

Identifying Gendered Narratives

A Qualitative Content Analysis of Media Framing of Syrian Refugees in the United States

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Abstract

The announcement by President Barack Obama to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States sparked notable controversy. The subsequent studies examining the framing of Syrian refugees in the American media did not specifically incorporate the element of gender in their scholarly works. This thesis argues that it is important not to overlook gender in research on the framing of refugees. Therefore, this thesis employs a qualitative content analysis to investigate whether there is a difference in how male and female Syrian refugees are framed in the three largest American national newspapers: USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. The study examines whether female Syrian refugees are more often framed as vulnerable and male Syrian refugees as threatening. This thesis does not find conclusive evidence that men and women are framed differently, however, the results do point in that direction. Additionally, the results demonstrate that both frames are present in the articles under analysis. Particularly, the narrative linking the admission of Syrian refugees to fears for the safety of American citizens and terrorism has garnered significant attention in the American press, mainly through paraphrasing and quotations.

Keywords: Syrian Refugees, Framing Analysis, Gender, Qualitative Content Analysis, United States, Gender and Civil War

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to this thesis and its underlying research question. It begins by providing a brief overview of the Syrian civil war and the resulting refugee crisis, offering contextual background information. Subsequently, attention is directed towards the media's portrayal of Syrian refugees, exploring the existing scientific gaps in this area of study, specifically in relation to gender. Subsequently, the research question is formulated, its scientific and societal relevance is further discussed and the methodology is introduced. In conclusion, an outline of the subsequent chapters in this thesis is presented.

1.1 The Syrian civil war and its refugees

The civil war in Syria has caused brutal violence and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, making it the second deadliest war of the twenty first century (Ray, n.d.). The violence has led to millions of Syrians fleeing their country. As of June 22, there are over five million registered Syrian refugees worldwide, of which the vast majority sought asylum in neighboring countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey (UNHCR, 2023). However, a significant amount of refugees have also sought asylum in countries beyond the region, mostly countries within the European Union (UNHCR, 2021). Considering the impact of the refugee crisis on the European Union, it comes as no surprise that data has been collected to measure the support among citizens to welcome refugees into their country. While the level of support varies between countries, figures show that it is a highly polarizing topic in European countries (Bermúdez, 2020).

Despite the fact that the United States has accepted far fewer Syrian refugees than European countries, it has also been a much-discussed and controversial issue in American society and politics. When President Obama announced his intention to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States, it sparked a whirlwind of criticism and political unrest. Some states even challenged the arrival of refugees in court, citing concerns about terrorism and the inability to guarantee the safety of their citizens.

1.2 Media framing and Syrian refugees

Due to the significant impact that the civil war has not only on Syria and the Syrians themselves but also on the countries where the refugees flee to, it is not surprising that this war has received

an enormous amount of media attention worldwide (Toivanen and Baser, 2016). What the media reports on and how they report on these issues is of great importance: an overwhelming amount of scientific research confirms that the media influence our perception of the world (Bryant & Oliver, 2008; Coleman et al., 2008; Reese et al., 2001). There are a great number of examples that demonstrate a link between how the media covers certain issues and the public opinion on these topics, also regarding the effect of framing on the public opinion on civil wars (Entman, 2004; Iyengar and Simon, 1993; Rill and David, 2008).

Several studies have examined the framing of Syrian refugees as well. Most of these studies focus on the framing of Syrian refugees in European and neighboring countries that have received a large influx of refugees, with some scholarly works also including the element of gender in their framing analysis. An analysis of photographs published in newspapers in Germany, Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom demonstrates that female Syrian refugees are more often represented as vulnerable and weak, while men are more often portrayed as threatening, with the latter more often being associated to terrorism (Amores et al., 2020). A study exploring media frames utilized by Canadian newspapers and television stations found similar results (Tyyska et al., 2017). News agencies in Jordan also frame female Syrian refugees as vulnerable, and news agencies in Lebanon did not only frame female Syrian refugees as vulnerable but also as being more vulnerable than male Syrian refugees (Haider et al., 2021). Güngör and Öz Döm (2017) analyzed how female Syrian refugees were visualized in Turkish newspapers and found that they were often shown to be suffering and emotional, and argue that female Syrian refugees were therefore framed as victims.

Although to a lesser extent than in Europe, research has also been conducted on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States. An analysis of local newspaper articles indicated that Syrian refugees are often affiliated with forming a threat to national security, as the fear of terrorism was highlighted in the reporting. However, the same study also found that their personal stories were highlighted in human-interest frames (Douai et al., 2022). A broad analysis of the newspapers *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* and television networks *Fox News* and *CNN* similarly found that these two frames are often utilized (Jahng & Doshi, 2021). Aswad (2018) explored the reporting by *The New York Times* and found that while most of the articles were coded as having a neutral tone, much attention was given to individuals who described the refugees as security threats. However, this study also finds that

the suffering and vulnerability of refugees is highlighted. Nasar (2020) found that Fox News emphasizes the potential security threats of the refugee crisis.

1.3 Scientific and societal relevance and research question

The previous section demonstrates that, similar to studies conducted in other parts of the world, frames of threat and vulnerability are found in the discourse regarding Syrian refugees in the United States. However, unlike a number of studies in other continents, so far the studies on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States do not specifically examine the differences in how male and female refugees are framed. It is problematic to overlook the element of gender in the framing of refugees of war because, as Van der Pas and Aaldering (2020) argue, the media can “reflect the content of existing gender stereotypes” (p. 119). Moreover, they argue that gendered reporting by the media negatively affects women, as it does not only reflect stereotypes but can also influence how we think about men and women. Moreover, gender should not be overlooked because of the gendered nature of civil war itself: empirical events and scientific research indicate that gender plays a significant role in civil wars, as men and women are impacted differently by war and often assume different roles, with men most often being the combatants (Kumar, 2001; Melander, 2016; Plümper and Neumayer, 2006; Ul Shafi, 2019). Despite the fact that in recent civil wars women more often take prominent positions than before, most combatants remain male and war is still characterized by its masculinity (Chinkin et al., 2020). While men therefore are more often the victim of violence that takes place on the battlefield of war, there are indications that women are more affected by the indirect consequences (Plümper and Neumayer, 2006). Sexual violence is one of those consequences that is mentioned to affect women more than men (Coulter, 2008; Kumar, 2001; McDermott, 2020; Plümper and Neumayer; Ul Shafi, 2019; Svallfors, 2023). Additionally, our own perceptions of what is considered masculine and feminine, as well as existing societal gender norms, influence how we think about men and women in war: we often think of men as the fighters and women as passive victims. This influences who we believe should be protected and affects policy (Carpenter, 2003; Coulter, 2008; Cohen, 2013). Gender norms thus have a significant influence on our society. Therefore, it is crucial that we do not overlook the gender element but instead incorporate it into scientific research. This helps us to better understand the world and become aware of our own thought patterns.

Thus, despite the importance of gender in civil war and the power of presumed gender roles on our world view and policies, no studies have been carried that have explicitly focused on how

male and female Syrian refugees are framed differently in the United States. This study thus contributes to the scientific literature on framing of Syrian refugees in the United States, most importantly by being the first to incorporate gender in the framing analysis. The United States is therefore selected as a case for this substantive reason: because analysis on gendered framing of Syrian refugees has been done in other countries, an analysis on United States media contributes more scientifically than an analysis conducted in, for example, European countries. In those studies, as discussed in section 1.2, we can see that gendered perceptions of men and women in civil war are carried through in media discourse in several parts of the world, with women more often being framed as vulnerable and men more often as threatening. The aim of this study is to fill the scientific gap in the literature on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States by examining whether media frames utilized by the press in the United States are gendered and in support of this literature.

Furthermore, the choice for the United States as a case was inspired by research conducted by Adida et al. (2019), who explored which Syrian refugees American citizens prefer to admit into the United States. Therefore, a group of American citizens rated the profiles of refugees. The researchers found that, alongside Christian and English speaking refugees, the preference for female profiles over male profiles was significant. The researchers suggested that this preference was motivated by vulnerability concerns. While the effect of media framing Syrian female refugees as vulnerable on the public opinion of American citizens is beyond the scope of this thesis, results from this study could be a starting point for further scientific research. Moreover, available polling and survey data on attitudes regarding refugees in other countries often incorporate differences among the female and male population of the host country, but does not specifically explore differences in preference for resettling male or female Syrian refugees. The fact that this gender preference was measured in the United States serves as another reason why it is an interesting case. Moreover, considering the significant influence of media coverage on public opinion, it becomes even more crucial to incorporate the gender element in research on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States when research shows that there is a gender bias in the preference for which refugees to resettle.

Furthermore, because framing influences what we find important and how we think of these issues (Bryant & Oliver, 2008; Coleman et al., 2008; Reese et al., 2001), investigating how different events, issues and people are framed in news reports is of high societal relevance. The Syrian civil war has caused an enormous humanitarian crisis, with refugees fleeing violence to

resettle in different parts of the world. How these refugees are perceived in their host countries can have a big influence on their lives. An example that illustrates this is the experience of the Syrian Saleh family, who resettled in Florida after fleeing the violence in Syria. They reported that the fears among Americans towards Syrian refugees after the Paris attacks created an atmosphere in which they felt unsafe. The family was afraid that their neighbors would find out that they were from Syria, and it felt unsafe for them to leave the house for a walk (Gomez, 2015).

In sum, it is both socially and scientifically relevant to examine the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States and, most importantly, incorporate gender in this framing analysis. Therefore, the following research question is answered:

How does the media in the United States frame female vs. male Syrian refugees?

1.4 Method

In order to examine how male and female Syrian refugees are framed, a qualitative content analysis is conducted. For this purpose, 150 news articles are analyzed from the three largest national newspapers in the United States: USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. Each of these three newspapers have a different ideological orientation (B.U. Libraries, n.d.), aiming to cover the ideological spectrum as comprehensively as possible. The choice for national over local newspapers is made because national newspapers are read across the country. This is beneficial for the reliability of this study, because due to the limited scope of this research, it is not possible to analyze a substantial number of articles from each state, which would be necessary to avoid that a few events or narratives in one particular state lead to a distorted view of which frames are frequently used. In addition, to gather insights into the frames presented in articles that do not aim to express a specific opinion, editorials and opinion pieces are excluded from this analysis. The value of this lies in the idea that while Americans are unlikely to expect to read an article with a biased perspective, they can still be influenced by the frames utilized in the news content.

Exploring the frames utilized by national newspapers thus provides the opportunity to examine how mass media in the United States frames male and female Syrian refugees. For obvious reasons, analyzing the content of other media sources, such as television station, is also relevant. However, television is a highly visual medium and considering accessing the reports

and videos of television stations from the United States was not possible, only the transcripts available in databases could have been explored for this research. This would mean that the frames used in the form of visuals would not be analyzed, despite the fact that this type of media depends heavily on visual content. Newspapers are textual in nature, and therefore the texts available in the databases give a more complete picture of the framing by these news sources. Therefore, the choice of newspapers in stead of television as a mass medium is more appropriate for this study. However, it is important to stress that the effect of the frames found in this study on the public opinion of American citizens towards Syrian refugees is beyond the scope of this research. This effect is not measured and no conclusions about the relationship between the media frames found in this study and the effect on public opinion can be drawn. Nevertheless, considering the existing literature on how media frames influence public opinion, it is expected that frames found in this research can influence public opinion. The subsequent chapter presents a discussion of this literature.

The articles under analysis are published from September 2015 to November 2016, therefore covering the period in and after President Obama announced his plan to resettle 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States. Moreover, the presidential primaries and election took place during this timeframe, making it a politically dynamic and relevant period in which the debate regarding Syrian was controversial. The articles were coded using a predetermined codebook. Based on the theoretical expectations outlined in Chapter 2, a specific search for the vulnerability frame and the security threat frame is conducted, anticipating that the former is more commonly used in relation to female Syrian refugees and the latter in relation to male Syrian refugees.

1.5 Outline of this research

This section explains the structure of this thesis. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework, which outlines relevant literature for this research. The theoretical expectations, based on this literature, serve as the basis for constructing the codebooks. Chapter 3 demonstrates the methodology that will be used to answer the research question. This chapter also includes the operationalization of the concepts relevant to this thesis, namely refugee, gender, vulnerability, and threat.

The subsequent chapter provides an exposition of the results, which are presented in both quantitative and qualitative ways. This is followed by a discussion of the results, where the

answer to the research question is addressed. Additionally, the limitations of this study are discussed, and suggestions for future research are proposed. The conclusion then summarizes the main findings. The codebooks are included in the Appendix, which follows the conclusion.

Chapter 2: theoretical framework

In this chapter a literature review of existing scientific research on the relationship between gender and civil war and the consequences of gender bias in and after civil war is presented. Subsequently, there is a discussion on the impacts and influence of media reports, discussing the three main media effects models: agenda-setting, priming and framing. Because this thesis focuses on the framing of Syrian refugees, this section is succeeded by an elaboration of how Syrian refugees have been framed in the media. In conclusion, the hypotheses based on the literature are formulated.

