Swedish Media Portrayals of Western Recruits to the Islamic State

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on how Swedish media portrays those men and women whom have chosen to leave their lives in their Western countries to join the Islamic State. Using critical discourse analysis and Norman Fairclough’s three dimensional model as a method together with a chosen analytical framework, I have analyzed news articles from influential Swedish news papers in an effort of highlighting the media portrayals of these men and women as well as analyzing the discursive practices of Swedish media in this field. The results of this thesis, suggest that Swedish media portrays male and female recruits to the Islamic State differently. The male recruits are portrayed as active warriors of the Islamic State with influential powers, while the female recruits most commonly are portrayed as passive victims under undue influence due to factors such as their young age and lack of better knowledge. The discursive practices of Swedish media in this field seem to a large extent therefore contradictory to the generally prevailing discourses in Swedish media. I suggest that Swedish media reporting in this field to a large extent draws on discourses related to hegemonic masculinity, whereas theories concerning feminism and terrorism have been overlooked.
1. Introduction

Below, a description of the research problem of this thesis will be provided, and the research questions and the aim of the thesis will be described.

1.1 Research Problem

Throughout history, we have seen violence and armed conflict in all parts of the world. This violence and these conflicts have often happened for different reasons and the actors behind this have usually had different aims with their strategies of violence. One type of violence which have had great impact on the world throughout history and in recent years is terrorism. Acts of terrorism are often spectacular and cause great fear to the public, why the world and its institutions considers it to be a great threat. There have been numerous of different terrorist organizations which have caught the world’s attention but the one terrorist organization which have received most attention in recent years is the organization called the Islamic State. The Islamic State is a terrorist organization, initially developed from the al Qaeda, which sprung from the chaos in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003 (CNN, 2019). Since then, the group have developed both in influence and power, as well as in territory. At it’s height, it controlled large areas of territories stretching from Western Syria to Eastern Iraq as well as many other smaller territories across the world (BBC A, 2019).

The Islamic State mainly became known to the general public in 2014 after the group filmed their brutal beheadings of different Western citizens and broadcasted this to the world (CNN, 2014). Their beheadings and otherwise brutal way is one of the factors which have made the organization known and able to spread fear across the world. For this particular reason, the Islamic State have gained a lot attention and the organization have been a common topic among politicians and news media. Despite the horror the organization have spread, the organization have not had a shortage on members or individuals willing to join them. In difference to many other terrorist organizations however, the Islamic State have been able to gain sympathizers and to recruit members from all parts of the world. These individuals have been both passive sympathizers, members actively fighting for the cause of the organization or individuals whom in other ways have contributed to the society the organization have aimed towards establishing. These sympathizers and members have stayed in their home countries, or chosen to travel to the area controlled by the Islamic State called "the caliphate” (BBC B, 2019). It is thought that people from over 110 different countries have left their home countries to live in the territory controlled by the Islamic State, either in Syria or in Iraq. In Syria or Iraq, these people have
lived under the rule of the Islamic State’s black flag and have followed its strict Islamic rule under Sharia (BBC B, 2019; NBC News, 2018).

Those whom have chosen to leave their Western home countries to join the Islamic State have received a lot of attention in Western media and politicians have been eager to find an explanation for how these people have been recruited, both in practical terms and psychological.

In news media, numerous of portraits of those recruited have further been reported and people close to the recruits have shed their thoughts on their recruitment. Besides the recruitment, there have also been a lot of reports concerning how these recruits have lived during their time in the caliphate and how they have responded to the strict lifestyle within the caliphate. Due to the great amount of attention on these Western recruits in media, both on the male and female recruits, it seems suitable to further investigate how the media have reported on these recruits and what have been written about them. Not least due to the role of media in spreading information to the general public and the media’s great power in influencing its readers. The research topic of this thesis is thus the media reporting of these Western recruits to the Islamic State.

1.2 Research Questions and Aim

As mentioned above, the research topic of this thesis is current as the Western recruits to the Islamic State have been continuously written about in media in recent years why further research concerning this reporting seems suitable. The research question of this thesis will therefore aim towards enabling such a research.

In today’s world, news media have great influence and the amount of news media available have increased in line with technology. News media can now be found by paper, online, on social media or in other platforms and media is now also available to all people in the world, despite not always in the same shape. For these particular reasons, the impact of media in today’s society is large and it is important not to underestimate the power it entails over individuals, groups and societies. As written by David Machin and Andrea Mayr, there is a general view in society that news have the aim of objectively informing us about events in the world. Sociologists have however suggested that this is a flawed image, and that it is not what media really does. Instead, news are just a special construction of reality as news are in need of being put in a context to which it gains meaning and shape. As news media is related to a subjectively chosen context, it can not be considered objective (Machin & Mayr, 2012:22). Due
to this potential bias in the news media – the aim of this thesis is to do further research on how media have presented the information concerning the Western recruits to the Islamic State in an effort of understanding the picture spread of these recruits to the general public. There are previous research which have examined how men and women are being presented in media, both concerning terrorism as well as other actions, and there is also previous research on how recruits to the Islamic State have been presented in media. The research in this particular area, the media portrayal of the Western recruits to the Islamic State, is however limited as it is based on a relative new phenomena. Research concerning whether there is a difference in how media portrayals the male and female recruits seems even more limited. Due to the limited research in the area, I aim towards further investigating how media have portrayed these Western recruits to the Islamic State and to compare if there is any difference in how they present the male and female recruits.

The central question of this thesis is thus:

- How are Western recruits, men and women, to the Islamic State portrayed in Swedish news media?

The operational sub-questions guiding the research process of this thesis are further:

- How are Western male recruits to the Islamic State portrayed in news media, and what discourses have contributed to this construction?
- How are female Western recruits to the Islamic State portrayed in news media, and what discourses have contributed to this construction?
- Is there a difference in how the Western male and female recruits to the Islamic State have been presented? If that is the case, what is the reason for this and what does this suggest about the Swedish news media?
- Have the description of these Western recruits to the Islamic State in Swedish news media remained constant over time?

1.3 Thesis Outline

The thesis will continue, after the research problem and the questions of this thesis have been stated, with a descriptive background on previous research concerning the research topic of this thesis and what is known about the subject. The thesis will further continue with a description of the methodological framework, and in this part of the thesis there will also be a discussion concerning the material used for this thesis. It will then continue with a description of the
analytical framework, and then the results will be presented together with an analysis of these. The thesis will end with a short conclusion as well as with a bibliography.

2. Background

In this section, a background concerning terrorism and the Islamic State together with its Western recruits will be provided. Previous research concerning the portrayal of men and women in media will then be presented together with previous research concerning how male and female terrorists are presented in media.

2.1 Terrorism

Terrorism is by the Terrorism Index (2014:6) and the Global Terrorism Database (2015) defined as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain political, economic, religious or social goal through fear, coercion or intimidation". An individual or a group using these means with such a declared goal is thus a terrorist or a terrorist organization. Despite terrorism not being a new phenomena, it has become a central security issue of the world since 9/11, and since George Bush declared "war on terrorism" (The Washington Post, 2018).

