is further explained in the following section.

4.2 Demonisation

A theme that has been repeated in news reports on PFC. England is demonisation. As the previous section tells us, women are not supposed to be violent, it betrays stereotypes of what women are and what they should be. For that reason, women of violence are a phenomenon that needs to be explained. In the previous section, I exemplified and analysed how victimisation of women who commit acts of violence can

⁷⁴ Goldenberg, Suzanne. From heroine to humilitator: Lynndie England: Family says woman who has become face of prison abuse has been made a scapegoat. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-08.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Goldenberg, Suzanne. Abu Ghraib abuse soldier admits indecent act. *The Guardian*. 2005-05-03.

⁷⁷ Smith, Emily. JUDGE KICKS OUT TROOP'S ABUSE CASE. *The Sun*. 2005-05-05.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

work as one explanation. This part of the thesis focuses on how female soldiers are framed as evil and anything but regular women or regular soldiers. The first newspaper that is examined is *The Washington Post*. After analysing their articles, I can conclude that the newspaper which frequently victimise PFC. England, hardly ever adopt a demonising language. However, in a few cases their reporters refer to the soldier as ‘a source of shame’⁷⁹ and ‘a villain’⁸⁰, in contrast to a victim and someone who has been made a scapegoat.

The other American newspaper, *The New York Times*, is also cautious when it comes to describing the soldier and her actions as evil. Only in one article did I find a negative portrayal of England, in this article they refer to the soldier as sadistic, and they demonise and trivialise her in the following way:

The other is dark, a smoker, divorced and now carrying an out of wedlock baby.⁸¹

The other becomes the hideous, leering face of American wartime criminality.⁸²

The other, is referring to Lynndie England. This first presentation of PFC. England is interesting, coming from a newspaper that is based in a country where the majority is religious. She has had sex with someone that she was not married to, she is divorced, and in addition to this she is a smoker. She represents darkness and sins, not innocence. The second representation is more explicitly disparaging and demonising, identifying England as the hideous face of America. PFC. England fails to behave like women should and fails to live up to the image of militarised femininity, therefore she is demonised.

The British media depicts England as a disgrace and a monster in numerous articles. The first newspaper that is analysed is *The Guardian*. Something that is recurrent in these representations of PFC. England is shame, the soldier is continuously described as a disgrace to her hometown and country.

⁷⁹ Duke, Lynne. A Woman Apart; For Fellow Soldiers, Lynndie England’s Role at Abu Ghraib Is Best Viewed From a Distance. *The Washington Post*. 2004-09-19.

⁸⁰ Applebaum, Anne. What Would You Do? *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-12.

⁸¹ Rich, Frank. Saving Private England. *The New York Times*. 2004-05-16.

⁸² Ibid.

The pictures brought shame to Fort Ashby.⁸³

England has been lambasted as a national disgrace.⁸⁴

Private Lynndie England, the woman who has become the emblem of America's shame.⁸⁵

While torture may be considered as the ultimate taboo of society, one may also expect that someone who has been labelled a torturer is associated with shame. Hence, this portrayal may not come as a surprise. However, what I find most interesting in this case is that PFC. England specifically becomes the national disgrace, when ten other soldiers also have been sentenced for the abusive treatment that took place at the prison. She is the emblem of America's shame, even though there were several other soldiers involved, and even though there are hundreds of existing photographs of abuse without England in them. By looking at earlier research we can find one explanation, as Sjoberg has argued – we are not used to seeing female abusers.⁸⁶ Pictures of a *female* soldier holding a leash around the neck of a detainee shocked the world. The public is not comfortable with the idea of a woman choosing to commit violent acts, it is shameful and not normal. Seeing an American woman behaving like that, is embarrassing to the entire nation. PFC. England left us with the question of how our notions of femininity and women can be reconciled with such brutality.⁸⁷

In addition to framing England as a disgrace, *The Guardian* defines her as 'evil'⁸⁸, a 'trailer trash'⁸⁹ and a 'leasher creature'⁹⁰. She is not a regular woman, nor is she a regular soldier, she is a creature and trash. The media characterises England as necessarily inhuman, because human/real women do not commit acts of violence.⁹¹ In the previous section I argued that violent women are not seen as rational actors, in this case, England is not even a subject anymore, she is reduced to an object. The

⁸³ Goldenberg, Suzanne. From heroine to humilitator: Lynndie England: Family says woman who has become face of prison abuse has been made a scapegoat. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-08.