2.1 Gender and civil war

Melander (2016, p. 197) writes that “the strongest pattern in civil war is probably it’s gendered nature.” Partly, the author writes, this is because men and women have different roles in wars, as the combatants are most often men. However, women are also connected to civil peace more than men, and gender equality is often believed to positively influence peace. Melander (2016) describes the two arguments for this. There is the essentialist argument, that is based on the idea that women are inherently more peaceful than men. The other argument is that the different genders have a different influence on peace because of socioeconomic developments and the social construction of gender. McDermott (2020) argues that in much research on political violence an emphasis is laid upon other factors that can serve as explanations, such as religion, the economy or the regime type, but that there is “no factor more important for understanding the sources and consequences of political violence than gender” (p.1). The author attributes the strong relationship between violence and gender to hierarchies that are beneficial for men compared to women.

Besides the fact that men and women generally have different roles in civil wars and the idea that gender characteristics have a different effect on war, men and women are also affected differently. Kumar (2001) discusses how in post conflict-areas, many women are the victim of forced prostitution and slavery, and that there are indications that in war areas domestic violence against women increases. And, perhaps one of the most prominent aspects: in many cases women suffer from sexual violence such as rape during civil war itself and in the aftermath. McDermott (2020) stresses that females are to a much greater extend the victims of sexual violence compared to males, as it “remains an endemic aspect of armed conflict, causing huge amounts of suffering among victims” (p. 4). Coulter (2008), who criticizes the narrow

view of the role women are believed to play in civil war by interviewing women in Sierra Leone about their different experiences and roles in the civil war that took place from 1991 - 2002, also emphasizes the gender based and sexual violence females encounter. Almost all of the interviewees in this research were raped, and told that sexual violence was often used as a form of punishment for female combatants. Therefore, Coulter (2008) argues that even when women in this war were combatants, they were still more vulnerable to becoming the victims of sexual violence due to their gender. (Ul Shafi, 2019) discusses how in the case of the Syrian civil war, women are reported to have been and continue to be victim of gender-based violence, including rape, and argues that this contributes to women being the group who suffers most from the impacts of war.

In so called 'old wars' violence often took place in the form of decisive battles: from army to army. However, in more recent wars this violence is less controlled and often directed against civilians (Kaldor, 2001). Hence, in current (civil) wars one can no longer say that combatants, mostly men, are always more at risk of violence than non-combatants, mostly women. Peet and Sjoberg (2019) discuss the central idea of international law, which is that there is a distinction between combatants and civilians in wars. This distinction serves to clarify who should be protected: the civilians. However, they argue, despite the consistence of this conviction, the killing of civilians in war actually happens oftentimes. They are therefore interested in what moves belligerents to attack civilians in war, and argue that this is highly gendered: when speaking of the victimization of civilians in war, 'civilians' is often used as a proxy for females. They argue that this is due to what females symbolize in a country and in war, namely the justification for a just war in the first place: 'good men' have to protect 'innocent women'. This makes them vulnerable for the same reason: when an army attacks the women of the other army, they are attacking the group who their enemy should have been able to protect.

Chinkin et al. (2020) further elaborate on the relationship between the so called 'new wars' and gender. They stress that, as in old wars, gender remains an important element of new wars and that while women now more often take prominent roles than in old wars, "war is still seen as a masculine phenomenon" (p. 2). Furthermore, the authors note that when females participate in roles that are not in line with traditional gender norms, this makes them more vulnerable to gender-based and sexual violence. Besides this, women who do not participate in such roles are also subjected to these forms of violence. However, the researchers criticize the narrow focus of the UN Security Council of women as solely being victims of war. They argue that this

stereotypes females and does not acknowledge the participation of women, who now more often take roles in peacebuilding processes as well.

Furthermore, Chinkin et al. (2020) discuss the (new) forms of masculinity that are present in new wars. While there is no strict line between masculinity in old and new wars, they note that in old wars the role of men as protectors of women and children was emphasized. In new wars, they observe hyper masculinity, which relates to sexual violence and is based upon “the extremists’ gendered narratives of identity politics, ideology and/ or religious fundamentalism, as well as the perpetration of sexual violence and the gendered character of the political economy of ‘new wars” (p. 7). They further argue that men take advantage of the social circumstances created by war to enter into forced (child) marriages. Besides this, the ‘mutated colonial’ form of masculinity refers to the way men present themselves as protecting women from dangerous men, and in that way instrumentalize women to justify post-colonial intervention. However, the authors also stress the role of men as victims: especially sexual violence towards males is not recognized enough, which they argue is due to our gendered assumptions and our idea of women being the victims. They note instances of men who feel like they have lost their masculinity after being the victim of sexual violence.

Plümper and Neumayer (2006) find that while in general women have a longer life expectancy than men, the indirect consequences of war narrow this gap. They argue that men suffer most from the direct consequences, because the majority of the combatants are male. However, because their findings demonstrate that the life expectancy of women in war is affected to a greater extent than the life expectancy of men in war, the authors stress that the indirect consequences should not be neglected. They argue that women suffer more from the indirect consequences due to three effects: the economic damage effect, the displacement effect, and the sexual violence effect. The economic effect refers to the impact of war on the economy, and therefore also on the rising costs of food. Plümper and Neumayer (2006) argue that women suffer more from this effect partly because of the fact that women are more at risk of shortages in iron and other vitamins, however, more importantly: in parochial societies men are prioritized in the access to food. Regarding the displacement effect, the authors argue that the majority of people in refugee camps are women, and because conflict causes displacement more women end up living in refugee camps. Therefore, they are the group suffering most from the often occurring lack of hygiene and health facilities in refugee camps. Lastly, they stress that in ethnic wars women’s bodies are instrumentalized as a weapon: sexual violence is often used

as a sign from men to men, to demonstrate that they fail at protecting the female population on their side. However, it is important to note that the authors only find evidence that war effects the life expectancy of women different than the life expectancy of men in wars with an ethnic element.

Svallfors (2023) researched the role of gendered norms and gender dynamics in the Colombian armed conflict by conducting semi-structured expert interviews. The participants argued that the conflict had affected men, women and sexual and gender minorities differently. Firstly, men have been subjected to a larger extent to the direct violence of war, because they have been more “directly exposed to war, as the main perpetrators, witnesses and victims of violence” (p.12). However, the participants also argue that women have been subjected more to other forms of, often indirect, violence such as forced displacement and sexual violence. The patriotic nature of Colombian society also causes that males provide for the biggest part of the income in most families. Therefore, women have been largely affected by the impact the war in Colombia had on the economy. This is in line with research by Plümper and Neumayer (2006) who found that while men as combatants are most at risk of being killed by the direct violence of the war, women suffer more from the indirect effects of war. Moreover, the research of Svallfors (2023) indicates that in the Colombian war sexual violence was not only an indirect effect of war, as the participants tell that it was also used as a method of punishment and a strategy of war. The author argues that in a militarized regime, “the ideal woman is constructed as pious, emotional, virtuous, pure, passive, spiritual, vulnerable, compliant, kind, instinctive, and morally superior to men” (p. 4). In these regimes, men are expected to protect these ‘ideal women’. The participants told that in Colombia sexual violence was a mean to show that a man failed at protecting these women. This is in line with what is argued by Peet and Sjöberg (2019), which is that the idea that men are fighting a just war by protecting innocent and vulnerable women makes females more vulnerable because of what they symbolize.

A similar pattern as in Colombia is visible in the analysis by Ul Shafi (2019) on the different gendered elements and effects of the ongoing Syrian Civil War. The author argues that, similar to Colombia, Syria is a patriotic and conservative society in which men generally are the ones providing income and women the ones taking care of the households, which leaves women without a source of income when men go to war or die on the battlefield. Besides this, women often lack training or education to find a job that can provide them with enough financial means to support their families, leaving many Syrian women in poverty. However, Ul Shafi (2019)

also argues that gaining financial independence provides opportunities for Syrian women, and that while it is important to acknowledge their suffering and vulnerability, their new active roles should be acknowledged and that they should be included in peacebuilding and post-conflict activities. In the subsequent section of this chapter there will be a discussion of how gendered narratives and assumptions can complicate this inclusion.

2.2 Gender bias in and after civil war: the consequences

While speaking at a domestic violence conference in 1998 Hilary Clinton, then in the role of first lady of the United States, famously said: “Women have always been the primary victims of war. Women lose their husbands, their fathers, their sons in combat” (Snopes, 2015). However, the focus on women as being the victims is also critiqued, and, moreover, we can observe that gender bias has had severe consequences in terms of policy. Cohen (2013) criticizes the narrow and traditional view on the roles women play in war, including the idea that only males are the perpetrators of sexual violence. She argues that gendered assumptions and the neglect of the different roles women play in conflict have resulted in the exclusion of females in policy processes after conflict. She researched the perpetration of sexual violence by female combatants during the war in Sierra Leone (1991 - 2002) by conducting interviews and analyzing survey data. She concludes that during the war in Sierra Leone women have also perpetrated sexual violence, including rape. Furthermore, she argues that under certain circumstances, in which there is enormous pressure, both genders react the same to those pressures, which can thus result in rape and other forms of sexual violence. Cohen (2013) emphasizes that the perpetration of this kind of violence by women is “surprising only because of the gendered assumptions that scholars and policymakers often make about women’s capacity to commit violence” (p. 386).

Coulter (2008) also criticizes the sole focus of women as being victims of war and the idea that women are inherently more peaceful than men, by mapping the different roles women had in the war in Sierra Leone by conducting qualitative field research in the form of interviews. He argues that women should not be portrayed as only being victims, as they can also be perpetrators of violence or perpetrators and victims at the same time. Coulter (2008, p. 57) notes that “the image of men marching off to war and women at home awaiting their return, and notions of women’s and men’s gendered roles in war and conflict persists.” The author argues that these gendered ideas result in women being seen as unnatural, more barbarian and non-feminine when they do fight, while men who do not want to fight are judged, and

sometimes even punished or killed because they are seen as not being masculine. Notions of what is considered masculine and feminine thus have a big, and sometimes even detrimental influence on the lives of people. This is also visible in the portrayal of female fighters in Western media, as Coulter (2008) notes that the female combatants in Sierra Leone were sexualized, as they were among other things, described as being “sexy ghetto chicks”. In subsequent sections in this chapter there will be an elaboration of the effect of this kind of framing by the media, alongside other examples of framing of gender and civil war.

It is thus important to continuously critically reflect on the role of gender and our gender biases because at times, our gender bias can even be detrimental. An example of this can be found in the war in Yugoslavia. Carpenter (2003) discusses how in the war in former Yugoslavia the international community focused on the protection and evacuation of women and children, even though, the author argues, we could empirically observe that adult civilian males were in general the most at risk of getting killed in civil wars because the counterparty perceived them as potential combatants. Carpenter (2003) thus observes that we, in the case of former Yugoslavia, did not protect a group that was heavily at risk, because we also perceived them as being the biggest threat, while we perceived other groups, women and children, as more vulnerable. She attributes this to the gendered norms that exist in society.

Another example can be found in how the international community has responded to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Autesserre (2012) demonstrates that the policy makers, aid organizations and journalists have focused on a few narratives to make peacebuilding and post conflict development seem manageable. One narrative that has received a huge amount of attention is the sexual abuse and rape of women and girls. No one would argue that this is not an important issue, especially considering the fact that in civil wars women and girls are more often the victim of sexual violence. However, Autesserre (2012) argues that the fact that this abuse is framed as solely a women’s issue leads to the neglect of boys and men who become victims of rape and sexual abuse.

A gender bias can not only be observed in policy decisions regarding who to rescue and who to provide aid to, but also in who we think is responsible for violence. Sjoberg and Gentry (2007, p. 58) write that “traditionally, most military criminals have been men; the stereotype of a war criminal definitely has a male face.” They further argue that when a woman is the perpetrator of violence, this goes against what is generally considered to be feminine behavior, as the idea exists that a female soldier cannot engage in torture. Therefore, they discuss how

proscribed violence perpetrated by men and women in the United States military is viewed and portrayed differently by, among other institutions, media sources. They argue that in the news stories about women in the United States military who perpetrated proscribed violence, more of a focus is laid upon the idea that this was an act carried out by a singular woman. The subsequent sections will focus on the power this kind of framing can have, and provide more examples of gendered framing in civil war.

2.3 Media coverage and its effects: agenda-setting, priming and framing

There is extensive literature and evidence for the hypothesis that the topics media report on and the way they report on these topics influences public opinion and the perceived reality of news consumers, both inside the United States and in other territories. (Bryant & Oliver, 2008; Reese et al., 2001). Because the idea that frames used by media sources are important and powerful is widely acknowledged in many different scientific disciplines, there is much literature on how different topics are framed in the media (Baden, 2019). There are three main theoretical concepts that describe the way news coverage influence the political agenda and public opinion: agenda setting, priming and framing (Scheufele & Tewsbury, 2007).