The goals of terrorism may be both long term as well as short term, and the reasons behind terrorism differ a lot between different terrorist groups as well as within the members of these groups (Lutz & Lutz, 2005:13). The long or short term goals are commonly grounded on political or religious motivations, despite other motivations also being stated at times. Specific short term goals of terrorism can be for example gaining publicity and media attention, destabilizing a policy or to damage economies whereas particular long term goals may be to redistribute power, influence and wealth of a society or a country. Commonly, terrorist organizations have these goals which they are not able to reinforce through the ordinary system. For this reason, these groups need to be willing to use force or violence in order to achieve their goals (Krieger & Meierriejes, 2011:4). Since 9/11, it is especially Islamic terrorism which have gained most attention in media and policy and this is highly correlated to the "war on terrorism" which was pronounced in the aftermath of 9/11. The "war on terrorism" have by many been considered to be a war against Islam, and an increase in the activity of Islamic terrorism have been seen since 9/11 (Smith & Zeigler, 2017:6). Boaz Ganor have for example suggested that certain Islamist-jihadist organizations have declared a war on Western states post the
declaration of the “war on terrorism”, and chosen to exploit certain democratic values and institutions in order to gain power and status (Ganor, 2015:15).

2.2 The Islamic State and its Western Recruits

The Islamic State is a terrorist organization which have been heavily forthcoming in their propaganda and recruitment of new members, and the organization have actively aimed towards recruiting citizens from foreign, and Western countries (CNN, 2015). In order to spread their propaganda, they have used social media and other digital platforms. Recruiters to the Islamic State have been known to use known social media channels such as Facebook, Youtube, Twitter or Tumblr, and to use instant messaging on forums such as Telegram, KiK and Wickr (Bozorgmehri, 2018:55). The Islamic State and their so called al-Hayat Media Center, have also worked with online propaganda directly aimed towards a Western audience (Macnair & Frank, 2017:235). The main factors which the Islamic State have tried try to awaken with their propaganda are sociological, political, religious and psychological factors relating to injustice, hatred, faith and loneliness (Bozorgmehri, 2018:58-59). For this reason, propaganda videos posted by the Islamic State often have themes such as friendship and camaraderie, strength and victory, religion and religious persecution or spiritual and existential fulfillment (Macnair & Frank, 2017:236-238). Through their communication, the Islamic State have had three key objectives; to legitimize, to mobilize and to terrorize. This have been considered possible to achieve by promoting their organization and the life which becomes available under their rule, as well as to attract new members and fighters from foreign countries (Bozorgmehri, 2018:55-56).

What can be said regarding the use of propaganda by the Islamic State is that it have worked to the extent that many foreign and Western citizens have chosen to leave their home countries to live under the caliphate. According to the United Nations, an estimated 40 000 individuals have joined the Islamic State from 110 different countries. Part of these 40 000 individuals whom have joined the Islamic State are people from different Western countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia or different countries in Europe. It has been estimated that around 5 904 persons from Western Europe and 753 from the Americas, Australia and New Zealand have joined the Islamic State, both men and women (BBC B, 2019). Besides the above mentioned numbers, it has also been mentioned that 20 percent of the recruits to the Islamic State can be estimated to come from Western nations (Macnair & Frank, 2017:235).
The vast majority of those whom have joined the Islamic State have been men, but in difference to many other terrorist organizations have the Islamic State actively encouraged muslim women to join the organization (Eggert, 2015:367). Also male recruits have been encouraged to take their women and children to the Islamic State territory (Tonzari Greenwood, 2017:91). Historically, women have been less involved in Islamic terrorist organizations and networks then in other terrorist organizations, mainly as Islam sets a precedent for women’s involvement in jihad (Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:40). The Quran calls for equality and that the responsibility of jihad is equal to men and women, but jihad is a struggle which can be depicted in many different ways and women are commonly not expected to engage in jihad in the similar way as men (Ibid, 2018:40). The Islamic State have however considered both men and women to be crucial for the development of their caliphate why they have targeted both men and women in their recruitment efforts (Eggert, 2015:367). In public communications of the Islamic State, women have also had a more prominent role than in previous Islamist armed groups – and it has been argued that women have been included in the Islamic State in such way to Make extremism appear like a normal life-style decision (Ibid, 2015:367).

There are numerous of different reasons for why these Western citizens have chosen to join the Islamic State. In research, there is an understanding that men and women participate for terrorism for the same reasons (Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:34). Many are motivated by the four R:s; revenge, redemption, relationship, respect (Ibid, 2018:33). Feelings such as isolation from the West, the perception that muslims are being attacked and frustration over a lack of international action are other common push factors (Eggert, 2015:366). Also desire to fulfill a religious duty, ideas of belonging, identity and community as well as romanticization of life under Islamic State may influence their choice (Ibid, 2015:366-367).

After being recruited in any of the above mentioned ways, the Western recruits have travelled to Syria or to Iraq to live under the Islamic flag. Many of the male recruits whom have travelled to the Islamic State have had high ranking roles within the organization, but the majority of the male recruits have been at middle rank or foot soldiers. The foreign male recruits have also been known as brutal tortures and executioners, as it often have been these foreign recruits whom have been shown in different propaganda videos by the Islamic State (Tonzari Greenwood, 2017:89). Besides the above mentioned roles of the male recruits to the Islamic State, there is also the opportunity to engage in other types of work with the aim of building up the caliphate. Men whom have been unfit for military service have for example been
encouraged to join others functions in building up and maintaining their new society, such as administrators, health personnel, builders, engineers or to work with media production (Ibid, 2017:91). The women recruits whom have joined the Islamic State have however had a different role and position within the caliphate than the male recruits. Historically within Islamic terrorist organizations, women’s role have been to give birth to new fighters and to take care of the children, as well as to take care of the home and the men (Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:41). This is also the role which the female recruits to the Islamic State have been encouraged or conditioned to take, and the role which the majority of the recruited women have entered. Besides the domestic roles of women in the Islamic State – it is known that there are Western women whom have acted as recruiters, propagandists and inciters (Eggert, 2015:367).

2.3 Previous Research on How Media Portrays Men and Women
As previously mentioned, media is a powerful actor in today’s society. According to Brigitte Nacos, media make constant choices regarding what and whom to present in the news and continuously consider why this particular material should be publicized (Nacos, 2006:436). All forms of media further communicate images of the sexes and media often have a particular framing pattern concerning men and women which sustain already socially endorsed views of the genders. Often, the images of both sexes are communicated from an unrealistic, stereotypical and limited perception (Wood, 1994:31). In general, men are often portrayed as active, adventurous and powerful as well as sexually aggressive and uninvolved in human relationships in media. Women on the other hand are generally portrayed as sex objects, young, thin and beautiful as well as passive, dependent and incompetent. There is thus a tendency in media to reinforce long standing cultural and stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity (Ibid, 1994:32).