⁸⁴ Younge, Gary. Comment & Analysis: Blame the white trash: The Abu Ghraib torturers are vile, but they are being scapegoated for crimes that are the fruit of occupation. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-17.

⁸⁵ Suzanne, Goldenberg. Fight against terror: Abu Ghraib: We did it for fun, claimed Iraq jail accused: Investigator tells Lynndie England hearing of 'joking around' on night shift. *The Guardian*. 2004-08-04.

⁸⁶ Sjoberg, 2007. p.58.

⁸⁷ Oliver, 2007, p.32.

⁸⁸ Younge, Gary. Comment & Analysis: Blame the white trash: The Abu Ghraib torturers are vile, but they are being scapegoated for crimes that are the fruit of occupation. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-17.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Sjoberg, 2007, p.37.

comparison directly or indirectly to a monster takes away not only England's agency, but also her humanity by stripping her of rational thought.⁹² The newspaper *The Guardian* demonise and trivialise PFC. England by comparing her to a sex worker and the au pair from hell.

Private Lynndie England (her very name like the nom de guerre of a sex worker).⁹³

Playing the part of the au pair from hell.⁹⁴

Instead of a soldier in the US army, she is portrayed as someone who is selling sex or taking care of children. While being a soldier is traditionally perceived as a respectable masculine profession, a sex worker and a nanny is seen as feminine professions. Society privilege traits associated with masculinity over traits associated with femininity, therefore a power relation is created and women become unequal. This presentation of PFC. England reveals *The Guardian's* perception of women's place in the society. Women do not belong in the masculine military; they are supposed to stay in their traditional limited gender roles, sexually satisfying men and taking care of children.

The last newspaper to be scrutinised within the theme of demonisation is *The Sun*. The majority of their articles employs an explicit demonising language while portraying PFC. England. Some of the words that are being used include: 'evil'⁹⁵, 'witch'⁹⁶, 'trailer trash torturer'⁹⁷, 'disgraced'⁹⁸, 'cruel'⁹⁹, 'grim abuser'¹⁰⁰, 'depraved'¹⁰¹, 'hated'¹⁰², and 'sick'¹⁰³. Previous research studies prove that describing violent women as sick is a common media narrative as a way of explaining their

⁹² Sjoberg, 2007, p.41.

⁹³ Raban, Jonathan. G2: Inside story: Emasculating Arabia: Images of an American being beheaded in Iraq have horrified the West, but the photographs of prisoners being abused in Abu Ghraib jail sparked surprising little outrage among Arabs. Why? Because, says Jonathan Raban, it was precisely what they expected. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-13.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Flynn, Brian. WITCH. EVIL SOLDIER LYNNDIE IN NEW TORTURE PHOTO. *The Sun*. 2004-05-07.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Flynn, Brian. TRAILER TRASH TORTURER WHO SHAMES U.S. *The Sun*. 2004-05-07.

⁹⁸ Flynn, Brian. LYNNDIE FILMED A SEX ORGY. *The Sun*. 2004-05-14.

⁹⁹ TORTURE 'FUN'. *The Sun*. 2004-05-19.

¹⁰⁰ Flynn, Brian. GRIM 'ABUSER'. *The Sun*. 2004-08-04.

¹⁰¹ LYNNDIE'S SEX TRYSTS, *The Sun*. 2004-08-06.

¹⁰² TORTURER'S TOT. *The Sun*. 2004-10-29.

¹⁰³ Flynn, Brian. GUARD IN SICK PICS 'A SADIST'. *The Sun*. 2005-01-14.

behaviour.¹⁰⁴ Because a regular woman is peace-loving and would not willingly resort to violence, she has to be mentally ill. There is no other explanation, she is not a normal healthy woman. In *The Sun*, PFC. England is also framed as promiscuous, and therefore disgusting.