Agenda setting

The idea that the topics media sources chose to report on influences the public agenda is known as agenda setting (Bryant & Oliver, 2008). Extensive empirical investigations have examined this theory across various regions, encompassing diverse subjects and types of media outlets, including television and print media (Coleman et al., 2008). In the process of creating news content, journalists face constraints such as space limitations in articles, time restrictions in television segments, or other practical limitations. Consequently, media editors, armed with ideas of relevance and newsworthiness, make choices in determining which subjects to cover, effectively "setting an agenda" for the public. McCombs (2005) underscores that agenda setting is a consequence of the journalistic duty to select news stories, rather than an intentional manipulation of the agenda. Therefore, agenda setting primarily revolves around the act of choosing news items for coverage. Coleman et al. (2008) argue that this selection process has an influence on the perception of news consumers, as increased attention given to a particular story leads individuals to perceive it as more important.

Lippman (1922, paraphrased in Coleman et al., 2009) is often credited for laying the theoretical foundation for the theory of agenda setting, with his book 'Public Opinion'. In this influential work he discusses how media influences the 'pictures in our head', in other words: how the media effects the way in which we view society. However, in the beginning of agenda setting research, the question arose whether it was actually the media who influenced the public opinion, or if the public opinion and topics people thought were important ended up in news reports. In other words: there is correlation, but what is the causal relationship between agenda setting and public opinion? Research demonstrated that the causal relationship between agenda setting and public opinion is strong and denied concerns of reversed causality (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Besides the fact that media agenda setting influences which topics are seen as important by citizens, it also influences the agenda of politicians and government officials (McCombs, 2005). Coleman et al. (2008, p. 149) argue that "the agenda-setting role of the news media plays an important part in focusing people's attention on the problems that government and public institutions can work to resolve. Without agreement on what is important, societies would struggle to accomplish public good."

We can thus see that that, before framing (which will be discussed later in this chapter) influences public opinion, agenda setting already shapes peoples reality of the world we live in. An example that illustrates this is the extensive amount of media reports by US news channels on the war in Iraq. In response to this, Americans saw the war as one of the most relevant topics during the US presidential elections (Bryant & Oliver, 2008). These findings are consistent with earlier investigations on agenda setting during past presidential elections in the United States. The first one was conducted by McCobs and Shaw (1972). The authors found that there is a strong relationship between the topics receiving substantial media attention and the issues deemed most significant by voters.

The study of Iyengar and Simon (1993) is particularly interesting because it explores the effect of all three media effect models (agenda setting, priming and framing) on the public opinion of American citizens towards the Persian Gulf war. When Saddam Hussein, the former president of Iraq, invaded Kuwait, the American news media extensively covered this event. The researchers examined Gallup polls measuring Americans' perceptions of the most significant problems facing the United States and the level of news coverage on the Gulf War, and discovered a strong correlation between the two variables. This demonstrated the influence of media agenda setting on shaping the opinions of American citizens regarding the Gulf crisis.

Furthermore, the study found that as the Gulf crisis gained prominence as an important issue, other concerns such as the economy and crime decreased in the importance assigned to them by Americans. Journalists face constraints in terms of time, space, and resources, and thus when a particular issue receives extensive media coverage, there is less room for other topics to receive attention. Iyengar and Simon (1993) therefore state: "In effect, intensive news coverage by a crisis issue not only elevates the prominence of the target issue but also removes other issues from public attention" (p. 376).

Priming

The notion of priming is considered an extension of agenda setting, wherein individuals utilize the topics emphasized by news media (agenda setting) to assess politicians and policies, as they begin to perceive these topics as more relevant (priming) (Scheufele & Tewsbury, 2007). In other words: "priming refers to the effects of the content of the media on people's later behavior or judgment related to the content that was processed" (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., 2009, p. 75). Roskos-Ewoldsen et al. (2009) argue that because of the strong presence of the media in people's lives, the effect of priming is powerful. Therefore, they argue, whether priming exists is no longer a question. However, they also emphasize that the priming effect is temporary: after a while the effect priming has on a certain issue diminishes.

Research on the effect of priming on the evaluations of politicians has demonstrated that when media attributes much attention to domestic issues, this becomes more important in their judgment of politicians, while a focus on foreign issues causes people to consider that as more relevant in judging politicians (Ewoldsen and Rhodes, 2020). This is illustrated by the research of Iyengar and Simon (1993) who, after assessing the effects of agenda-setting on the public opinion of Americans, assessed the priming effect of the media coverage on the Persian Gulf War. The researchers observed the occurrence of the priming effect: following extensive media reporting on the Gulf war, American citizens regarded the foreign policy performance of former President George Bush as more important than his performance on economic affairs. This provides evidence for the theory that extensive media coverage of specific topics leads individuals to prioritize those topics when forming their judgments on people. Iyengar and Simon (1993) further argue that the effect of priming is stronger when evaluating politicians based on their performance, rather than on their personality traits.

Framing

Framing is not about the news selection itself, but about how a topic is portrayed. Framing is based on the idea that these frames influence how the news consumer thinks about the topic (Scheufele & Tewsbury, 2007). Considering the widespread attention to framing in scientific research, it comes as no surprise that different scholars have made an effort to define what a frame and framing exactly is. Reese (2001) stresses that frames consist of five components: they are organizing, based on a principle, they are shared in some way, persistent over time and structured. Reese (2001, p.11) then defines a frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world”. Another definition of a frame is the one of Tankard et al. (as cited in Reese, 2001, p. 10), which is as follows: “A frame is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration.”

Considerable research has been conducted to examine the manner in which media sources frame specific subjects, groups, and news events. Subsequently, the impact of such framing has been subject to analysis by scholars, also in the context of conflicts and wars. After exploring the agenda-setting and priming effects, Iyengar and Simon (1993) investigated the impact of framing on public opinion regarding the Gulf crisis. However, their analysis did not focus on specific frames, but rather on the distinction between episodic framing and thematic framing. Episodic framing presents news as events, while thematic framing brings news within a broader context. The former tends to generate support for military action, whereas the latter fosters support for structural solutions such as economic or diplomatic approaches. The researchers found that news coverage of the Gulf War predominantly adopted an episodic frame. Consequently, they found support for the hypothesis that this framing led American citizens to endorse a military solution to the conflict.

Rill and Davis (2008) employed an experimental design to investigate the influence of media reports on the consumers’ opinions regarding the Israel-Hezbollah conflict in Lebanon in 2006. Their findings revealed a statistically significant effect between the narratives participants were exposed to and their attitudes towards the conflict: individuals who encountered stories portraying either Hezbollah or Israel in a positive frame held more favorable opinions towards that specific party. Furthermore, the researchers posed open-ended questions to the participants and found that those who read the positively framed article employed similar key terms in their responses.

However, Entman (2004) argues that we must not overlook the influence of politicians' rhetoric on media framing, as the relationship between journalists and politicians is less independent than desirable. This is exemplified by the framing of the post-9/11 'war on terror'. President Bush used language such as 'war' and 'evil,' which was widely adopted and echoed by the media in the United States, ultimately leading to more support for the government and its policies (Entman, 2004).

Another example, which is unrelated to war but relevant to this research, highlights how framing of news events can impact attitudes towards minorities in a society. Brinston and Stohl (2011) conducted an experimental study examining the effect of news coverage of the terrorist attacks in London in 2005 on public opinion. Different frames were presented to sample groups, and the researchers observed that certain frames increased fear towards Muslims and led to greater support for restricting civil liberties.

There is also scientific evidence of gender bias in media reporting. Van der Pas and Aaldering (2020) analyzed a total of 25,000 content analysis studies that compared how males and females were covered in the press in over 750,000 different media stories combined. This is of importance, they argue, because of the media's ability to 'reflect the content of existing gender stereotypes' (p. 119), which influences the expectations of how groups belonging to these genders should behave. The authors find several differences in how the media reports on men and women. First, they observe that the press in proportional electoral systems dedicate more attention to men compared to women, with men also being quoted more. Furthermore, in the media reports on women, more of an emphasis is put upon their gender, their looks and their family. They emphasize that this is a disadvantage for female politicians, because it takes away the attention from their political ideas and standpoints. Moreover, their findings indicate that the viability assessment in media reports is favorable to men compared to women. The authors thus argue that there is a gender bias in the media, and that this gender bias is often unfavorable for women.

The element of gender has also been included in studies that are concerned with the media frames regarding civil war. Toivanen and Baser (2016) investigated how the British and French media framed female Kurdish combatants who fought for the YPJ, also known as the Women's Protection Unit, in Syria. They found that the reporting by both the British and French press was gendered: the fact that women were doing this jobs was framed as something 'exceptional'. Besides this frame of exceptionalism, they found frames that focused on their battle for

emancipation and equality, their personal and emotional motivations, but also on their physical appearance. This is in line with what is argued by Coulter (2008), who discusses how female fighters in Sierra Leone were sexualized in Western media coverage, for example by being called ‘sexy ghetto chicks’. Furthermore, Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) discuss how the women in the Abu Ghraib scandal, in which pictures of American soldiers abusing prisoners in Iraq were released, were framed in the media. They argue that in the media reports the women were sexualized, as there was significant emphasis on how they looked in the reports. Moreover, the women went viral on pornographic websites. Sjoberg and Gentry (2007) further discuss that the women were framed as being incapable of having made their own decisions, and therefore lacking agency.

In sum, we can see that agenda setting, priming and framing influence the public opinion. However, Coleman et al. (2008) emphasize that the effect of media reporting is not the same for all issues. When a topic is relatable and directly observable in the lives of news consumers, media coverage has a diminished influence. However, when a subject is abstract and less personally relatable, individuals rely more heavily on media to shape their understanding of the issue, or on the ‘picture in their head’, as Lipmann would say. Coleman et al. (2008, p. 153) write that “unless you have been a soldier in Iraq, you have to depend on the media for your information about conflict in that country.” We can argue that this is the case for stories about civil war and refugees in Western media: most news consumers have not been in that situation and therefore the effect of media coverage is stronger. In the subsequent paragraph, what we know so far about the framing of Syrian refugees, and in particular the gender dimension, will be discussed.

2.5 The framing of and public opinion on Syrian refugees

Framing of Syrian refugees outside of the United States

Hoyer (2016) argues that media coverage can influence public discourse in different ways, but that word choice is a particularly important aspect because it can create a sentiment of identification, but it can also emphasize that a refugee is different. Therefore, Hoyer (2016) analyzed the word choice regarding Syrian refugees of the three biggest newspapers in Spain: El Mundo, El País and ABC. The results indicated that while in general the framing created a sense of identification with the refugees, others created a sense of division. Another theme that

frequently arose was the idea that the amount of refugees seeking asylum was beyond Europe's capacity.

Amores et al. (2020) explored the differences in representation of female and male refugees in media reports by examining 500 photographs published in the media sources with the biggest audiences in Germany, Spain, Italy, France and the United Kingdom, which they argue were also the countries in Europe who were most affected by the refugee crisis. While this study does not specifically focus on Syrian refugees only (83.6% of the refugees were from the Middle East, while 13% was from sub-Saharan Africa), it was conducted in a period where a significant amount of the refugees coming to Europe were fleeing from Syria. This makes this research particularly relevant, as we can assume that much of the refugees in the pictures were Syrian refugees. First, they found that female refugees were underrepresented compared to male refugees. Furthermore, their analysis demonstrated that female refugees were, compared to men, more often portrayed as being a victim. The authors argue that with this framing "European media are reinforcing hegemonic sexist representations by condescendingly presenting women as weak, vulnerable, submissive and inoffensive subjects" (p. 308). Men, on the other hand, were more often framed as being a burden or a threat. The latter is often linked to terrorism and security concerns.

A large part of the Syrian refugees are located in neighboring countries Lebanon and Jordan. Research on the framing of female Syrian refugees in the Lebanon National News Agency and Jordan News Agency demonstrates that the first framed the female Syrian refugees as vulnerable, while also laying an emphasizes on empowering this group. Moreover, the news agency of Lebanon framed the female Syrian refugees not only as being vulnerable, but also as being more vulnerable compared to male Syrian refugees. An emphasis is laid upon the sexual violence female Syrian refugees go through, but also on social and economical abuse (Haider et al., 2021).

A country that received a large amount of Syrian refugees because of a deal made with the European Union is Turkey, which makes studies on the framing of Syrian refugees in this nation particularly interesting. Güngör and Öz Döm (2017) studied the portrayal of female Syrian refugees in Turkey by analyzing pictures of female Syrian refugees published on the first page of national newspapers. The newspapers were selected based on circulation and on their distinct political leanings. They stress that the media reflect existing knowledge in society, as well as contributing to producing knowledge, which makes content analysis of female Syrian refugees

highly relevant. Their findings demonstrate that in the pictures published by the Turkish press the Syrian refugee women were mostly displayed in their roles as a wife and a mother, as there was no picture in their sample of a refugee woman by herself. Therefore the authors argue that in the framing by Turkish newspapers “they are mostly not a leading lady of their own stories, but an understudy” (p. 326). The authors subsequently stress that the focus on female refugees as being a wife and a mother emphasizes their role in the private domain instead of the public domain. Furthermore, the study found that in many of the pictures the female Syrian refugees were the ones shown as emotional and suffering, which frames the females as being the victims.