2.4 Previous research on How Media Portrays Men and Women Engaged in Terrorism
As media have a tendency of reinforcing long standing cultural and stereotypical ideas of gender – this also applies when media writes about violent acts, for example terrorism, committed by either a male or female perpetrator. According to Nacos, framing patterns of terrorism in news are of special importance as such news have a tendency to have strong effects on the perception and reactions of news receivers (Nacos, 2006:436). Both men and women have a long history of engaging in terrorist organizations, and throughout history – numerous of men and women in terrorist organizations have been portrayed in media. Despite both gender being central to historical terrorism and despite that the number of individuals engaging in terrorist
organizations have increased the last decade, media have a tendency of continuously being astonished by the participation of women in terrorist activities. Women participating in terrorism is commonly given special attention in media in comparison to men, and attacks perpetrated by women often draw more media attention than attacks perpetrated by men (Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:47). This is also a tendency which Laura Sjoberg have concluded in her research. According to her, women have previously been neglected in questions concerning conflict and war but have now, in relation to the Islamic State, received tremendous amounts of attention in media (Sjoberg, 2018:296). When women act violent, it has been shown that media have a tendency of reacting with surprise or even with sympathy. Public response to terrorism perpetrated by women are often met with more sympathy than terrorism perpetrated by men (Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:47). How media presents these women, for example female terrorists to the Islamic State, have however implications for how we view both these women and men. If these women continuously are portrayed as victims, we continuously also portray these men as threats (Sjoberg, 2018:303).

According to Nacos, there is however no evidence that male and female terrorists are fundamentally different in terms of recruitment, motivation, ideological fervor and brutality. Yet, the medias treatment of female terrorists is very much different than of male terrorists and the treatment of these female terrorists are consistent with the patterns of societal gender stereotypes in general (Nacos, 2006:436). Due to these gendered stereotypes, we also often have pre-decided thoughts on how men and women are expected to behave and if either group challenge this, it will affect media and the public reactions to this (Ibid, 2006:437).

This is a conclusion also drawn by Alice Martini in her research concerning how media have portrayed the women whom have travelled to the Islamic State. According to the research of Martini, the women whom have chosen to join the Islamic State were in media commonly described as naive and vulnerable. Women are also described as being lured down to the Islamic State territory by a man or with the goal of marriage (Martini, 2018:465-466). Both the research conducted by Alice Martini and Laura Sjoberg further suggests that the common gendered stereotypes in media also affects how media presents these women’s choice of joining the Islamic State. Sjoberg states for example that many of the articles concerning the female members of the Islamic State correspond with the well-established ”mother, monster and whore-narratives” of women, and in these texts – these women are commonly treated as victims of the Islamic State and as a victim of her own femininity, thus removing the woman’s
own agency over her choices (Sjoberg, 2018:299; Martini, 2018:465-466). Besides the above mentioned, Martini does for example suggests that the fact that women may have chosen to join the Islamic State by themselves have challenged the current understandings of these actors, and thus challenged the current discourse in the field. For this reason, Martini suggests that the media instead have sought to portray these women in line with the current discourse by focusing on specific attributes in the specific cases which to a greater extent correspond with the current discourse. Martini further suggests that the current interpretation of these women, which is heavily gender biased, risk limiting the actual understanding of these women (Martini, 2018:471).

3. Research Design
In this section, the methodology of this thesis will be described. It will start with a short description of the method of this thesis and continue with a more in depth description of how this method will be used to analyze the material chosen. The material chosen will then be described, and a short discussion of the sources will be conducted. This section ends with a discussion on the ethical considerations for conducting this research.

3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis.
Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is considered to be a special approach which study the use of text and talks. It have emerged from critical linguistics and it is a way of critically examining language, discourse and communication. The aim of CDA is to reveal what kind of, or if any, social relations of power can be found to be present implicitly or explicitly in texts as the use of language is a social construction which varies in context from each person (Machin & Mayr, 2012:24). Further, it is an interdisciplinary approach which especially focus on the relationship between discourse and society (van Dijk, 1995:17). Particularly discourse is something which is central to CDA. Discourse can be described as ”language in real contexts of use”, as it shows how we use particular language or what meaning we give to a particular language. A discourse is often something which operates above specific grammar and semantics to capture what happens when the language is used in different social, political and cultural arenas. For this reason, CDA often involves a process where one examine the choice of specific words, grammar or created sentences in texts as an effort of understanding the underlying discourses and ideologies on which the choices are made (Machin & Mayr, 2012: 20).
Due to the stated aims of CDA, it seems as a suitable method to use for this thesis where the aim is to examine how Western recruits to the Islamic State are presented in Swedish news media, and whether there is any difference in how the male and female recruits are being portrayed.

3.2 Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Model as Basis

The aim of a critical discourse analysis is to explore the links between language use and social practice (Jørgensen & Philips, 2002:69). Within critical discourse analysis, Norman Fairclough have constructed his own framework for doing such an analysis; Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Model. This is the model which I intend to use as my basis when conducing my research. The model which Fairclough have constructed is an analytical framework for research on communication and society, and these are two aspects which Fairclough considers to be highly related. The model is thus based on the principle that one communicative event, such as a text, never can be understood or analyzed in isolation – it can only be understood in relation of the specific social context in which they have evolved (Ibid, 2002:70).

A communicative event, such as text or speeches, both shapes and is shaped by the specific language use in that specific context. When a journalist draws on a discourse commonly used in media for example, the journalist also play a part in reproducing that particular discourse in the media. Besides from reproducing the current discourse, a communicative event also have the opportunity of changing the same discourse by for example changing the language used (Ibid, 2002:72). This is what Fairclough have named the ”order of the discourse”, but it is more commonly refereed to as intertextuality and interdiscursivity (Ibid, 2002:73). Interdiscursivity is something which occurs when different discourses are taken together in a communicative event, and as these are taken together in one event – the boundaries between these different discourses change. Interdiscursivity may also occur through intertextuality, which is a condition referring to communicative events which all draw on previous events (Ibid, 2002:73). Intertextuality is thus the influence of history in two different ways. A text may be influenced by history, but it will for this reason also contribute to the development of history. Despite many people thinking that interdiscursivity and intertextuality is something which shows the instability of language, Fairclough considers the opposite. Despite change being possible by drawing on previous discourses, the amount of change possible is limited by the power relations in the world which aims towards keeping the status quo (Ibid, 2002:74). "Orders of discourse can be seen as one domain of potential cultural hegemony, with dominant groups struggling to
assert and maintain particular structuring within and between them” (Fairclough, 1995:56). Ideology and Hegemony are thus two concepts important to Fairclough. According to Fairclough, ideology is the "meaning in the service of power", and ideologies should be understood as something created in societies with relations of domination which are based on social structures such as class and gender. Ideology should therefore be considered a process in which meaning is produced in everyday life, and this meaning is then mobilized in an effort of maintaining the current power relations (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002:75). Hegemony is then what Fairclough considered to give us the means by which we can analyze a particular discourse found in a larger social context with current power relations (Ibid, 2002:76).