England's sex videos and X-rated photo sessions were shown to Washington politicians. One said "She was having sex with numerous partners" another shocked senator said "It was pretty disgusting".¹⁰⁵

Stories vilifying women because of their sexual depravity are recurrent throughout history.¹⁰⁶ In ancient Greece, the Amazons had sex freely which is said to have caused chaos, because they did not behave as real women.¹⁰⁷ Today, women who have several partners are still portrayed as dirty whores and perverts. While men are expected to be sexual with as many partners as they want to, women are seen as disgusting when expressing their sexual lusts (if they are not a sex worker, then their responsibility is to satisfy as many men as possible). Regular women and the ideal female soldiers are supposed to be innocent virgins, not have numerous sexual partners, as highlighted by this article in *The Sun*. Sjoberg explains that women's integration into spheres of power and violence (such as the military) threatens patriarchy, until those women are dehumanised through sexualisation.¹⁰⁸

4.3 Trivialisation

The final category in my analysis is the most comprehensive, this section includes different kinds of descriptions of England that are associated with feminine traits. Earlier research findings show us that women are more easily portrayed in ways that emphasises physical traits, appearance and relationships.¹⁰⁹ This representation of female soldiers is problematic because it supersedes their military identity, and trivialise their achievements and contributions as soldiers. Female soldiers are depicted as

¹⁰⁴ Sjoberg, 2007, p.39.

¹⁰⁵ Flynn, Brian. LYNNDIE FILMED A SEX ORGY. *The Sun*. 2004-05-14.

¹⁰⁶ Sjoberg, 2007, p.41.

¹⁰⁷ Sjoberg, 2007, p.43.

¹⁰⁸ Sjoberg, 2007, p.45.

¹⁰⁹ Ette, 2013, p.253.

primarily women, and not soldiers. In the course of examining the data, I have observed three different techniques to trivialise England. The first one is to infantilise her, by focusing on her small size, her childish looks and conduct. The second technique is to highlight her relationships and define her as a mother or wife. Lastly, the final technique that I have observed, which has not been noted by previous scholars, is the way in which England's class background is emphasised and framed in a negative way. This technique is both a way of trivialising and demonising England. Following the same order as previous sections, the first newspaper that is analysed is *The Washington Post*. Nearly all articles in the American newspaper *The Washington Post* adopt a trivialising language while depicting PFC. England. The most common technique is to infantilise her by describing her as small in stature, innocent and girlish.

She was only 5 foot 2 and not much more than 100 pounds.¹¹⁰

The baby faced Army reservist.¹¹¹

This wee woman.¹¹²

The diminutive Pfc. Lynndie England.¹¹³

She seems too small, even pixie like, to be as sadistically abusive as she's portrayed.¹¹⁴

Even her name Lynndie R. England sounds too innocently chirpy.¹¹⁵

There's something so girlish about her, though she's 21.¹¹⁶

In the portrayal of PFC. England she is consistently characterised as vulnerable and childlike, and identified with attributes that signify femininity, which are not usually equated with military values.¹¹⁷ The emphasis on qualities that are traditionally associated with femininity, such as small and innocent, strip England of the tough soldier identity. In war discourse, the ideal soldier is associated with masculinity,

¹¹⁰ Davenport, Christian & Amon, Michael. Accused Soldiers a Diverse Group; Families Defend Seven Charged With Abusing Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib. *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-09.

¹¹¹ Wiltz, Teresa. Torture's Tortured Cultural Roots. *The Washington Post*. 2005-05-03.

¹¹² Cohen, Richard. Victimizer and Victim. *The Washington Post*. 2005-05-06.

¹¹³ Fisher, Marc. Vile Photos Miss The Rot Beyond A Few Bad Apples. *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-13.

¹¹⁴ Duke, Lynne. A Woman Apart; For Fellow Soldiers, Lynndie England's Role at Abu Ghraib Is Best Viewed From a Distance. *The Washington Post*. 2004-09-19.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ette, 2013, p.255.

strength, and aggressiveness, attributes that are at odds with the ones that *The Washington Post* has assigned to PFC. England.¹¹⁸ Even though she has committed sadistic abuse, as the reporters themselves are aware of, she is seen as too small to be a dangerous perpetrator. She is presented as a little girl and therefore she is not capable of violence, nor is she a suitable soldier. As seen in war narratives, little girls are not supposed to go to war – they are supposed to be protected from it. In addition to the infantilising language trivialising England’s capabilities, *The Washington Post* also highlights her status as a wife and a mother. In several articles the reporters put emphasis on her relationships, from high school until the prison scandal.