Narli et al. (2020) further explored the framing of female Syrian refugees in Turkey not by analyzing news photographs, but by conducting a content analysis of 856 news stories that were published in both national and local newspapers in Turkey. The articles were written between January 2013 and December 2015, which is a time when Turkey hosted a large amount of Syrian refugees. The authors argue that it is important to analyze media reports to “understand how they are perceived and categorized” (p. 3). They find contradictory frames. In some instances, the women are described as a victim in a compassionate tone that emphasized their difficult circumstances. The authors also observe an emphasis on gender-based problems and sexual violence that are endured by the refugee women. However, the female refugees are also portrayed as “an object of desire and a potential second wife who could anger and stress Turkish women, thereby becoming a threat to Turkish family unity” (p. 16). Therefore, the female Syrian refugees are also framed as threatening because of their gender in the media reports.

Tyyskä et al. (2017) analyzed the news coverage of the resettlement policies of the Canadian government in Canadian newspapers and television stations from September 2015 to April 2016. They identified a ‘savior complex’ in the media coverage on Syrian refugees, in which an emphasis was laid upon refugees as vulnerable and in need of help, and that offering this help was in line with ‘Canadian values’. The results demonstrated that in much of the reports other people spoke on behalf of the refugees, which according to the authors contributes to their marginalization. They found that especially the voices of female Syrian refugees were underrepresented. Moreover, Tyyskä et al. (2017) expected to find differences in the framing of female and male Syrian refugees, with men being more often framed as threatening, and women as vulnerable because, as the authors argue: “orientalism and patriarchy work in conjunction with one another to produce gendered representations of Muslim women and men that both homogenize and “other” them” (p. 3). They found evidence for these theoretical

expectations, as the results demonstrated that men were more often described as being a risk. Furthermore, they were described as less vulnerable than women and therefore not as deserving to resettle in Canada as a refugee.

Framing of Syrian refugees in the United States

Aswad (2018) argues that, while there is research on the framing of Syrian refugees in other parts of the world, there is a scarcity of scientific research on how they are portrayed in the United States and therefore analyzed the reporting of The New York Times on Syrian refugees during the presidential election of 2016. The author coded each article as either being positive, negative or neutral. When an article consistent of both positive and negative tones but in a somewhat equal manner, the article was coded as neutral. The analysis showed that 58% of articles was coded as neutral, 25% as positive and 17% as negative. Subsequently, the author used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to further analyze the articles and found that figures who were opposed to the resettlement of refugees in the United States were given a significant amount of space in the articles, often in the form of quotation. Aswad (2018, p. 362) argues: “Therefore, despite some articles appearing ‘neutral,’ this did not prevent them from presenting underlying negative discourses toward refugees.” A significant number of the ‘negative’ quotes were given in the light of the primaries and the presidential election itself, speaking about fears of terrorism. The articles that were coded as ‘positive’ towards refugees emphasized their victimhood.

Jahng and Doshi (2021) conducted a broader analysis on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States press, analyzing reports released in a similar time period (2015 -2016), from the national newspapers The New York Times and The Washington Post and television stations Fox News and CNN. The authors combined framing theory with securitization theory. They found that the two frames most often utilized were the human interest frame and the terrorism frame. It is important to note that articles that consisted frames used by politicians were excluded from the analysis, which caused that many of the articles written in the light of the presidential primaries were not incorporated in the sample. The authors highlight this point in the discussion section, arguing that future research could incorporate these articles into the analysis.

Douai et al. (2022) analyzed the framing of Syrian refugees in local newspapers in the United States. They found that local newspapers give a significant amount of attention to the individual

stories, their experiences and the suffering of Syrian refugees, which is described as the human interest frame. However, Syrian refugees were also regularly framed as a national security threat, especially in the period after the 2015 terroristic attacks in Paris. Besides the national security threat frame the administrative costs of letting in more Syrian refugees was emphasized, which they argue contributed to a more negative attitude towards Syrian refugees.

The study conducted by Nassar (2020) does not only look at how different television stations in the United States frame Syrian refugees, but also at how the effects of frames differ among consumers of those different media channels, and how they differ depending on people's affiliation with a political party. First, Nassar (2020) analyzes the transcripts of Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN from 2011 to 2018. The author argues that Fox News is considered to be a more conservative news source, while the final two are placed on the liberal side of the spectrum. The results demonstrate that Fox News emphasizes the perceived threats of the refugee crisis more in comparison to MSNBC and CNN. Furthermore, Fox News dedicates more attention to Muslim Syrian refugees than Christian Syrian refugees. Subsequently, Nassar (2020) conducts an experiment to examine whether describing Syrian refugees as Christian or Muslim increases or decreases the support of white Americans for resettling refugees in the United States, and studies whether this effect is different for frequent viewers of Fox News, MSNBC, and CNN, and whether this effects differs for people who identify as Republican, Democrat or Independent. The results demonstrate that participants who frequently consume Fox News are less supportive of admitting Syrian refugees when they are framed as Muslims, while this effect does not hold for viewers of MSNBC and CNN. Furthermore, the effect also differs for people affiliating with different political parties, as the results indicate that framing Syrian refugees as Muslims decreases support for resettlement among Independents and Republicans, while this was not the case for participants who identified as Democrat. By exploring both the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States and examining the effect of those frames, this study does not only indicate how refugees are framed in the press, but also lengths further support to framing theory. However, it is crucial to be aware that this study only included white Americans, and is therefore not representative for all of the American people.

Considering the large amount of different media channels that arose in the last decade, it is also interesting and relevant to analyze the framing of other media sources than the traditional channels such as newspapers and television stations. Perrealt and Paul (2018) analyzed how Syrian refugees were framed on the Facebook page 'Humans of New York', a citizen

journalism site of run by American photographer Brandon Stanton. At the time of this study, the Facebook page reached an audience of 18 million followers, which makes it relevant to analyze the content. The results showed that on this alternative platform refugees were framed as skilled, emphasizing their careers and different skills. Furthermore, they were portrayed as being able to integrate into the American society. The authors note that these frames are different than the ones often used by mainstream media, such as the security threat frame. This indicates that there are differences between the framing of traditional media sources and alternative media sources.

Public opinion towards and perceptions of Syrian refugees in the United States

Although this study does not directly assess the impact of framing on public opinion in the United States regarding Syrian refugees, it is relevant to examine the existing knowledge on public opinion and perceptions of Syrian refugees among American citizens. Considering the theory on framing and its influence on public opinion, we can incorporate these perceptions into our expectations. Concerning the Obama administration's plan to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees into the United States, available polling data from Bloomberg and NBC News/Survey Monkey indicate that a majority of Americans opposed this plan, with 53% expressing disagreement with President Obama's proposal (Politico, 2015). However, research demonstrates that there are differences in preference between which groups of Syrian refugees Americans are willing to admit. Adida et al. (2019) investigated which refugees American citizens favored for admission into the United States. A group of American citizens rated the profiles of refugees, ranking them in order of whom they preferred to admit into the United States. The study revealed a significant preference for female profiles over male profiles, alongside preferences for Christian and English-speaking refugees. Notably, the researchers did not find that safety concerns drove this preference and instead speculated that it might be motivated by concerns related to vulnerability, although this aspect was not directly measured in their research.

It is also relevant to know what Americans themselves post on social media. Rettberg and Gajjala (2015) conducted an analysis on what people posted with the hashtag #refugeesNOTwelcome. They found that specifically Syrian men were portrayed the same way as many men from the Middle East historically are framed: as dangerous, masculine and overall negatively. The authors also note that the male refugees were often called rapists or terrorist. Moreover, men were often described as being a coward for fleeing their country and leaving

their wives and children, in stead of staying to fight. Rettberg and Gajjala (2015) argue that this kind of discourse “attempts to reclaim and maintain the stereotype of middle-eastern masculinity as threatening” (p. 179). Other research on the attitudes of Americans towards Syrian refugees shows that while Americans have feelings of empathy for Syrian refugees, they also fear terrorism (Yigit & Tatch, 2017).

2.6 Hypotheses

This literature review on gender and civil war, framing and the framing of Syrian refugees demonstrates that men and women are perceived differently in civil war itself and when they become refugees of war afterwards. The cited literature attribute this partly to the different roles of men and women in civil war, partly because certain things happen more often to men while other things happen more often to women, and partly because of the existence of gendered norms in society of what we characterize as feminine and what we perceive as masculine behavior.

Regarding the role of men in civil war, the above mentioned literature demonstrated that men are more often the combatants in civil war (Kumar, 2001; Melander, 2016; Plümper & Neumayer, 2006; Svallfors, 2023). This has been the case in old wars, and while more women than before take on active roles in civil war, war in this day and age is still characterized by masculinity and the largest parts of the combatants remain male (Chinkin et al., 2020). Therefore, men are the ones who do most of the fighting. This is in line with gendered stereotypes and norms in society, as men who chose not to fight are often seen as less masculine (Coulter, 2008). Furthermore, some authors (McDermott, 2020; Ul Shafi, 2019) argue that women are the main victims of war, or that they are perceived as the main victims (Cohen, 2013; Coulter, 2008). Besides this, in several studies the argument is presented that sexual violence against women is used as a weapon of war, and that women should be protected from the men of the other army (Peet & Sjoberg, 2019; Svallfors, 2023). Subsequently, Rettberg and Gajjala (2015) note that men from the Middle East are often framed as dangerous, masculine and overall negative. Moreover, in the framing of several studies analyzing media coverage outside the United States we can see that men are more often framed as a threat to national security and are more often associated with terrorism (Amores et al.,; Tyyska et al., 2016). The expectation is that these frames are also present in the way male Syrian refugees are described by the media in the United States, leading to the first hypothesis of this study:

H1: The security threat frame is more likely to be used to describe male Syrian refugees.

Women in civil war are more often perceived as vulnerable and victims. Partly this is because certain things in civil war happen more frequently to women than to men, most importantly sexual violence (Kumar, 2001; McDermott, 2020; Peet & Sjoberg, 2019; Ul Shafi, 2019; Svallfors, 2023). There are also indications that women suffer the most from the other indirect consequences of war, such as the effect war has on the economy (Plümper & Neumayer, 2006). However, there are also authors who emphasize the role of our perceptions of what is feminine and gender stereotypes that lead us to think of women as vulnerable and passive victims (Cohen, 2013; Coulter, 2008). We can see that when women become refugees, this perception is carried through in the form of frames utilized by media sources, where women are framed as vulnerable (Amores et al., 2020; Güngör & Öz Döm; 2017; Narli et al., 2020; Tyyska et al., 2017). The expectation is that this framing is also present in the press reports by media in the United States. The second hypothesis is therefore:

H2: Vulnerability frames are more likely to be used to describe female Syrian refugees.

The central line from this literature review is thus that, because of the different roles of men and women in civil war, gendered stereotypes and because how they are affected differently by war, men are more often perceived as threatening and women as vulnerable and in need of protection. When they become refugees, this perception is carried through in the manner in which the media frames men and women. No studies have been carried out in the United States that explores how female and male Syrian refugees are framed differently. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to explore whether the frames utilized by national newspapers in the United States support this literature, and this is done by testing the hypotheses presented in this chapter. In the subsequent chapter of this thesis the method of testing these hypotheses is discussed, and the benchmarks and conditions to accept or deny the hypotheses is presented.

Chapter 3: methodology

In this chapter the methodology and the operationalization of the key concepts are presented. First, the method is discussed. Subsequently, the choices that were made regarding the unit of analysis are elaborated upon. Furthermore, the concepts of refugee, gender, threat, and vulnerability are operationalized. In conclusion, there is a reflection on the reliability of the research, and the benchmark for accepting the hypotheses are discussed.

3.1 Qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis

In the field of qualitative content analysis there are two distinct methodologies: content analysis and discourse analysis. While both methods are focused on the analysis of text in the broad sense of the word, they are rooted in different philosophical assumptions. The main assumption of discourse analysis is that social reality cannot only be found in text, but that text and interactions itself also produce and construct social reality. Scientists who conduct discourse analysis therefore are interested in how this reality is produced. Content analysis on the other hand purely focuses on the text itself. It is assumed that when researchers follow the same coding scheme and method, they will come to the same conclusions (Hardy et al., 2004).

Qualitative content analysis is a useful method both to test already existing hypotheses and theoretical expectations and to find inspiration for new hypotheses and theoretical expectations that can be tested. The first is known as the deductive approach (hypotheses testing), while the latter is an inductive approach (hypotheses generating). It is also possible to combine these two research strategies (Thorne, 2000). In this particular research design, the theoretical expectations are generated from the theory and the content analysis is used as a method to test whether evidence can be found for these theoretical expectations. Therefore, this study follows a deductive approach. A deductive approach is more suitable for this research design because this method is more appropriate in situations where existing theories already exist, but are yet to be combined with one another or applied in other situations and contexts (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This applies in this particular situation. An inductive on the other hand is very useful in situations where there is little prior research on a certain topic, because this approach allows you to explore the data to find possible explanations.