According to Fairclough, every instance of language use consists of three dimensions; it is a text, it is a discursive practice and it is a social practice. Fairclough thus suggest that an analysis should focus on the linguistic features of the text, the processes relating to the production of the text and the social practice to which the communicative event belongs (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002:69). For a discursive analysis of an communicative event to be correct, it is important that all these three dimensions are taken into account when conducing the analysis. This is thus what I aim towards incorporating in my research for this thesis.

3.3 Benefits of Using Critical Discourse Analysis
As previously mentioned, there is a general view among the public to consider media as something objective which will inform about events in the world. News are however subjective, and it is given meaning by the context in which is it written (Machin & Mayr, 2012:22). By investigating how Swedish media portrays these Western recruits to the public, this enables also the public of becoming aware of the subjectivity of media why they then can be more critical of what they read. By using critical discourse analysis, it will be possible to highlight how media is just one actor in a field of a range of actors, all of which may have sentiments of influencing the public in one way or another. As critical discourse analysis examines the underlying power relations between these different actors, possible influence of media can easily be detected by using such an analysis. Critical discourse analysis and Fairclough’s 3D-model further investigates both the text as well as the context in which the text have been written – why using this method enables a more in-depth analysis of the subject than would have been possible if using for example solely textual analysis.
3.4 Specific Tools of Critical Discourse Analysis Used for This Thesis

For this thesis, I will use Swedish news articles as my material which I aim to analyze. Regarding the linguistics of the text, I will use textual analysis to discover how discourses are activated in the texts which I analyze (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002:83). In his model, Fairclough provides several specific aspects which one can investigate when conducting this analysis, for example examining the text’s ethos, metaphors, wording and grammar (Ibid, 2002:83). In their book, Machin & Mayr have further stated several particular tools that can be used, which I will list below.

Classification of social actors

When speaking about people or when presenting people, it is common to use labels or general descriptions in an effort of giving the reader a better view of the person in question. This has to do with what Machin and Mayr presents as individualization versus collectivization or specification and generalization. General descriptions are for example what Machin and Mayr describes as “collectivization”, where individuals are depicted as a group and thus are homogenized. The opposite to collectivization is individualization, where an individual is represented alone and in such cases, it is easier to focus on the different aspects of a particular person (Machin & Mayr, 2012:101).

Modality & Hedging

Analyzing a texts modality or whether hedging are used are other tools which can be effective for the purpose of this thesis. Modality is relating to how we communicate our level of certainty in the way we speak. One common modality is truth, where the person speaks in a way without any uncertainties (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002:84). Modality can also be associated with hedging terms which show level of certainty and commitment with a person (Machin & Mayr, 2012:188). Hedging is also used to create a strategic ambiguity within the claims described in a text – which is something which lowers the level of certainty communicated. By using this strategic ambiguity in the way the sentences are built up, the writer can for example avoid making any direct claims or taking stance (Ibid, 2012:192).

Quoting verbs

What further can be revealing in a text is to see which words are chosen to present a specific person and present how this specific person have spoken (Ibid, 2012:57). It is by quoting verbs
that also aspects such as guilt, ambiguity or confidence implicitly is implied in a text or interview (Ibid, 2012:62).

*Representational strategies in language*

When conducting such an analysis as suggested in this thesis, it is further important to remember that there is not neutral way of representing or presenting a person. Instead, all descriptions of a person are choices made to draw attention to specific aspects of that persons identity or behavior. This choices made in this part will then also impact how the people whom later will read the description, view this particular person or the image this person will have of the persons depicted (Ibid, 2012:77-78).

*Transitivity*

When analyzing texts, it is also important to look at the transitivity of the texts; how a sentence or paragraph is structured and which object or subject in these which receive the emphasis. This is something which is important to take into consideration as the emphas in a sentence or paragraph have a large impact on how this part will be understood by the public (Ibid, 2012:104-106).

*Intertextuality*

Besides this, regarding the discursive practice, I will analyze whether it is possible to detect any intertextual chain in the text, or any implications that the texts are built on each others, or if it to a large extent is the same text but in different versions (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002:81). By doing such an analysis, it will be possible to detect how structure and content in the articles have transformed, and this can thus be used to answer my research question of whether the description of the Western recruits to the Islamic State in media have been consistent or if it have changed in time.

3.5 Material

Critical discourse analysis as a method have in times been criticized for selecting and using a small number of texts, why there is potential for the bias of the researcher to be higher when choosing these texts. However, by being aware of this criticism – there is an opportunity to work around the criticism or at least minimizing the risk of the criticized aspects to interrupt the research. For this reason, I will aim towards being as transparent as possible when choosing
the material and I intend to use the strategy of choosing material from criteria’s spelled out before the actual gathering of this material (Sriwimon & Jimarkon Zilli, 2017:136).

The criteria’s which I have chosen to following when gathering my material are inspired from the criteria-list done by Michael Wodak and Ruth Meyer. Wodak and Mayer have suggested that the following criteria’s could be used when choosing material; specific political units (region, nation state, international union), specific periods of time relating to important discourse events which are connected with the issue in question, specific social and special political actors, specific discourse, specific fields of political action and specific semiotic media and genre (Ibid, 2017:137-138).

As previously stated, I will examine Swedish news articles for this thesis which are related to my chosen research topic; Western recruits to the Islamic State. Concerning the specific political unit which Wodak and Meyer mentioned, I will limit my news articles as for being solely from Swedish newspapers. Choosing all articles from one country enables many aspects, such as level of democracy, level of equality and level of freedom of expression to be constant as the Swedish news papers will be written in the same geographical context and thus within the same nation-wide social and political dimensions. The different news articles may have different political stances and the below mentioned news papers have different political stances, but no further emphasis will be places on the political stances of the news papers in this thesis. Instead the emphasis will be placed on the fact that all chosen newspapers work within the same nation-wide political and social context. As I only will use Swedish news articles, all the material will however be in Swedish. One can however conclude that it is important for me, the researcher, to have great knowledge in the language which I intend to analyze as the specific meanings of words as well as emphasis in different sentences are of great importance. As I am Swedish and as Swedish is my mother tongue, this is something which seems easiest reached by analyzing Swedish news articles, written in Swedish.

According to Tidningsutgivarna, the ten newspapers with the largest range (reaches highest amount of people) in Sweden are ”Aftonbladet”, ”Expressen”, ”Dagens Nyheter”, ”Svenska Dagbladet”, ”Dagens industri”, ”Göteborgs-posten”, ”Sydsvenskan”, ”Skånska Dagbladet”, ”Dagen” and ”Helsingborgs Dagblad” (TU, 2017). As the aim of this reach is to highlight how the media portrays Western recruits, as this may impact how the public view these people – it is important to me to choose news papers which have reached the highest amount of people.
For this reason, I will choose my material from these ten news papers, and solely those articles which can be read online for free.