Shortly after high school, Lynndie England was married.¹¹⁹
She is reportedly engaged to Graner.¹²⁰

Her battle dress uniform is cut maternity style.¹²¹
But who can ignore the pregnancy? England had a romantic relationship with another soldier.¹²²

This portrayal is in line with previous studies that have been presenting evidence of how male soldiers are described using a professional discourse, while women’s gender identity and relationships supersede their roles as soldiers.¹²³ These types of media discourses are problematic because they restrict women to a limited set of traditional roles tied to the private domain, as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters.¹²⁴ As acknowledged by Oliver ‘women are serving and dying, but conservatives think that women should be mothers, not killers’¹²⁵. The last technique employed by *The Washington Post*, which was not acknowledged in previous research findings on women in the media, is the emphasis on England’s socioeconomic background.

She was a 17-year-old high school junior when she marched into her family's

¹¹⁸ Ette, 2013, p.255.

¹¹⁹ Davenport, Christian & Amon, Michael. Accused Soldiers a Diverse Group; Families Defend Seven Charged With Abusing Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib. *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-09.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Duke, Lynne. A Woman Apart; For Fellow Soldiers, Lynndie England’s Role at Abu Ghraib Is Best Viewed From a Distance. *The Washington Post*. 2004-09-19.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ette, 2013, p.254.

¹²⁴ Ette, 2013, p.255.

¹²⁵ Oliver, 2007, p.14.

trailer in the former coalmining town.¹²⁶

20-year-old farm girl from West Virginia who lives in a trailer park.¹²⁷

Yes, her family lives in a trailer park. And sure, it's hill country.¹²⁸

She lived with her family in a trailer in West Virginia. She's only a high school graduate. She married when she was 19.¹²⁹

The newspaper minimises and disparage PFC. England and her background when they frame her as a poor uneducated country girl. In these portrayals she is both trivialised and demonised because of her socioeconomic status. Not only is England a woman, and therefore valued less than a man, she is also from a lower class in society. England is at the bottom in the social hierarchy, she gains no respect and no power.

The following newspaper to be under scrutiny is *The New York Times*. Throughout the analysis of this newspaper I have noted that these reporters adopt a more neutral language than the reporters writing for the other three sources. Only two times do *The New York Times* highlight England's maternity, by writing 'now pregnant'¹³⁰ and 'the pregnant 21-year-old soldier',¹³¹ besides from these examples the newspaper does not trivialise PFC. England, which is a positive result.

Moving on to the British newspapers, the results are less favourable from a feminist perspective. *The Guardian* infantilise England by highlighting her physical attributes 'small in stature'¹³², 'she looked even younger than her 21 years'¹³³ and her childish behaviour 'Pte England showed little expression aside from the occasional nervous giggle'¹³⁴. Instead of a fierce soldier, she is trivialised and depicted as a small vulnerable girl who is nervously giggling. *The Guardian* also makes England's relationships and maternity a focus of attention. The newspaper describes how the

¹²⁶ Davenport, Christian & Amon, Michael. Accused Soldiers a Diverse Group; Families Defend Seven Charged With Abusing Iraqi Prisoners at Abu Ghraib. *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-09.

¹²⁷ Applebaum, Anne. What Would You Do? *The Washington Post*. 2004-05-12.

¹²⁸ Duke, Lynne. A Woman Apart; For Fellow Soldiers, Lynndie England's Role at Abu Ghraib Is Best Viewed From a Distance. *The Washington Post*. 2004-09-19.

¹²⁹ Cohen, Richard. Victimizer and Victim. *The Washington Post*. 2005-05-06.

¹³⁰ Reuters. Ex-Soldier Testifies in Abuse Hearing. *The New York Times*. 2004-08-31.

¹³¹ Zernike, Kate. Prison Guard Calls Abuse Routine and Sometimes Abusing. *The New York Times*. 2004-05-16.