3.2 Unit of analysis: selection of newspapers and newspaper articles

Sampling can either be done randomly or purposively. Both methods have their own advantages and limitations. Riff and Freitag (1997) note that when the sampling in qualitative content analysis is done purposively generalizability can be a problem, however, they subsequently note that some form of purposive selection is often still preferred and depending on the study sometimes also necessary. This section entails an elaboration on the choices that have been made regarding the selection of cases in this research. First, the overarching case and time period is discussed. Subsequently, the choices that are made regarding the search terms, which newspapers are included in the analysis, the length of the articles and the number of articles that are analyzed are explained.

In September 2015, President Barack Obama announced that his administration would facilitate the admission of 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States. One might expect that the arrival of 10,000 Syrian refugees in a country with more than 330 million inhabitants would not spark much debate or controversy. However, the opposite was the case. Only 7 states were in favor of this idea, while a large majority of 31 states opposed to the arrival of Syrian refugees and 7 did not want to commit to the plan, with many using the terrorist attacks in Paris as a reason (Douai et al., 2022). The debate on whether to accept Syrian refugees into the United States caused a lot of political debate during this time, which was also around the primaries of the presidential elections (Douai et al., 2022). Besides being a polarizing and controversial issue among US politicians, the plan of admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees into the United States also sparked debate among US citizens: a Gallup poll found that 60% of Americans opposed admitting Syrian refugees, while 37% was in favor (Gallup, 2015). However, in August 2016 the administration of President Obama reached the goal of admitting 10,000 Syrian refugees. We can thus say that during this time, the Syrian refugee crisis and the subsequent plan to admit Syrian refugees into the United States was a salient issue in American society. That makes this time relevant to include into the analysis.

Subsequently, Adida et al. (2019) found in a survey conducted in October and November 2016, just before Donald Trump was elected president, which Syrian refugees Americans preferred. They found that US citizens prefer Syrian refugees who are female, English-speaking and Christian. The finding that Americans preferred the profiles of female Syrian refugees over male Syrian refugees is substantively interesting for this research, because the framing of Syrian refugees is analyzed. Therefore, this time period is included in the analysis too. The time

period from which newspaper articles are extracted is therefore September 2015 until November 2016.

The newspaper articles under analysis are articles that are specially about the admission of refugees into the United States. Articles that are about the admission of refugees in other countries, such as countries within the European Union or near Syria are excluded. This is to frame the scope of the study and to prevent incorrect and far-fetched causal relationships from being drawn. We can thus say that there is a form of purposive sampling in this research, as a specific time period, country and overarching theme of the articles are chosen. However, a conscious decision was made not to deliberately search for stories about a number of specific events. This is due to the fact that selection bias could potentially influence the results. For example: if we examine how a certain event where refugees were for obvious reason at risk are being framed, it is more likely that they are framed as being vulnerable. The case selection in this case prevents us from being able to make any sort of generalization or get an understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. For similar reasons, it is unfavorable for the analysis to select stories that could potentially be more women-oriented or men-oriented: this could lead to concluding that the reporting is gendered when this is not necessarily the case. In addition, no gender related search terms are used.

The articles are extracted from two databases: Nexis Uni and the archive of The Wall Street Journal. The reason for this is that articles from The New York Times and USA today are available in Nexis Uni, while articles from The Wall Street Journal are not. To ensure that the right articles are included in the analysis, it is important to have correct search terms. In the section above, I argued that there are no gender related search terms to avoid selection bias. Therefore, the search terms are kept general and are as follows for Nexis Uni: ‘refugee’ or ‘refugees’ and ‘Syria’ or ‘Syrian civil war’ and ‘United States’ or ‘US’ or ‘USA’. Due to limitations in the advanced search options of the archive of The Wall Street Journal, the search term ‘Syrian refugees’ is used in this regard. The consequence of this is that a more time consuming effort to exclude irrelevant articles from the analysis has to be made for this portion of the sample.

To ensure that stories that are so short that a topic cannot be sufficiently framed are excluded from the analysis, a minimum word count for each story is used. This word count is set for a minimum of 250 words. For obvious reasons, a word count has an arbitrary element: there are no substantive arguments for a minimum word count of 250 in stead of a minimum of 240

words, but a line has to be drawn somewhere. A newspaper article that consists of 250 words is long enough to consist of frame(s), but short enough to account for the sometimes volatile and fast-paced nature of the news. To ensure that there is a balance in the length of the articles and because analyzing very long stories and essays goes beyond the capacity of this research, the maximum word count is kept at 2000 words. For this analysis, the choice is made to focus on news articles, and therefore filter out opinion pieces and columns. The reason for this is that news articles about news events still contain frames that have an effect on the public opinion, even when there is no intention to express an opinion. After filtering out articles that are irrelevant for this analysis, a random sample of 150 articles is analyzed.

For this analysis, the choice has been made to analyze newspaper articles from national newspapers. It would also have been possible to analyze articles from local newspapers or a combination of local and national newspapers. However, for this analysis a choice for national newspapers was most appropriate, most importantly due to the limited capacity of this research: In order to get a full, generalizable picture of local news coverage, a significant number of articles in each state would have had to be analyzed. Otherwise, by analyzing a small number of articles, which may have been marked by certain events that just happened in the state in question, you run the risk of getting a distorted view of which frames are used or not used. National newspapers are read all over the country and therefore this problem is not present when the choice is made to analyze these articles.

For the same reason, the selection of which newspapers are included is partly based upon which newspapers are most circulated in the United States. However, it is equally important to cover the ideological spectrum because this ensures that the articles under analysis have reached a varied and representative group of American citizens. Moreover, it can level out differences in potential liberal or conservative bias. The three largest newspapers by circulation in the United States are USA Today, The Wall Street Journal and The New York Times. USA today is considered to be a newspaper that does not lean liberal or conservative, but as ‘moderate’ on the ideological spectrum. The New York Times is perceived as liberal, while The Wall Street Journal is considered a conservative-leaning publication (B.U. Libraries, n.d.). Therefore, the inclusion of USA Today, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal encompasses the three biggest newspapers by circulation in the United States, as well as covering a large part of the ideological spectrum.

3.4 Operationalization of key concepts

Before we can conduct a qualitative analysis to find out whether men are framed as threatening and women as vulnerable and in need of protection, we have to be clear about what exactly we are talking when we say that someone is vulnerable or a potential threat. As Baldwin (1997, p. 6) argues: “Without clear concept scholars are apt to talk past each other, and policy-makers find it difficult to distinguish between alternative policies.” Therefore, in this section, there is an elaboration on the concepts of refugee and gender. Subsequently, the concepts of threat and vulnerability are conceptualized and operationalized.

Refugee

It is important to specify who we are talking about in this analysis, because besides refugees, the Syrian civil war and the associated humanitarian crisis has caused for a high number of internationally displaced people (UNHCR, n.d.). Furthermore, civil wars can produce stateless people and asylum seekers. An internally displaced person is someone who needs to flee its home to find security, but has not left its own country. A stateless person is someone who is not in possession of citizenship for any country (UNHCR, n.d.). An asylum seeker is someone who seeks for asylum in another country, which is, according to the UNHCR (n.d.) “the right to be recognized as a refugee and receive legal protection and material assistance.” There is also the term migrant. For this term, there is no international recognized definition. Amnesty International (n.d.) defines a migrant as someone who is staying in other country than their own, but is not a refugee or asylum seeker.

Though the terms internationally displaced person, stateless person, migrants, asylum seeker and refugee are sometimes used interchangeably, they have distinct meanings. For this analysis we are solely interested in the framing of Syrian refugees. The UNHCR (n.d.) defines a refugee as follows: “A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.”

Gender

This study examines how women and men are framed differently in media reports. Therefore, in this section attention is paid to how gender is operationalized in the articles. Holmes (2007,

p. 11) writes that “we live in a world that is organized around the idea that women and men have different bodies, different capabilities and different needs and desires.” In this research, the framing of two elements of what is generally seen as feminine and masculine are investigated: the expectation is that women are framed as being vulnerable, while men are framed as threatening. Therefore, there is no focus on other characteristics or other aspects of femininity and masculinity and gender is operationalized by examining straightforwardly whether in the article a distinction in gender is made by specifically talking about men or women.

Therefore, for the first hypothesis, the following question is asked: is or are the refugee or refugees who are framed as vulnerable (a) female? Collins Dictionary (n.d.) identifies, among other words, the following synonyms for female: womanlike, woman and lady. For women, Collins Dictionary (n.d.) additionally identifies girl as a synonym. In this analysis, other roles that can only belong to women are also included, such as mother, girlfriend, niece, aunt and grandmother. In addition, feminine pronouns such as her, hers and she are also considered as referring to the female gender.

Subsequently, in the articles examined for the second hypothesis, the following question is asked: is or are the refugee or refugees who are framed as threatening (a) male? For male, Collins Dictionary (n.d.) identifies, among others, male, man, boy and guy as synonyms. Other roles that can only be fulfilled by a male, such as being a husband, boyfriend, son, father, grandfather, nephew, and uncle, are also included in the analysis. In addition, masculine pronouns such as him, he and his are also considered as referring to the male gender.

Security threat frame

The concept of a ‘threat’ is closely related to the concept of ‘security’. Baldwin (1997) argues that security is a neglected concept, which is surprising considering how much the concept is used. He argues that if we don’t know what security is, we cannot know when we are at risk of losing our security. One of the first scholars who made an effort to define the concept of security is Wolfers (1952 p. 485), who argued that security measured “the absence of threats to acquired values.” When we talk about security, we can also say that a certain issue is ‘securitized’. An influential theory on securitization is known as the Copenhagen School. This theory was developed by Buzan, Waever and De Wilde (1998) and is concerned with when and how an issue is securitized. They argue that an issue is securitized when it is presented as a threat.

Subsequently, because of the threat, measures are justified to fight this threat. This raises the following question: when security in the broadest sense of the world can be seen as the absence of threats, and an issue is securitized when it is presented as a threat, then what is a threat? According to Erikson (2020) the concept of a ‘threat’ is undertheorized. A threat, he argues, is, just like danger, risk, or hazard, a negative concern: “threat simply means that something is perceived as having potentially negative implications for someone or something” (p. 3). Threat framing subsequently is related to how “something is perceived, labelled, and communicated as a threat to something or someone” (p. 3).

Erikson (2020) already points out that the word ‘threat’ belongs to a family of words that express certain negatives concern. Therefore, it is relevant to be aware of the words and expressions that mean the same or something very similar as threat. Collins Dictionary (n.d.) identifies the following words in this regard: danger, risk, hazard, menace and peril.

Taking the aforementioned theorization of the concepts of security and threat into account, someone is supposed to be placed in the security threat frame under the following circumstances:

1. Someone is explicitly named to be a threat or a synonym of threat to something or someone.
2. By other word choices, focuses in the text and the way text is constructed, someone can be framed as a threat without being explicitly named a threat. Therefore, to determine whether the security threat frame is present, the following question is examined: is someone portrayed as being a potential threat to someone or something?

Subsequently, if the question can be answered with yes, the following question is examined:

3. In what way is the refugee perceived as having negative implications for someone, and for whom would it have negative implications?

Vulnerability

To measure whether Syrian refugees are framed in the media as vulnerable too, we need to conceptualize and operationalize vulnerability. This leads us to the question: what exactly is vulnerability and when is someone seen as vulnerable? Alwang et al. (2001) analyze how different disciplines measure and define vulnerability. On the basis of their literature review in

the different fields they conclude that vulnerability begins with being at risk, and this risk could eventually lead to an undesirable outcome. This outcome, they argue, is what policymakers have to focus on with regard to vulnerability. In conclusion, they describe who should be seen as vulnerable with the following statement: “Everyone faces risks, and some people are vulnerable because of their inability to manage these risks - due to a lack of assets and other factors” (p. 35).

Schroeder and Gefenas (2009) explore the meaning of vulnerability for the sake of research ethics, but they emphasize that their search for a definition is also relevant for other people belonging to other professions such as policymakers. Aiming to define vulnerability, the authors start by citing the definition as described in the New Oxford Dictionary of English: “To be vulnerable means to be exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, either physically or emotionally” (as cited in Schroeder and Gefenas, 2009). However, they argue, a risk of being harmed or attacked alone does not make a person vulnerable. A definition of vulnerability needs to take something else into account, namely the inability of someone to protect itself against the possibility of being attacked or harmed. They therefore reach the following definition of vulnerability: “To be vulnerable means to be exposed to the possibility of harm while substantially lacking ability and/or means to protect oneself” (p. 116). However, to make the definition more operationalizable, something else is taken into account: all humans are to some extent at risk of being harmed, but not everyone is equally vulnerable. Therefore, the final definition is nuanced to the following: “To be vulnerable means to face a significant probability of incurring an identifiable harm while substantially lacking ability and/or means to protect oneself” (p. 117).