Concerning the time frame of this thesis, I have chosen to limit the time frame of my material from 2014 to 2018. It was mainly in 2014 that the media and the public became aware of the Islamic State and it is mainly from 2014 that large amount of Western recruits have chosen to travel to the territory of the Islamic State (BBC B, 2019). For the above mentioned reasons, 2014 seems as a suitable year to choose my material from. Regarding for how long the time frame should be, that was a more difficult question. During 2019, tremendous amounts of articles have been written about the Western recruits of the Islamic State in relation to the organization loosing their last territory. However, we are currently not even half past 2019 as a year, why it does not seems reasonable to include the articles of this year as there may occur a change in the portrayals later this year. The fall of the caliphate can also be considered such an event which is so heavily different from the context in which the organization were established it in previously during this period that it will be difficult to include both in the same analysis (The Guardian, 2019). For the above mentioned reasons, the time frame of thesis will be limited for 2014-2018.

3.6 Transcription
As the material I will use are in Swedish, and this thesis is in English – I will need to translate the quotes I intend to use for this thesis from Swedish to English. As it is of considerable importance that these quotes and withdrawals are translated correctly, this will be done using dictionaries and with great consistency. In the text, solely the translated quotes will be presented but there will be careful source references so that the material can easily be found if this would be of interest.

3.7 Ethical Considerations
When conducting the analysis of my material, it is important to take ethnical aspects into consideration. I intend on doing my research in line with the principles mentioned in the ALLEA-handbook; reliability, honesty, respects and accountability are such principles which should be kept in all stages of the research process (ALLEA, 2017).

When conducting the research, it it also important to stay objective to my own research and my findings. As I conduct the critical discourse analysis, it is important to consider that also I live
in a social context and that also my own language are part of discourses. For this reason, it is important to also be aware of my own potential bias and aim towards distancing my self from the material used and the analysis conducted (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002:21). Besides this, it is also important not to allow any knowledge of my research topic which I may receive from undocumented sources to have an impact on my analysis of the material. This, as well as other potential bias, is something which I have aimed toward minimizing through choosing my material from the above mentioned criteria’s.

4. Analytical Framework

Below, I will provide an outline of the analytical framework used in this thesis. As mentioned above, to be able to do a complete analysis of my research problem, it is necessary to draw on existing theories in order to draw any conclusion regarding social and discursive practices of the Swedish media. Below, a description of relevant theories will therefore be outlined.

4.1 Discourse in General

The concept of discourse have been widely used in research and policy, and its definition have for thus reason become rather vague and in-precise (Jorgensen & Philips, 2012:1). There are many different definitions of discourse, and research have not yet agreed on what discourses are or how they should be analyzed. Despite this have Jorgensen and Philips chosen to define the concept of discourse as "a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)", and this is the definition which will serve as a basis for this thesis (Ibid, 2012:1). All discourses are commonly based on social constructivism, and social constructivism is based on the view that all aspects of the world is a result of social practices, including language and institutionalized ways of categorizing the world (Blackburn, 2016). Critical discourse analysis is just one existing social constructivist approach, but there are four premises which according to Vivien Burr are shared by all the existing social constructivist approaches. This four approaches are; to have a critical approach to all knowledge which is taken for granted, to always include the historical and cultural aspects, to understand the link between knowledge and social processes as well as to understand the link between knowledge and different social actions (Burr, 1995:2-5).

As mentioned above, this thesis will use Fairclough’s three dimensional model in the efforts of conducting a critical discourse theory. Fairclough makes an important distinction between non-
discursive and discursive moments of a social practice and suggest that these moments adhere to different logic. He suggests that the discursive is a mechanism working with other mechanisms and therefore constitutes a social practice. Each mechanism has their own logic however, and for an appropriate understanding of the social practice in question – these mechanisms must be analyzed separately with appropriate tools in order to draw any conclusion on the social practice investigated (Jorgensen & Philips, 2012:71). This is something which is highlighted though Fairclough’s three dimensional model and it is for the above mentioned reason that conducting a textual analysis of a text isn’t enough if the aim is to understand a social practice, or in this case how Swedish media portrays the Western recruits to the Islamic State. The context is necessary if any conclusions would be able to be drawn in this field (Ibid, 2012:69).

4.2 The Terrorism Discourse Post 9/11

As mentioned, terrorism have been seen throughout history and states have always been forced to position itself to this (Krieger & Meierrieckes, 2011:4). Since 9/11 however, a lot have changed regarding how different states have positioned itself to terrorist acts, terrorist groups and terrorist sympathizers. The attack of 9/11 have been instrumental in reframing the international development policies to include security as the highest policy. Due to the focus of Western states and as Western states have the priority of suppressing terrorism, how the media and public speak about terrorism have changed. Terrorism as a discourse is now often used to discredit oppositional groups or to justify current state policies or regimes in a way which haven’t been seen in history (Toomey & Singleton, 2014:184). The term terrorism does also infer value judgement about the legitimacy of the tactics and the objectives of a group or individual, as terrorism is considered something ”which the bad guys do” (Ibid, 2014:185). From historically commonly speaking about terrorists as freedom fighters, they are now considered criminals and illegitimate actors, for example in news media. One can say that since 9/11, a de-humanization of these individuals have occurred (Ibid, 2014:186). Those who practice terrorism have lost their familiarity and terrorist activities are now considered activities for those unworthy of normal standards and processes, in difference to the historical context where terrorist groups could enjoy a certain kind of legitimacy, for example IRA which could ensure their political status by using terrorism. As terrorism is now considered a criminal activity, it is also associated with illegitimacy, brutality and evilness. This perceived enemy may therefore be defeated at all costs, and this seems to apply to all those associated with terrorism. The scope of whom are considered illegitimate actors or terrorists have thus
increased. Also those who sympathizes with the terrorists and the community they represent are now considered to accept the group, and are therefore also acceptable targets when it comes to state policies such as sanctions or attacks (Ibid, 2014:188).

4.3 Media Power

Media have high capacity in contributing to the publics knowledge regarding how things are in terms of society, events or other circumstances. As a result of this, media can be considered to have either a soft/social power over the public (Corner, 2011:14-15; van Djik, 1995:10). Teun A van Dijk defines social power as a "social relation between groups or institutions, involving the control by a more powerful group or institution of the actions and the minds of a less powerful group" (Ibid, 1995:10). Through the soft/social power the media endures, it has the potential of controlling the thoughts or opinions of the readers (Corner, 2011:14-15). The power that media contains over the public is however only symbolic, as the media may only control and influence the thoughts of the readers, but lack any direct control of the readers actual actions (van Djik, 1995:10).