¹³² Suzanne, Goldenberg. Fight against terror: Abu Ghraib: We did it for fun, claimed Iraq jail accused: Investigator tells Lynndie England hearing of 'joking around' on night shift. *The Guardian*. 2004-08-04.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

female soldier was ‘romantically involved with one of the men’¹³⁵, ‘four months pregnant’¹³⁶, ‘at the age of 19 when she married a co worker’¹³⁷ and ‘her pregnancy, now in its seventh month’¹³⁸. The wife and mother identity supersedes the soldier identity. These are stereotypical representations that trap all women into traditional gender roles. It demonstrates that gender norms and patriarchal structures remain intact, and it threatens the progress towards gender equality. Something that I find interesting is that *The Guardian*, just like *The Washington Post*, trivialise and demonise England by focusing on her social background. Her socioeconomic status and her hometown give the reporters one more reason to minimise the soldier.

Lynndie England, a young soldier from a poor town in West Virginia, became instead the symbol of the ugly American.¹³⁹

A former chicken plant worker like England can humiliate virtually any Iraqi she wants precisely and only because she is American in Iraq. Once she returns to America she reverts to the bottom of the pile.¹⁴⁰

The ugly American at the bottom of the pile, is how *The Guardian* portray PFC. England. To understand these representations, a feminist perspective is not enough, an intersectional perspective would be more suitable to explain how gender and class intersect. England is a woman and therefore inferior to men, she is also from a poor community and therefore inferior to wealthy powerful people. However, in Iraq, England is not at the bottom anymore. At the same time as England is marginalised for her feminine identity and socioeconomic class in this framing, she is privileged as an American, above the ‘inferior Arab villain’.¹⁴¹

The final part of the analysis focuses on the British newspaper *The Sun*. The newspaper trivialises and infantilises the soldier by labelling her the ‘girl soldier’¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Goldenberg, Suzanne. From heroine to humilitator: Lynndie England: Family says woman who has become face of prison abuse has been made a scapegoat. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-08.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Suzanne, Goldenberg. Fight against terror: Abu Ghraib: We did it for fun, claimed Iraq jail accused: Investigator tells Lynndie England hearing of ‘joking around’ on night shift. *The Guardian*. 2004-08-04.

¹³⁹ Goldenberg, Suzanne. G2: Women: ‘I reported the rape within 30 minutes – then watched my career implode’: Suzanne Goldenberg reports on the scandal of unpunished sexual assault within the US army. *The Guardian*. 2004-10-25.

¹⁴⁰ Younge, Gary. Comment & Analysis: Blame the white trash: The Abu Ghraib torturers are vile, but they are being scapegoated for crimes that are the fruit of occupation. *The Guardian*. 2004-05-17.

¹⁴¹ Sjoberg, 2007, p.206.

¹⁴² Flynn, Brian. TRAILER TRASH TORTURER WHO SHAMES U.S. *The Sun*. 2004-05-07.

and the ‘jail girl’¹⁴³ on numerous occasions, and they also refer to her as the ‘pregnant soldier’¹⁴⁴. The newspaper excludes her more masculine elements (soldier identity, rank etc.) to make room for a discourse highlighting her femininity. Lastly, *The Sun* also focuses on England’s social background and frames this in a negative way. She is depicted as a pregnant, former factory worker, and divorcee from a trailer park.

The former chicken factory worker from a dirt poor town is pregnant by one of the other brutes pictured torturing prisoners.¹⁴⁵

The girl soldier at the centre of the sickest Iraq torture pictures is a pregnant divorcee from a trailer park.¹⁴⁶

The rail worker's daughter comes from a family who live at the end of a dirt track in the isolated community.¹⁴⁷

She left school for a job in a local grocery store and married a workmate.¹⁴⁸

This framing is interesting because research has concluded that military roles are not only gendered, but also race and class based, therefore poor and working class women are disproportionately recruited.¹⁴⁹ Hence, England was not unique, many of the soldiers are from a similar background. Highlighting her background is just one more way to vilify and trivialise her, to strip away her professional identity.

¹⁴³ IRAQI JAIL GIRL GUILTY. *The Sun*. 2005-05-03.