Vulnerable and vulnerability can be described in different ways, meaning that there are synonyms for these two words. For the analyzation of text, it is useful to be aware of other ways of saying someone is ‘vulnerable’. Therefore, special attention should be paid to the synonyms of vulnerability. Collins Dictionary (n.d.) identifies the following words as being similar to vulnerable: susceptible, helpless, unprotected, defenseless, exposed, weak, sensitive, tender, unguarded, thin-skinned, open to attack, assailable,

Taking the aforementioned literature into account, the concept of vulnerability will be operationalized for this research in the following way:

1. First, we examine if someone is explicitly described as being vulnerable, or a synonym of vulnerable.
2. Because meaning can be hidden in the way text is constructed, it is not expected that in many cases people will explicitly be called vulnerable. Therefore, taking the definitions of vulnerability in the literature into account, the following question is asked to examine whether someone is framed as being vulnerable: is someone described or portrayed to be at risk, while not being able to protect itself against that risk?

Subsequently, if the question can be answered with yes, the following question is examined:

3. In what way is the refugee perceived or portrayed as at risk, and in what way is the refugee perceived or portrayed as not being able to project itself against that risk?

3.5 Benchmark and reliability

This section entails an explanation of how the results are connected to the hypotheses, in other words: what results need to be found to accept or reject the hypotheses. While the systematic nature of quantitative research causes that the trustworthiness of results derived from these studies are less often questioned, qualitative research can also be used to test hypotheses (Adler, 2022). However, in qualitative research, setting a benchmark to confirm or deny hypotheses is thus also less clear cut than when theoretical expectations are tested in a quantitative manner. The question is therefore how to set a benchmark, and if a benchmark should be set in the first place. Gerring (2011) illustrates this dilemma, using the example of athletes in the high jump: when we set a very low benchmark for the athlete, we are not impressed when they cross the benchmark, and when we set the bar very high, we are not surprised that they did not manage to jump over. Therefore, the ideal benchmark is “just high enough that it can be cleared by some people (but no higher), or just low enough that it cannot be cleared by some people” (Gerring, 2011, p. 97). Gerring (2011) notes that a researcher could therefore decide not to set an arbitrary benchmark at all, and, in the example of the athletes, just examine how high they can jump. However, he argues, the consequence of not stating what conditions should be met is that it leaves room for different interpretations of the results. Moreover, Levy (2008) emphasizes that a case study can only provide evidence if a researcher is clear about what results need to be found to provide for that evidence.

Therefore, despite that setting a benchmark has an unavoidable arbitrary element, in this study clear conditions are formulated that need to be fulfilled to accept the hypotheses. Gerring (2011) argues that ‘easy tests’, tests where the benchmark is not set particularly high, can be used in instances where there is little prior research and the study has an exploratory nature. Hard tests are better suited for studies where there is a significant amount of prior research from which the hypotheses are derived. The latter applies to this study, as there are several studies in other parts of the world in which female Syrian refugees are framed as vulnerable, and male Syrian refugees as threatening. Therefore, a conservative benchmark will be set for accepting the hypotheses. For the first hypothesis this means that when a distinction is made in gender, the security threat frame has to be used at least twice as much to describe men than to describe women. Regarding the hypothesis that women are more likely to be framed as vulnerable this means that, when a distinction is made in gender, the vulnerability frame has to be used at least twice as much to describe women than to describe men. However, for the results to be meaningful and to avoid that the hypotheses are accepted on the basis of a very small number of articles, a significant number of articles have to make a distinction in gender in the first place. Therefore, in articles that use the vulnerability or threat frame, at least 20% has to be gendered to be able to accept the hypotheses. It is important to acknowledge that this benchmark has an arbitrary element, as a benchmark of 20% evidently is not very different from 19% or 21%. However, as discussed above, a benchmark is set to preliminarily determine whether evidence is strong enough to support the existing theory and to avoid incorrect claims to be made on the basis of this research.

In this analysis, the first question that is examined is whether the security threat frame or the vulnerability frame is utilized. This is to ensure that data can also be collected on how many times these frames are used in the first place, even when an article is not gendered. Subsequently, in articles where the security threat frame or the vulnerability frame is utilized, the question is answered if the refugee or refugees that are portrayed or described as vulnerable or threatening is or are male or female. In the articles, an explicit and specific reference to the male or female gender has to be made, as described in section 3.4. This is on the basis of similar reasoning of Gerring (2011) for using a hard test: it provides strength to the conclusions if results are found. However, this also means that in instances where it is likely that a reference to a male or female is made in the article, yet this is not explicitly mentioned by for example using a male or female pronoun or referring to a role that can only be held by males or females

such as mother or father, the article is not coded as making a distinction in gender. The consequences of this are further discussed in the discussion section of this research.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the analysis in this research is conducted by one coder. This has consequences for the reliability because in an ideal situation, the articles would be coded by more researchers to increase the reliability. Because this is not possible within the scope of this research, it is important that the code book is clear and leaves a small amount of room for personal interpretation. No human, and therefore no researcher can operate completely objective and in this study it is not assumed what is often assumed within content analysis: that every researcher will come to the same conclusions when following the same method and code book. However, by extracting clear codes and frames from the literature the reliability of the research is increased. Therefore, while the assumptions of this research is more in line with the general assumptions of discourse analysis, the more strict method that is more familiar in content analysis is used.

Chapter 4: results

This chapter presents the findings derived from the executed research, employing a combined quantitative and qualitative approach to evaluate the observed patterns. Firstly, the sample of articles is presented. Subsequently, the outcomes regarding the framing of Syrian female refugees as vulnerable and male Syrian refugees as a threat or being perceived as threatening are elaborated upon. Finally, an examination of the observed patterns is conducted, assessing their conformity with the initial expectations.

4.1 Distribution of newspaper articles

For the purpose of this analysis, a total of 150 newspaper articles were selected for coding, sourced from the three largest national newspapers in the United States: USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. The time period during which the analyzed articles were written spans from September 2015 to November 2016. Within this period, the presidential election of 2016 took place, preceded by the primary election. Due to limitations in access to articles from The Wall Street Journal in Nexis Uni, two separate archives were utilized: Nexis Uni and the archive from The Wall Street Journal. Consequently, the analysis includes 100 articles from the Lexis Nexis database and 50 articles from The Wall Street Journal's archive.

It is important to note that the distribution of coverage on the admission of Syrian refugees into the United States was not equal among the three newspapers. Out of the 1476 available newspaper articles in Lexis Nexis, 218 were from USA Today 1258 from The New York Times. As a result, the quantity of articles from each newspaper in the sample differed: 22 articles from USA Today were analyzed and 78 from The New York Times. This indicates the variations in the extent of coverage given to the issue. Subsequently, after analyzing 100 articles extracted from Nexis Uni, a random selection of 50 articles from The Wall Street Journal were analyzed, which were retrieved from its own archive.

USA Today	22	14,66 %
The Wall Street Journal	50	33,33 %
The New York Times	78	52 %

Table 1: distribution of quantity of news articles of each newspaper

4.2 Syrian refugees, gender and the security threat frame

The vast majority of newspaper articles examined consisted of a notion that Syrian refugees or their arrival could be or was a (potential) threat. However, it is noteworthy that this characterization predominantly appeared in the form of quotations or paraphrases, often from politicians affiliated with the Republican Party. Several articles also included quotes or paraphrases from individuals expressing compassion or highlighting the vulnerability of refugees. Additionally, certain articles presented counterbalancing information, such as factual data, contradicting the concerns raised by these politicians. For instance, some articles emphasized the rigorous and extensive vetting process undergone by Syrian refugees before they are granted refugee status in the United States. Nevertheless, the media reporting during this period notably focused on the narrative that admitting Syrian refugees could pose a potential threat to national security: among the 150 analyzed articles, a substantial proportion (114 articles) identified Syrian refugees as (potential) security threats in some way. The main concern raised in the article is that terrorists could use the refugee program as a way to enter the United States. Many of these articles cited the terrorist attacks in Paris as a justification for this association, linking the admission of Syrian refugees to an increased risk of terrorism. For USA Today Kelly (2005) for example quoted Senator and former candidate for the Republican nomination for president Marco Rubio, who expressed his empathy for Syrian refugees, but also his concerns for national security over admitting Syrian refugees into The United States: "You can have 1,000 people come in, and 999 of them are just poor people fleeing oppression and violence, but one of them is an ISIS fighter. If that's the case, you have a problem, and there is no way to vet that out." Kelly (2005) further paraphrases a government official: "A top administration official said Sunday that the U.S. government is carefully vetting Syrian

refugees to make sure there are no terrorists among them, but congressional Republicans were skeptical.”

The controversy around admitting Syrian refugees especially escalated after the terrorist attacks in Paris, which is reflected in a large number of newspaper articles, under which one from The Wall Street Journal written by Peterson and Lee (2015) which said that “Lawmakers are eager to highlight their security concerns in the wake of the Nov. 13 Paris attacks, and they are considering the refugee measure” and “Republicans late Tuesday proposed a version of the spending bill to Democrats with a provision that would pause the screening of refugees from Syria and Iraq to the U.S. and require top administration officials to personally sign off that each refugee isn’t a security threat.” Rappeport (2015) cited, in an article published for The New York Times, a conversation Governor John Kasich had with his daughter about Syrian refugees, in which he told her that “These people are in trouble, but think about putting somebody on our street, in our town, in our country who mean us harm”.

Notably, however, only a small number of articles addressed the gender dimension. Specifically, in 7 out of the 114 articles where the admission of Syrian refugees was depicted as a potential threat to American citizens' security or national security, reference was made specifically to male individuals. In none of the articles where Syrian refugees were affiliated with threats, a reference was made to women or girls. Therefore, despite the fact that only in a few articles a distinction in gender was made, in the articles that did refer to a specific gender 100% of these references were towards males. However, in the remaining articles, no distinction based on gender was made, and refugees were presented as a homogeneous group. In the articles where specifically men were identified as threatening, this was mostly done by quoting and paraphrasing Republican politicians. Haberman (2015), in an article written for The New York Times paraphrased Donald Trump, at that time a candidate for the Republican nomination, wondering why mostly Syrian men are fleeing into Europe, subsequently wondering if it is a “Trojan horse”, and expressing expectations of a terrorist attack in the United States. In other articles, stories of male Syrian refugees with (suspected) ties to terroristic organizations were highlighted.

4.3 Syrian refugees, gender and the vulnerability frame

Although less prevalent compared to the idea that admitting Syrian refugees could pose a potential security threat, the depiction of refugees as vulnerable and in need of protection was

also observed in the analyzed articles. Explicitly labelling refugees as vulnerable was found in only 6 articles. However, in other instances, refugees were portrayed or described as vulnerable using alternative expressions. For example, the articles emphasized their lack of safety in Syria, leaving them with no choice but to flee. Jordan (2015), in an article written for The Wall Street Journal reported factually when a refugee can be admitted, and in that described the vulnerability of refugees: "To be approved as a refugee, an applicant must establish that he or she has a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, creed or origin." Similar to the security threat framing, in many other articles the portrayal often relied on quotations or paraphrases. USA Today for example quoted President Obama saying: "The people who are fleeing Syria are the most harmed by terrorism, they are the most vulnerable."

Other newspaper articles told stories about Syrian refugees who's safety in Syria was in such high risk and that they were unable to protect themselves, and therefore had to flee their country. For The New York Times Fernandez (2015), for example, reported the story of a men who participated in a peaceful demonstration and was subsequently tortured: "He was arrested and detained by military forces, spending 14 months in jail off and on. He speaks of electric shocks and beatings and, grimly, the removal of a kidney". In a few other stories, politicians speak about their concerns for the safety of Syrian refugees considering the hostile political climate and hatred against them, fueled by politicians from the Republican Party.

Furthermore, expressions of empathy and sympathy were evident in various forms and wordings throughout several articles. However, it is important to note that empathy and sympathy do not necessarily equate to the explicit portrayal of vulnerability, which implies being at risk without adequate means of self-protection. Hence, it is important to recognize that in articles where refugees were not explicitly framed as vulnerable, they often were perceived as individuals experiencing hardship or fragility. These notions often emerged in response to other quotations associating refugees with being a security threat to the United States and its citizens.

However, in only a few instances a specific distinction in gender was made. In 6 articles the refugee or refugees who were perceived as being vulnerable and in need of protection were female, in 5 articles the refugee or refugees referred to were male and in 1 article female refugees were called specifically vulnerable, while the story and vulnerability of a male Syrian refugee was also highlighted. When refugees were framed as vulnerable, this was often in the form of a paraphrase or a quotation. Hilary Clinton, at the time the democratic nominee for

president of the United States, was paraphrased by Chozick (2015) for The New York Times, explaining her stance on the policy of admitting Syrian refugees into the United States, expressing concern for Yazidi women: “Mrs. Clinton had expressed support for the flood of Syrian refugees who have overwhelmed European nations, but in the interview she called on the Obama administration to take in more than the 10,000 refugees the United States has committed to supporting, pointing specifically to ethnic groups like the Yazidi women who have been captured and held as sex slaves in the region.” It is a notable observation that in this quote Hilary Clinton mentioned a specific group, in stead of making a generalized statement regarding the vulnerability of all female Syrian refugees. While it is reasonable to perceive Yezidi women as being especially vulnerable due to their unique circumstances, the quote suggests that the perception of vulnerability is not universally applied to all female refugees. This finding is interesting, because Yezidi women are not the only targets of sexual abuse perpetrated by ISIS fighters.