The power the media have can be viewed from two different perspectives; that media have an opportunity to benefit the public by providing information and that media can be harmful for the exact same reason (Corner, 2011:15). Concerning media, the relationship between power and knowledge which is of importance to the approach of critical discourse analysis is thus evident. Gillian Rose do for example suggest that power and knowledge have direct influence on one another and neither can exist in a vacuum (Rose, 2001:138). The power the media contains can be harmful as media is just one power actor engaging in a system of other power actors, which may differ on international and national level (Corner, 2011:19-20). There is the possibility that elites or other individuals or groups with an agenda may control the information of the public through media (Ibid, 2011:31). This kind of deception in media can be considered a way of securing higher levels of acceptance and to reduce the political damage that certain actions, for example different state policies may lead to (Ibid, 2011:32). Ordinary people have further continuous access to the news media but have no power to influence what is it in, in difference to these elite groups or institutions (van Djik, 1995:12). One of the most worrying aspect of media power which have been brought forward in recent years is how the media acts within the political system and is bound by different political parties. This is one aspect which is not always obvious for the public eye, why it may be easier to influence their minds in this concern (Corner, 2011:19-20).
4.4 Femininity and Feminism

When referring to femininity, one usually refer to certain characteristics of which conforms to a certain gender stereotype of women often grounded in history. This can for example be long hair, wearing certain forms of cloths or being submissive or nurturant (Griffin, 2017). Femininity is a concept continuously challenged in current world order. Not because femininity is wrong, but due to the discourse femininity historically have been associated with.

The view of femininity and the gendered stereotype of women is part of the current feminist challenge. To define feminism is however a difficult task and there is often little agreement concerning what feminism is and means (Thomson, 2001:5). There are many different theories within feminist theory, and all of these put emphasis on different aspects in this challenge. One common dominator between the different feminist theories are however the idea of the sexes and the relationship between these, as well as the idea of the women as a social construction. The idea of this social construction is central to all feminist theories and which other aspects of emphasis are built on (Ibid, 2001:6-7). Feminism further aim towards showing the reality of male domination and continue the struggle for a world where women are recognized as equal human beings in their own right (ibid, 2001:8).

Feminism have also influences and become politics. Feminist politics suggests that the nature of politics needs to be changed in a way so that it includes women. In feminist sense, what women aim for is the human status where rights, benefits and dignities are gained but not to any other groups extent and that duties as well as obligations should not fall disproportionately on women (Ibid, 2001:8).

One theory within feminist theory which have received a lot of attention is radical feminism. Radical feminism is based on the suggestion that society at large is based on patriarchal grounds and for this particular reason, women have continuously been marginalized and discriminated against. The theory is thus based on the assumption that men, wrongly, are dominated over women in society (Vukoicic, 2017). They suggest that the oppression of women is the most fundamental form of oppression and it has existed since the beginning of mankind (Thomson, 2001:133). Because of the patriarchy, women are viewed as the other while the male is the norm in society. As men as a group benefits from this system, they do however have incentives of keeping this status quo (Ibid, 2001:135). The aim of of radical feminists is however to abolish this patriarchy in order to create an equal society for both women and men. This can be done
by for example challenging the concept of gender roles, and to raise problems such as violence against women and opposing the sexual objectification of women in for example media (Ibid, 2011:135-136). In difference to many other feminist sub-theories, radical feminism consider the patriarchal gender system to be the root-problem of society whilst many other theories suggest that it is the legal system or class conflict which is the root-problem (Vukoicic, 2017).

4.5 Masculinity

When referring to masculinity, one is commonly talking about the behavior, the social roles and the relations of men given in a society as well as the meaning of these (Chandler & Munday A, 2016). Masculinity is something which we often ascribe with characteristics such as muscular, strong, brave and in control to, at the same time as masculinity seldom is ascribed adjectives such as weak, soft or emotional (Reeser, 2010:12). The concept of masculinity is however considered to vary throughout history and throughout different cultures and contexts as masculinity. Masculinity may thus have different meaning for different persons and in different situations (Chandler & Munday A, 2016).

Concerning masculinity, there are many different theories and discourses. One of the most commonly mentioned theories is hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is a practice/discourse which legitimizes men’s domination over women in society (Chandler & Munday B, 2016). Hegemonic masculinity is further defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995:77; Lusher & Robins, 2009:387). Besides men’s domination over women, hegemonic masculinity also have dominance over other men as well whom are not considered as masculine (Lusher & Robins, 2009:387). Connell & Messerschmidt writes that hegemonic masculinity have distinguished itself from other masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity should however not be considered normal in the statistical sense as only a minority of men enact it. Despite this however, hegemonic masculinity have become normative in the sense that it is currently considered the most honorable way of being a man and it requires all other men and women to position themselves to it (Kareithi, 2013:26; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005:832). The rise of women in society have however created a crisis for masculinity all over the world – and thus also led to hegemonic masculinity now claiming those areas or characteristics which they still can endure control over, for example muscularity (Kareithi, 2013: 27).
5. Results and Analysis

5.1 How Swedish Media Portrayals the Western Male Recruits to the Islamic State

When examining the material available concerning the Islamic State, it can be noticed that the Western men whom have joined the Islamic State are mentioned in all those articles concerning Western recruits to the Islamic State. These articles are however different, some of the articles concerns recruits in general, some concerns specifically the Western men of the Islamic State and some of the articles are individual portraits of the men whom have joined the organization.