¹⁴⁴ LYNNDIE ENGLAND “FOOLING AROUND”. *The Sun*. 2004-05-19.

¹⁴⁵ Flynn, Brian. WITCH. EVIL SOLDIER LYNNDIE IN NEW TORTURE PHOTO. *The Sun*. 2004-05-07.

¹⁴⁶ Flynn, Brian. TRAILER TRASH TORTURER WHO SHAMES U.S. *The Sun*. 2004-05-07.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Turpin, J. Many faces: Women confronting war. In L. Lorentzen and J. Turpin (Eds.), *The women and war reader* (pp. 3- 18). New York: New York University, 1998.

5 Result

The aim of this study has been to understand how, and why, the media is sustaining traditional gender norms in their portrayal of female soldiers. A qualitative content analysis has been applied together with a feminist perspective, to answer the research questions: In what ways are Lynndie England and her actions portrayed by the U.S. and the U.K. media, and how can this be understood from a feminist perspective? What kind of gendered images are constructed of female soldiers through this portrayal, and are there any differences or similarities between the media narrative in the selected newspapers? In this chapter, I will present the results from the analysis. In the same order as the selected newspapers have been examined, I will now discuss the results from each newspaper. Following this, I will debate whether there are any differences or similarities between the portrayals in the articles published by the American media and the British. Finally, I will present how the aim of the study has been achieved.

By analysing *The Washington Post*, I have been able to illustrate how the newspaper trivialise and victimise PFC. England in numerous articles. England specifically, and female soldiers generally, are not framed as rational intelligent actors, nor are they portrayed as real soldiers. The reporters have highlighted that PFC. England must have been used by a man and ordered to commit the abuse, she did not make a conscious choice. She did not want to be a part of the torture; she was just too weak to say no. She is a victim. In addition to the victimisation, *The Washington Post* has also trivialised the soldier, by characterising her as small in stature, innocent, and girlish. Attributes that signify femininity, and not the masculine attributes that are equated with military values and strong tough soldiers. The newspaper has also emphasised the soldier's status as a wife and a mother, and framed her as an uneducated country girl. In sum, *The Washington Post* tells us that PFC. England is an innocent little girl from a trailer park who has been made a scapegoat. *The Washington Post's* victimising and trivialising portrayal of PFC. England and female soldiers sustain traditional gender norms. Intentionally or unintentionally, England is turned into a victim because female violence is difficult to accept, it interrupts gender stereotypes and shakes the inherited perceptions of women.

Through the analysis of *The New York Times*, I have been able to conclude that this newspaper adopts a fairly neutral language describing PFC. England. Aside from a few negative examples, specifically the one article that clearly demonised her, the American newspaper has been cautious to not victimise, demonise or trivialise the soldier. If this newspaper has stricter rules regarding their language, or if they are more concerned with women's inequality and therefore makes a conscious choice to write differently, can not be answered in this study. However, the result of the analysis of the newspaper is fairly positive from a feminist perspective. Only in a few problematic portrayals, does *The New York Times* sustain traditional gender norms. Still, almost no problematic reporting on women is not good enough, there should not be any if we want to achieve gender equality.

The first British newspaper that has been analysed is *The Guardian*. What I find most interesting about this newspaper is that it is the only one who has really captured all of the three categories: victimised, demonised and trivialised. In some articles, England is described as a victim, a good girl who has become a scapegoat. In others, she is demonised and characterised as evil, trash, a sex worker, the au pair from hell and a disgrace. Finally, she she is also trivialised by being depicted as a small vulnerable girl, pregnant and poor. By adopting all techniques possible, *The Guardian* makes sure that the gender norms remain intact. Similar to *The Washington Post*, I believe that this British newspaper marginalise England because they are not ready for violent women, they pose a challenge to our understandings of femininity and what it means to be a woman.

Finally, by analysing *The Sun*, I can confirm that right-wing tabloid newspapers adopt a more sensational language. The British newspaper has been the most demonising, describing PFC. England numerous times with words such as evil, cruel, grim, sick, hated, disgraced, witch and so fourth. *The Sun* has also highlighted her mother identity and socioeconomic status and framed these in a negative way, referring to her as trash. Out of all the newspaper, *The Sun* has been the worst, at least when looking at the latent language describing England. The female soldier has clearly not behaved in a way that *The Sun* expects a woman to behave (or, she has behaved in a way that is helping the tabloid paper to sell more). Nevertheless, this framing of PFC. England and female soldiers is problematic and does not question traditional gender norms, it reifies and sustain them.