In an other instance, females were mentioned among other groups that were seen as vulnerable; regarding the admission of refugees into the United States, Harris et al. (2015) reported for The New York Time that “The United Nations Commissioner for Refugees has already referred 18,000 cases to the United States for resettlement. Many of them are the most vulnerable from Syria's collapse: torture survivors, people with special medical needs and women who head households. More than half are children, officials say.” In an other article for The New York Times Sengupta and Barnard (2015) wrote about a male, gay, Syrian refugee who had to flee his country because of his sexuality, mothers (in this instance widows) with their children were also identified as one of the vulnerable groups: “It is United States policy to accept the most vulnerable of those fleeing war and persecution abroad -- torture victims, widows with children, and religious or sexual minorities, like Adnan, who face heightened risks.”

4.4 Analysis per newspaper

For this analysis, a deliberate decision was made to select three newspapers that are each considered to have a distinct ideological orientation: USA Today is positioned in the middle of the liberal-conservative spectrum, the New York Times is considered liberal, and the Wall Street Journal is seen as conservative (B.U. Libraries, n.d.). Therefore, it is interesting to not only examine the general pattern but also to observe how frames are utilized within each newspaper.

USA Today

USA Today reported significantly less on Syrian refugees compared to the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal, resulting in a smaller proportion of articles from this newspaper in the sample. This makes it difficult to make generalized statements about the coverage of Syrian refugees by USA Today. In this sample, we see that 40.9% of articles (nine articles) from USA Today mentioned or described Syrian refugees as vulnerable in some way. Out of these nine articles, two referred to a female, while references to males were made. In 68.18% of the articles (15 articles), someone expressed views of Syrian refugees as a potential threat or framed them as such in another way. Out of these 15 articles, two referenced to a male.

It is interesting to note that the editorial board of USA Today, in an opinion piece that was not included in the analysis as all opinion pieces were filtered out, expressed support for accepting more Syrian refugees in the United States: “The best way to stem the flow of refugees would be to end the war in Syria. But with that unlikely to happen anytime soon, the next best approach is to manage the crisis as best as possible. And that entails the United States doing its part to take in a reasonable share of desperate people” (Accept more Syrian refugees: Our view, 2015). However, USA Today wrote relatively few articles about Syrian refugees. The first article that USA Today wrote about admitting Syrian refugees in the United States, within the timeframe of this analysis and using the specified search terms, was published before President Obama announced his plan to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees. This article, written on September 10, 2015, already mentioned that admitting Syrian refugees would be a challenging issue for Obama (Korte, 2015).

The New York Times

The largest number of articles in the sample are from the New York Times. This is because the articles from both USA Today and the New York Times were extracted from Lexis Nexis, and USA Today had written very few articles about Syrian refugees. The results indicate that in the analyzed articles from the New York Times, Syrian refugees were identified as vulnerable in some way, either through paraphrasing, quoting, or other means, in 52.56% (41 articles) of the cases. Out of these 41 articles, three referred to a female, three to a male and in one article a gay man’s vulnerability was emphasized, while females were considered as a vulnerable group. The New York Times employs this frame more frequently than the Wall Street Journal and USA Today. Regarding the security threat frame, we observe that it is attributed to Syrian

refugees in 74.36% of the articles (58 articles), in terms of being perceived, mentioned, or described as a threat. This is more than in USA Today but less than in The Wall Street Journal. Out of these 58 articles, four referenced to a male.

The Wall Street Journal

Out of the 150 articles analyzed for this research, 50 articles are from The Wall Street Journal. The analysis reveals that in these articles from The Wall Street Journal, Syrian refugees are described or mentioned as vulnerable in some way in 40% (20 articles) of the cases. Out of these 20 articles, one referred to a female and one to a male. This is approximately the same as USA Today, but less than The New York Times. Regarding the security threat frame, we observe that in 86% (50 articles) of the articles, Syrian refugees are portrayed as threatening in some way, often through paraphrasing and quotations. This represents the highest percentage among the three newspapers. Out of these 50 articles, one referred to a male.

	Threat frame	Vulnerability frame
USA Today	68.18% (15 articles)	40.9% (9 articles)
The New York Times	74.36% (58 articles)	52.56% (41 articles)
The Wall Street Journal	86% (43 articles)	40% (20 articles)
Total of all newspapers	76% (114 articles)	46,6% (70 articles)
Reference to the male gender in articles where the frame was utilized *	6.14% (7 articles)	8,57% (6 articles)
Reference to the female gender in articles where the frame was utilized *	0% (0 articles)	10% (7 articles)

Table 2: percentages and numbers of articles in which refugees are perceived as a (potential) threat and vulnerable. * These numbers represent the percentages of articles in which the refugee or refugees frames as vulnerable or threatening was male or female. For example: out of the 76% of the articles in which the threat frame was used, 6.14% made a reference to the male gender.

4.5 Consequences for the hypotheses

The analysis aimed to examine the portrayal of female and male Syrian refugees in media discourse, anticipating a tendency to represent females as vulnerable and males as threatening. While this expectation was observed in some articles, the prevalence of such depictions was relatively low. Specifically, male or males were explicitly mentioned in only 6.14% of the articles discussing (potential) threats posed by admitting Syrian refugees, and females were referenced in 10% of the articles emphasizing their vulnerability. In this section the consequences of the results drawn from this analysis for each hypothesis is discussed.

Hypotheses 1

The first hypothesis that is tested in this study is as follows:

H1: The security threat frame is more likely to be used to describe male Syrian refugees.

In the third chapter of this study the conditions and benchmark to accept this hypothesis were discussed: in instances where a refugee or refugees were portrayed as threatening and a reference was made to the male or female gender, the frame had to be used twice as much for men compared to women. Furthermore, to avoid drawing conclusions based on a very small number of articles, the condition was set that at least 20% of the articles in which the security threat frame was used a distinction in gender had to be made.

In the articles in which the security threat frame was used and a reference to gender was made, all of the references referred to the male gender. However, because only in 6,1% of the 114 articles in which a refugee or refugees are portrayed or perceived as threatening a distinction in gender was made, the benchmark of 20% is not met. Therefore, not enough evidence was found in support of the first hypothesis. A discussion of this finding can be found in the subsequent chapter of this research.

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis under analysis examined the vulnerability frame in relation to the gender of Syrian refugees:

H2: Vulnerability frames are more likely to be used to describe female Syrian refugees.

The same conditions to accept or reject the hypothesis was used as with the first hypothesis, meaning that in articles where a refugee or refugees were portrayed as vulnerable and a reference was made to the male or female gender, the frame had to be used twice as much for females compared to men. Furthermore, the benchmark that 20% of the articles in which this frame was utilized has to met. This analysis found no evidence that this frame was used significantly more to describe women, as in six instances women were perceived as vulnerable, in five instances men were perceived as vulnerable and in one instance women were explicitly called vulnerable, while in the same article the story of a Syrian refugees was told, in which his vulnerability was emphasized. Besides the fact that this frame was thus not used twice as much to describe females than to describe men, the benchmark of 20% was not met. Therefore, this hypothesis cannot be accepted on the basis of this study.

We can thus conclude that no support for the hypotheses was yielded in this research. However, although no significant gender-based patterns emerged from the data, it was evident that refugees were frequently depicted as both vulnerable and threatening upon their admission and arrival. This depiction primarily manifested through the use of quotations and paraphrasing. Moreover, the analysis revealed that various narratives regarding the refugee debate were emphasized in most articles. However, notable attention was given to objections raised by politicians, primarily affiliated with the Republican Party, against the arrival of Syrian refugees in the United States. The concerns surrounding national security, citizen safety, and the potential for terrorism were present in almost all the analyzed articles, even when the primary focus was on other aspects of the debate or the personal experiences of Syrian refugees.

The subsequent chapters will provide a more detailed elaboration of these findings, including their societal and scientific impact. The conclusion will summarize the main points, while the discussion section will address the implications of the findings and the limitations of the research.

Chapter 5: discussion

In the subsequent chapter, an analysis of the research findings is presented, containing a discussion of the results in relation to the research question. Additionally, the theoretical implications of this research are examined. Moreover, the limitations of the study are discussed, acknowledging the potential constraints. Finally, recommendations for future research are proposed.

5.1 Interpretation of the results and theoretical implications

The objective of this study was to answer the following research question: How does the media in the United States frame female vs male Syrian refugees? Based on existing theories and prior research on news framing of male and female Syrian refugees, it was expected that women would be portrayed as more vulnerable and in need of protection, while men would be depicted as a potential threat or as being threatening. A total of 150 newspaper articles published between September 2015 and November 2016 were analyzed, sourced from the three largest national newspapers in the United States, each with distinct perceived ideological orientations: USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times. The content of each article was systematically analyzed, using a predetermined codebook.

In the preceding chapter the results revealed that in the articles in which Syrian refugees were framed as either vulnerable or threatening, in only a limited number of cases a differentiation was made based on the gender of the refugees. Therefore, the hypotheses that male Syrian refugees are more often framed as threatening and female Syrian refugees as vulnerable could not be accepted. However, despite the fact that the evidence was not as strong as expected, the results do point in the direction that men and women are framed differently by news sources in the United States. In only 7 out of the 114 articles in which the admission of refugees was perceived or portrayed to be a potential threat a distinction in gender was made. However, in all of these instances the refugee referred to was a male. Besides this, it should be noted that a 'hard test', as explained in chapter 3, was used to determine whether a reference to 'maleness' was made. For example, in many articles in which fear for terrorism and national security was linked to the resettlement of refugees in the United, the terrorists who carried out the Paris attacks were discussed, mentioning that one of them was said to be carrying a Syrian passport. We know that these terrorists were male, however, their gender was not specifically mentioned or referred to and therefore the article was not coded as referring to a specific gender. This hard

test makes that the evidence that is found is particularly strong, but it should thus also be taken into account that we cannot say that the other 107 articles were completely gender neutral.

With regards to the expectation that women would be more often framed as vulnerable compared to men, the results do not demonstrate this pattern. Women were only framed one time more as vulnerable compared to men. However, in the instances where women were framed as vulnerable, they were often described as a vulnerable group only because of their gender, for example by listing them among other vulnerable groups such as children and religious minorities. In the cases where males were referred to as vulnerable, this was on the basis of a personal story of the refugee, and not specifically because of their gender. Therefore, despite the fact that the results are not in line with what was expected, stronger evidence could possibly have been yielded if the sample was bigger.

Therefore, with regards to the research question, we can say despite not finding evidence as strong as expected, the results do indicate that men and women are possibly framed differently by the press in the United States. Besides this, the analysis revealed several other relevant findings. First, it is evident that both the vulnerability framed and the threat frame are used in the reporting on Syrian refugees. The most prominent visible pattern is the perception of refugees as a potential security threat: a substantial majority of the examined articles addresses the potential security implications associated with admitting Syrian refugees into the United States. Most of the time this in the form of a paraphrasing or a quotation from someone expressing the fear that resettling Syrian refugees in the United States would be a threat to national security. Even articles emphasizing the vulnerability of refugees often include a quotation by someone (often politicians from the Republican Party) expressing fear for admitting Syrian refugees. In other instances, the debate surrounding the perceived security threats is mentioned. We can thus conclude that this narrative received substantial attention in the three biggest American national newspapers.

5.2 Theoretical and societal implications

The discovery of the narrative that resettling Syrian refugees in the United States received a lot of attention aligns with previous research conducted by Aswad (2018), which demonstrates that The New York Times extensively features opponents of refugee acceptance, often through direct quotes and paraphrasing, in its coverage of Syrian refugees. Consequently, it has now been established that this phenomenon extends beyond The New York Times, as it is also

present in the two other major newspapers in the United States, namely USA Today and The Wall Street Journal. Jahng and Doshi (2021) and Douai et al. (2022) found in their research on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States that there were numerous concerns expressed about terrorism. The findings of this study align with those findings, as many of the security concerns stemmed from fears of terrorist attacks. Especially after the terrorist attacks in Paris, politicians and other governmental figures expressed those concerns.

Nassar (2020) found that Fox News, a television station that is generally perceived as conservative, emphasized the threatening aspects of the refugee crisis more than CNN and MSNBC, who are often placed on the liberal side of the spectrum. This thesis also incorporated media sources with different ideological leanings to ensure that the ideological spectrum is covered as much as possible. The Wall Street Journal, considered to be more conservative than USA Today and The New York Times, utilized the threat frame more than the other two newspapers in this analysis. However, this difference was rather small and the results could be more narrow or wide if the sample size increases. Therefore, it cannot be argued on the basis of this study that, similar to the study conducted by Nassar (2020), the conservative news source under analysis framed refugees significantly different than the moderate (USA Today) and liberal (The New York Times) newspaper.