What can be seen from the majority of the news articles where these Western men are mentioned, both those concerning recruits in general and the individualized portraits, are the labels commonly used to describe this group of individuals. The most common label used to describe these men whom have joined the Islamic State and travelled to Syria or Iraq is by presenting them as "IS-warriors" (SVT, 2017; SR, 2018; SVT, 2018; Expressen A, 2018). This can for example be seen in these quotes from different news articles; "he became an IS-warrior" or "a new survey by Expressen over 150 returning IS-warriors shows how they today do everything to avoid being recognized" (Skånska Dagbladet, 2017; Expressen B, 2017). What is interesting about the label "IS-warrior" is that the label itself suggest that the individual have been actively engaged in battle. That the individuals written about in the news articles have actively engaged in battle is however not always known or proven. There are many Western recruits to the Islamic State whom have engaged in battle for the Islamic State and many Western recruits are known to have had high-ranking roles within the Islamic State. At the same time, it is also known that the Islamic State have encouraged all men to join the Islamic State and that those whom are considered unfit for military service may have other functions in the group such as building up and maintaining their new society with tasks as administrators, health personnel, builders or engineers (Tonzari Greenwood, 2017:91). Despite the different roles available for men in the organization, the label "IS-warrior" seems to be the general term used to describe all those men whom have travelled from their Western countries to Syria and Iraq with the ambition of joining the Islamic State. Besides IS-warrior, other common labels to describe these male recruits are "IS-terrorists", "IS-jihadists" or "IS-returnees" (Expressen A, 2017; Expressen B, 2014). These labels can be seen to be used in the news articles where these male recruits are written about as a collective group and in those articles where there is individualized portrait of them. What all of these labels of presenting these male recruits have
Another common dominator between the news articles which have written about the Western men whom have travelled to the Islamic State are the writers ways of quoting the verbs concerning how these individuals represent themselves and their actions. This is mainly something which can be seen in those news articles where there are individualized portraits of the recruited men whom have made the journey to Syria or Iraq. When reporters have interviewed these men, there is a tendency in the reporters to use particular verbs when writing or quoting what these men have said or answered to different questions. Often, the verbs used are such verbs which indicate that the interviewee is not telling the truth or indicate a low level of certainty in the answer. This can for example be seen in the following examples. "Last spring he returned home and claimed that he was devoted to helping vulnerable people in the IS-stronghold Raqqa in Syria", "he himself claims to have been close to death. During an exchange of fire, he was hit by a bullet in his thigh, he declared" or "he suggests that he have had a romantic, simplified image of the war and claims that he did not participate in battle, never fired a weapon or went to training camps" (Expressen A, 2017; Expressen A, 2014; Expressen C, 2017). The use of verbs such as "claims" or "suggests" can be found to be used when the interviewee discusses his time with the Islamic State or mentions that he have had a tough time in the organization. According to Machin and Mayr, quoting verb is one area where guilt can be implicitly implied in texts (Machin & Mayr, 2012:62). Using words such as "claims" or "suggests" can be considered to be such verbs which imply guilt as the verbs are not as neutral as for example the word "says". The term "says" is however rarely used in the above mentioned cases. Instead, the term "says" seems more commonly to be used when the interviewee presents himself more in line with the common opinions or thoughts regarding these recruited men and their time with the Islamic State. This can for example be seen in the following examples; "one cannot become a muslim and at the same time struggle to get a democratic country, says the jihadist Muhajir" or "considering Sweden’s soldiers in Afghanistan, it wasn’t wrong, he says regarding the attack" (Expressen A, 2014; Expressen B, 2014). Besides this, the term "says" is often used in sentences with strategic ambiguity. Thus in sentences where the reader becomes uncertain regarding the image which is portrayed of the individual due to the sentences or paragraphs being contradictory. This can for example be done by presenting contradictory information in the same paragraph or by using different verbs to explain what they have said in the same paragraph. For example "he says that several parts of
the information in the documents from IS is correct, his date of birth, the time of the trip and much more. But, he totally refuses to have fought in Syria or to have joined the organization”, or ”I just want to forget about everything, he says, and tells us that his journey to the conflict area have had consequences for his work life” (Expressen A, 2017).

In the articles concerning the Western men whom have joined the Islamic State, it is also common that the emphasis in the articles are on the activities these men have had in Sweden prior or after their time in Syria or Iraq or on the activities they have had during their time in those countries. What can be found to be commonly emphasized in the news articles regarding their history or their current life are the often negative aspects of their lives, which may contribute to the reader questioning the individual’s morality. Focusing on the crimes which these men have committed, even if there are solely small crimes or done at a young age, is a common dominator in the majority of the articles where these male recruits are mentioned. Examples from these articles are; ”in Sweden, Eric Nuhanovic is not known as a heavy criminal. 2011, when he was 16 years old, he got caught for illegally driving a moped around Östergårdsskolan i Halmstad. The moped also lacked a license plate and Eric Nuhanovic did not wear a helmet. At the same time he got caught for using cannabis”, ”he have previously been more known as a local bandit in Malmö whom have been mentioned in investigations of robbery and money collection” or ”in Sweden, he appears in the criminal register for only one instance, when he was convicted for damages after he broke a window shield in a health store in Gothenburg a couple of years ago” (Expressen B, 2018; Expressen A, 2017). Besides the crimes these men may have committed in Sweden, the news papers seems to take every chance available to focus on the specific activities these recruits may have had during their time with the Islamic State or the crimes they may have committed in Syria or in Iraq. This can for example be seen in the following examples, ”he went to war for the purpose of Muajahedden Fi Ash-Sham as one of the first Swedes whom travelled to Syria to join the battle. There are images where he poses next to victims of war”, ”he went to Syria to fight for a jihadist group, ”he was a sniper in Syria and had leading positions in the group during 2012 and 2013” or ”he murdered in Syria in 2013” (Expressen A, 2017).

Despite many of the articles being individualized in terms of presenting specific men, there are rarely any efforts made to humanize these individuals or to describe their previous life’s in Western societies more in depth. Besides their names, information concerning where they are from and what crimes they may have committed in Sweden – there are rarely any further
personalized information regarding these men shared with the readers (Expressen A, 2017; Skånska Dagbladet, 2017; Expressen, 2015; Expressen B, 2014). The same can be said concerning how these men have been recruited. How Western men and women to the Islamic State have been recruited have been a current subject for the last couple of years in media, and it has been a great fear for many parents that their son or daughter would be recruited (SVT, 2014). Despite this, and despite the recruitment being of great importance to the Western recruits commitment to the Islamic State – this is rarely mentioned in the articles examined concerning these male recruits. In most articles, it is simply concluded that these men have joined the Islamic State without any further details concerning their recruitment or any reflections concerning why these men may have made such a choice. This can for example be seen in the following quotes; “in September 2014, Nuhanovic left Sweden to join the terrorist group the Islamic State”, “he joined the war in Syria”, ”he was one of several friends in the same neighborhood in Stockholm whom left for Syria”, or “he moved with his wife and four children to Syria in 2014” (Expressen B, 2018; Expressen A, 2017). What these quotes indicate is how little information there actually is in the news papers concerning for example whom have recruited these men, what underlying factors may have influenced their decision or whether their decision was expected from their families or friends.

5.2 How Swedish Media Portrayals the Western Female Recruits to the Islamic State

From the news articles examined for this thesis, it can be found that the Western women whom have joined the Islamic State are not mentioned in all news articles concerning Western recruits to the Islamic State, but they are mentioned in several of the news articles to different extent. Concerning these female recruits, there are both news articles where these women are mentioned as a group and even more news articles where they are individually portrayed.

Concerning how these recruited women are labeled in the news articles or what term is used to describe these recruited women in media, certain common traits can be seen from the different articles examined. When the recruited women are spoken of as a group, these women are commonly referred to as simply "the women" or in certain cases they are referred to as "IS-women" or for example "IS-widows" (SR, 2014; Sveriges Dagblad, 2017; SVT, 2018). The labels used to describe these women in the news articles can be found to be of a rather generalized kind. The labels used are often rather bland and suggests nothing specific regarding these women’s engagement in the Islamic State besides their gender. Besides this, the labels used do not suggest that the women have had any active participation in the Islamic State and
the labels do not suggest anything concerning these women’s activities, ideology or their thoughts. In the individualized portraits however, the recruited women can be found to be commonly presented with their first name.