By comparing the American and British newspapers, I can conclude that the newspapers all adopt a similar language. However, the latter is a bit worse when it comes to reinforcing notions of femininity and gender roles. While *The Washington Post* victimised and trivialised PFC. England in numerous articles, *The New York Times* adopted a fairly neutral language. In the United Kingdom, both of the newspapers clearly demonised and trivialised the soldier, but *The Guardian* also victimised her. It is important to acknowledge that *The Sun* is a right-wing tabloid, in contrast to the other newspapers which are left-wing broadsheet papers. This may have had an effect on the result. In addition to this, PFC. England is an American soldier, not a British one, which may have had an impact on the media narrative in the different countries.

What I find interesting is that a new category emerged during the analysis, namely social class. Besides from *The New York Times*, all the newspapers highlighted England's socioeconomic background, and they framed this in a negative way. Growing up poor in a trailer park became one more reason for the newspapers to trivialise and demonise the soldier. This framing has, according to my knowledge, not been noted by scholars analysing media's representation of women in the military before. This shortcoming in my theoretical framework and deductive approach will be further discussed in the following chapter.

As previously expressed, the aim of this study is to understand how, and why, the media sustains traditional gender norms in their portrayal of female soldiers. In sum, all of the selected newspapers, more or less, sustain gender norms by victimising, trivialising and demonising PFC. England. They adopt this marginalising language because violent women are incompatible with traditional understandings of women and femininity. Women like England pose a challenge to entrenched gender norms and gender roles, therefore the media excuses these women's behaviour and explain it away. This result demonstrates that traditional gender norms and perceptions of women's place in the military specifically, and in the society in general, remain intact. We learn that the ideal type of militarised femininity allows women to participate in the military, but it does not allow them to be violent or sexual.

6 Concluding discussion

The intention of this thesis has been to examine the media's representation of female soldiers. On the basis of the results from earlier scholars showing that women in the military are continuously marginalised by the media, I wanted to approach this issue from a feminist perspective and by adopting a deductive content analysis. In this final chapter of the thesis I will discuss and reflect upon the chosen methodology and theoretical framework of the study, the result in comparison to earlier research findings, and future research.

When choosing to employ a deductive content analysis, I was aware of both the advantages and the limitations of the method. Because the categories are already predetermined by previous knowledge in a deductive analysis, researchers approach the data with an informed, but also, strong bias. Therefore, I may have been more likely to find evidence that is supporting my feminist theory. As I have been able to demonstrate in the analysis of the source material, the selected newspapers have in many ways adopted a language that confirms previous scholars' work on how female soldiers are victimised, trivialised and demonised. However, I have also identified a new subcategory, which is social class. In a deductive approach, new categories can offer a contradictory view of a phenomenon or extend and enrich the theory.¹⁵⁰ Hence, I argue that my result enriches the theory, it allows researchers to develop the theory further by analysing how class and gender intersects in the media's portrayal of female soldiers.

By applying a deductive content analysis together with Sjoberg's feminist theory on war and Enloe's concept of militarised femininity on the material, I have been able to present how women in the military are being marginalised by the media. My intention has never been to defend PFC. England or any of the female soldiers involved in the Abu Ghraib scandal. On the contrary, they need to be held accountable for their abusive treatment, and the public needs to understand that women are capable of

¹⁵⁰ Hsiu-Fang & Shannon, 2005.

violence. In this case study, the American and British newspapers victimise, demonise and trivialise female soldiers, which needs to be further addressed. My hope is that this thesis has been able to make the invisible visible, to inspire feminist and human rights scholars to complete future research within this field, to make journalists more self-reflective and aware of how their portrayal is problematic, and to make the public question the media. As stated by Cynthia Enloe, how society thinks about women as soldiers does matter, when this subject is treated as insignificant, we do miss a chance to delve into the gendered dynamics of society's political life.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ Enloe, 2000, p. xi.

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