We can thus see that several findings in other scientific research on the framing of Syrian refugees align with the results found in this study. However, as this was the first study to explore how male and female Syrian refugees were framed by the media in The United States in comparison to each other, it is relevant to examine how the results found in this study compare to framing analysis conducted in other countries. Analysis of visual content in German, Spanish, Italian and British news papers demonstrate that women are more often portrayed as vulnerable and men more often as a burden or a threat (Amores et al., 2020). Similar results were found after analyzing news coverage in Canada (Tysska et al., 2017). The results of this thesis, despite not being as strong as expected, do indicate that in the United States male Syrian refugees are likewise more often framed as a threat than female Syrian refugees: in all of the instances in which the security threat frame was used and the article was coded as referring to the male of female gender, the refugee or refugees referred to were male. The fact that a hard test was used to determine whether an article was gendered strengthens this finding. Therefore, it is important that future studies further examine this. Section 5.3 entails more elaboration on suggestions for future research.

In Lebanon female Syrian refugees were, similar to the study of Amores et al. (2020) in European countries and Tyyska et al. (2017) in Canada, also found to be framed more frequently as vulnerable compared to men. Narli et al. (2020) and Güngör and Öz Döm (2017) did not explore how female refugees were framed compared to male refugees, however, they did find that female Syrian refugees were victimized due to the manner in which they were portrayed in the Turkish news media. The results found in this thesis, partly align with these previous scholarly works, as in several instances female Syrian refugees were framed as vulnerable. However, a pattern in which female Syrian refugees were framed significantly more often vulnerable compared to their male counterparts was not identified. Furthermore, as already discussed, the number of articles that specifically referred to male or female gender was not high enough to meet the benchmark of 20% that was set for this study. However, in the interpretation of these results, it is important to reflect on the strict coding scheme that was used in this analysis. For example, in article for The New York Times Parker (2015) paraphrased Jeb Bush, at that time candidate for the Republican nomination for President of the United States, saying that he would allow the admission of certain refugees into the United States, namely women, children and Christians. However, in this article no reference was made in any way to the vulnerability of refugees, and therefore the articles could not be coded as such. In other words, this example illustrates that there were instances in which women were singled out because of their gender, despite not being directly framed as vulnerable. Therefore, it is crucial that gender is incorporated in future framing analysis.

Besides the implications this study has for the existing literature, this study also has societal implications. The literature cited in the theoretical framework (Chapter 2) of this research demonstrates the power of framing. Therefore, it is important to examine how the media frames topics, especially when it can influence policies concerning a vulnerable group like refugees. This research has contributed to the literature on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States. Its primary contribution is that it has focused on the element of gender and investigated whether male Syrian refugees are framed differently from female Syrian refugees. This research has revealed that Syrian refugees are consistently associated with concerns about security and terrorism, mostly in the form of quotations and paraphrasing. This is mentioned even in articles that emphasize the vulnerability of refugees. The societal consequences of continually linking Syrian refugees to these issues can have a negative impact on the perception Americans have of this group. With the literature on agenda-setting, priming, and framing in mind, it is important to reflect on which aspects receive emphasis in the news coverage of Syrian refugees.

Regarding the public opinion of Americans towards Syrian refugees, Yigit and Tatch (2017) found that while Americans sympathized with the refugees, they also expressed fears of terrorism. This study did not measure the effect of the frames that were identified on public opinion, but considering the effect frames utilized by the press can have on public opinion, it is interesting to find that the media frames used align with the attitudes of Americans regarding Syrian refugees. Furthermore, Rettberg and Gajjala (2015) found that in tweets using the hashtag #refugeesNOTwelcome American citizens frequently described men as dangerous, often calling them rapists and terrorists. In the light of this research, it is particularly interesting that in the sample under analysis for this study, all articles in which Syrian refugees were framed as a threat and a reference was made in gender, the reference was towards the male gender.

5.3 Limitations and suggestions for further research

Naturally, every research study has its own limitations. In this section, these limitations will be discussed, with some of them providing inspiration for future research.

An important limitation of this research is that all articles were coded by a single coder. In an ideal situation, qualitative content analysis would be conducted by multiple coders. Subsequently, software systems could be used to assess the level of agreement among coders. Naturally, this would enhance the reliability of the results. Due to the presence of only one coder to code all the articles in this research, there were also limitations in terms of time, which imposed a limit on the number of articles that could be coded. Although the sample size was sufficient to examine the patterns in the media coverage, a larger sample size could have further strengthened the robustness of the results.

However, the creation of a clear codebook prior to the study reduces the impact of having only one coder on the reliability of the results. This means that the codes, in this case vulnerability and threat frames, were extracted from the theory. The data was subsequently analyzed by examining whether and to what extent these two frames were present in the sample. This differs from an inductive or theory generating approach, where the research explores the data with an open mind to find out which frames can be identified. The choice for a deductive approach was appropriate for this study because there already was existing research leading to theoretical expectations about how men and women would be framed differently. Moreover, this approach was also necessary to enhance the reliability of the results: because the research was conducted

by one coder, it was crucial that the codebook left little room for personal interpretations and biases. Nevertheless, future research, with a larger sample size and additional coders, can, and should, conduct a broader analysis aiming to explore a wider range of frames used to describe male and female refugees.

Furthermore, as discussed in the previous sections, a similar logic was applied to the manner in which was decided when an article was coded as referring to the male or female gender. A 'hard test' was used for this, meaning that a specific reference to one of the two genders had to be made. The advantage of applying a hard test is that the results that are found provide more convincing evidence (Gerring, 2011). However, a disadvantage is that some information might be lost, as references to gender can also be made in a more subtle way. Therefore, it is recommended that future analysis explores references made to gender in both a direct and subtle way.

The aforementioned aspects are practical constraints that impose limitations on this research. However, various choices were also made to facilitate a focused approach and thereby strengthen the study. These choices, however, also provide opportunities for future research. One initial choice was to exclude opinion pieces from the analysis. An advantage of this approach is that it allows for insights into the frames presented in articles that do not aim to express a specific opinion. Americans likely read these articles without the conscious expectation of encountering biased perspectives, yet they can still be influenced by unconscious biases that manifest in framing. On the other hand, it is worth noting that a significant portion of news content comprises opinion pieces. Therefore, it remains relevant and intriguing for future research to include opinion pieces in investigations of the framing of Syrian refugees.

Additionally, the choice was made to analyze only articles discussing the resettlement of Syrian refugees in the United States. This decision provides focus to the research and avoids drawing inaccurate and far-fetched causal relationships based on this study. Furthermore, reporting on the reception of refugees in the region where news readers reside is inherently different from writing about other parts of the world where refugees are being accommodated. For these reasons, the choice was made to focus on this overarching theme. However, a substantial portion of news content also consists of articles concerning Syrian refugees in other countries. Moreover, significant attention is given to the Syrian civil war in general and other groups, such as internally displaced people, affected by it. These factors can also influence the public opinion regarding Syrian refugees. Therefore, they can be considered in future research as well.

Furthermore, while this study has examined the framing of female and male refugees, it is important to acknowledge that there are people who do not identify with either of these genders. Svallfors (2023) included, besides men and women, sexual and gender minorities in her research on gendered norms and gendered dynamics in the Colombian armed conflict. It is important to acknowledge the sexual and gender minorities and therefore it would be beneficial if they are incorporated in future research.

Finally, it is important to stress that future research on the framing of refugees should reflect on the role of gender and ensure that gender elements are not overlooked. Despite the fact that this research did not find conclusive evidence of differential framing between male and female Syrian refugees, the evidence points towards the direction that they are framed differently by the press. Therefore, more research is needed to further explore this framing. This is especially crucial considering the scarcity of research that incorporates the gender element, especially in the United States. Moreover, previous research by Adida et al. (2019) has indicated that Americans have a preference for Syrian female refugees over Syrian male refugees, but the motivations behind this preference remain unclear. This underscores the need for further investigation to uncover the underlying reasons for this preference. Taking the literature on the relationship between media reporting and public opinion into account, the role of framing on this preference should be further explored.

Chapter 6: conclusion

The concluding chapter of this thesis presents an overview of the research conducted and the results. Subsequently, the contribution of this research to the scientific field is discussed. In conclusion, the necessity for future research to incorporate the element of gender in their framing analysis is emphasized.

This thesis connected theories from two distinct fields of science: media framing theory and the association between gender and civil war. It is well-known that the topics covered by the media and the manner in which they report on these subjects greatly influence people's perception of the world and, consequently, their public opinion on various matters (Coleman et al., 2008; Bryant & Oliver, 2008; Entman, 2004; Iyengar and Simon, 1993; Reese et al., 2001; Rill and David, 2008). This effect is particularly strong when the media coverage pertains to events that are not readily observable in our daily lives (Coleman et al., 2008). This is often the case with news reports on war in Western media. Regarding the connection between gender and civil war: through empirical evaluation, we know that gender is a significant factor in civil war, with men and women being affected differently and playing different roles (Kumar, 2001; Melander, 2016). The same holds true for the Syrian civil war (Ul Shafi, 2019). Furthermore, pre-existing societal perceptions of gender norms shape our perspective on who is most vulnerable and therefore in need of protection (Carpenter, 2003).

The Syrian civil war and the associated refugee crisis have garnered immense media attention worldwide (Toivanen and Baser, 2016). The plan of the Obama administration to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees into the United States elicited diverse reactions, with a considerable number of (mostly Republican) politicians strongly opposing the arrival of Syrian refugees in their respective states. Several studies, although fewer compared to the framing of Syrian refugees in European countries, have examined how Syrian refugees are framed in the American press. However, no attention has been paid to the gender aspect in these studies.

Therefore, this research aimed to investigate, through qualitative content analysis, whether and how male Syrian refugees and female Syrian refugees are framed differently from one another. Articles from the three largest national American newspapers, namely USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and The New York Times, were analyzed for this purpose. The selected articles covered the period from September 2015 to November 2016, which coincided with the presidential primaries and the ultimate election that resulted in the election of Donald Trump

as president. Based on existing literature, it was hypothesized that female Syrian refugees would be more frequently framed as vulnerable, while male Syrian refugees would be portrayed as a threat or threatening. Consequently, a predetermined coding framework was employed to specifically identify these two frames within the data. Once one of these frames was identified, further examination was conducted to determine whether the gender of the respective refugee(s) involved was specified.

The results demonstrate that both the vulnerability frame and the security threat frame were clearly observable in the analyzed articles. The latter frame, in particular, was prevalent in a significant portion of the articles, often manifested through paraphrasing and citations. It is thus evident that the narrative of concerns about security and fear of terrorism featured prominently in the coverage of admitting Syrian refugees into the United States. However, the biggest contribution this study has made to the scientific field is incorporating gender in the framing analysis, an element that had not received attention in prior research on the framing of Syrian refugees in the United States. This study has therefore aimed to fill this gap in scientific research. While the results found in this study did not yield evidence as strong as expected, they do point in the direction that female and male Syrian refugees are framed differently, especially with regards to the security threat frame. Therefore, this research can serve as inspiration and motivation for other scholars to further explore how female and male Syrian refugees are framed differently in the United States and beyond. This is highly relevant because the press can both reflect existing gendered stereotypes, as well as contribute to their manifestation and reinforcement (Van der Pas and Aaldering, 2020). In addition, the existing literature of the effect media frames can have on public opinion demonstrates that it is of high societal relevance to conduct media framing analysis. Moreover, the lack of studies in the United States, and the scarcity in general, that include gender in the framing analysis of Syrian refugees display that there is a scientific gap that needs to be filled. This study has taken a first step in doing this.

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Appendix

This appendix contains the two codebooks that were used to analyse the data. The first codebook was used to examine the vulnerability frame in relation to gender. The second codebook was used to analyse the relationship between the security threat frame and gender.

Codebook 1

	Unit of analysis: title and date	Newspaper: USA Today, The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal	Is or are the refugee(s) explicitly called vulnerable, or a synonym of vulnerable?	Is someone described or portrayed to be at risk, while not being able to protect itself against that risk?	In what way is the refugee perceived or portrayed as at risk, and in what way is the refugee perceived or portrayed as not being able to project itself against that risk?	Is or are the refugee or refugees who are framed as vulnerable (a) female?	Is or are the refugee or refugees who are framed as vulnerable (a) male?
1.							

Codebook 2

	Unit of analysis: title, date and word count	Newspaper: USA Today, The New York Times or The Wall Street Journal	Is the refugee explicitly named to be a threat or a synonym of threat to something or someone?	Is someone portrayed as being a potential threat to someone or something?	In what way is the refugee perceived as having negative implications for someone, and for whom would it have negative implications?	Is or are the refugee or refugees who are framed as a threat or threatening (a) male?	Is or are the refugee or refugees who are framed as a threat or threatening (a) female?
1.							