Another common dominator in the articles where there are interviews with those women whom have travelled to the Islamic State, is how the writers choose to quote the verbs concerning how these women represents themselves and their choices. This is exemplified in the following examples; ”Yasmin said that for her part, the trip was about her will to live in an Islamic country and helping the local population”, ”they left the country when Marilyn’s parents where out of town to get an advantage and she says that she counted on a short adventure” or ”I didn’t know anything about Islam or the IS, so I didn’t know what he meant, she says” (Aftonbladet, 2017; Expressen B, 2017; Aftonbladet A, 2016). Concerning these recruited women, it is thus the verb ”says” which is commonly used to describe what they have said and as mentioned under the section concerning the recruited men, ”says” can be considered a neutral term which does not imply either guilt or low certainty in the answer.

When writing about these recruited women in Swedish media, there is also often emphasize on stereotypical images of women, or characteristics such as young, naive and sweet. The following was for example written about Lisa Umm Uthman, a 22 year old Swedish girl who converted to Islam at an early age and then joined the Islamic State. ”Lisa Umm Uthman, at that time a 21 year old girl from Gothenburg, had in only a few years transformed from a happy and frisky girl in high school who used to upload images from parties with her girl friends to a convinced supporter of the Islamic State” (Aftonbladet D, 2016). Other Western women whom have travelled to the Islamic State in Syria or Iraq have further been presented as follow. ”Young. Beautiful. Mother of three. And a terrorist”, ”school girl on the run with the Islamic State” or ”all three girls in the age of 15 to 16 years old were high achieving students in Bethnal Green in Eastern London”(Expressen C, 2018; Aftonbladet B, 2016).

Besides the above mentioned emphasis, one should also recognize that one of the main emphasis in the articles concerning female recruits to the Islamic State is how they got recruited to the organization. Concerning their recruitment, there is a tendency in media to focus on any external circumstance or influence which may have made these women join the Islamic State. This can for example be seen in the following quotes; ”Sara from Western Sweden became radicalized at a young age after a messy upbringing. Friends and relatives hade gone to Syria.
They said come down, its good here, you can die here, you have receive martyrdom here and the closer the death the more safe, she says in the documentary or “in the video she looks relaxed and tells about how her as a fourteen year old meeting the boyfriend, an IS-terrorist from Sweden, who brought her to Iraq” (Aftonbladet C, 2016, Aftonbladet A, 2016). In another article concerning three women whom left Great Britain for the Islamic State in 2015, it can be read that ”in an article from the Guardian it is emphasized that IS entice young individuals with the image of a society that will be perfect and with an important life task for each one” (Aftonbladet B, 2016). There is thus reason to conclude that the articles concerning women’s recruitment or engagement to the Islamic State often focus on them as being naive, unaware or in love. Often the recruitment of these women are further presented as something which could have happened to anyone and that these women fell victim of an external power pulling them into radicalization and the caliphate (Aftonbladet D, 2016; Expressen C, 2018; Aftonbladet B, 2016).

In the articles examined, there is very little focus regarding women’s own responsibility concerning their recruitment or their active choice to join the Islamic State, even in those cases where the women themselves say that they voluntarily travelled to Syria or Iraq. Besides focusing on external circumstances which made the women join the Islamic State, there is also a tendency of presenting their personal circumstances, such as ideological convictions or will as something secondary (Aftonbladet, 2017; Expressen C, 2018; Aftonbladet C, 2016). This can for example be seen in the following example; ”they are everything from individuals whom have converted to Islam, to young women whom left with someone they had fallen in love with, or married to. Then there were a few who have been ideological motivated”(SVT, 2018). From the above, it can thus be concluded that that the magazines often portray women as innocent and naive, as well as not in control over their own recruitment or situation.

Besides the above mentioned, there is a tendency in the majority of the articles regarding the recruited women or where these recruited women are mentioned to focus on what women have not been allowed to do during their time with the Islamic State or what they have been forced to do. This can for example been seen in these quotes; ”she was forced to wear niqab and was forbidden to keep phone contact with her family” or ”the boyfriend brought her to war, forced her in a terrorist sect and controlled her life”(Expressen B, 2017). There are also other examples such as; ”as a woman you can’t do anything. If you are unmarried you get treated as a dog. And as a married woman it is the husband who represent her, she says”(Aftonbladet,
It is thus seldom mentioned what these women specifically have done during their time in Syria or Iraq or how they have spent their days, besides that they have gotten married. This can be shown in the following quotes "how life with IS will be in practice they have little opportunity to actually finding out. Young women will often simply be married off to a IS-warrior and will have no influence outside the home or relation in which they have been placed” or "women who travel to Syria can be part of the conflict by marrying with a man who will go to war and therefore risks becoming a widow after a martyr”(Aftonbladet B, 2016; SR, 2014). There are articles where it is not denied that women may have had other roles within the Islamic State than simply wives. This is however often then presented with strategic ambiguity lowering the certainty of the claims or it is suggested that these women despite this, present no threat to the world. This is exemplified in the following paragraphs; “despite the that the Swedish IS-women may possible have been involved and used violence, mainly against other women, they have probably not participated in any battles and the majority of the women rather pose a threat to themselves” or "at least eight young women from Stockholm have recently joined the IS writes SVD. Expressen wrote about one of them last Friday. SÄPO have no information concerning this and does not work on the case, as the women are not considered a threat” (SVD 2017; Expressen B, 2014).

5.3 A Comparison and Discussion Regarding the Different Media Portrayals

From above, one can conclude that there is a difference in how the recruited men and women from Western countries to the Islamic State have been portrayed or represented in Swedish media. It can for example be concluded that men and women are labelled differently, where the men are presented with labels indicating active engagement and specific roles within the organization, while the women commonly are presented with labels suggesting a more passive engagement and vague roles. Besides the labels used to describe these recruits, there is also a difference in what is emphasized in the articles concerning these recruits. Concerning the men, the crimes they may have committed is emphasized while concerning the women its their recruitment and what they have not been allowed to do during their time with the Islamic State which is emphasized. The general conclusion which can be drawn from the above mentioned are that the difference in how these men and women are presented seems highly correlated with the stereotypical views concerning masculinity and femininity precisely mentioned in this thesis.
Another general difference between how these men and women are portrayed in Swedish media seems to be related to the question concerning guilt or innocence. From the articles examined, it can be concluded that men commonly are portrayed as the guilty actor while the women to a greater extent are portrayed as innocent and as victims. These are portrayals which seems evident throughout the different aspects examined for this thesis, for example regarding the recruitment of the individuals and their roles within the Islamic State. Despite that there are some cases of articles which do not to completely correspond with this image, this is the image seen in majority of the articles examined.

From the above comparison of how these men and women generally are portrayed in Swedish media, the question of why there is a difference in these portraits seems reasonable to ask. One answer to this question can be suggested to be found in the background section of this thesis. As previously mentioned, men and women are known to have had different roles within the Islamic State. Men are known to have engaged in war and it is men whom have had high positions in the group at the same time as the women’s main roles have been to take care of the family and to raise new warriors for the Islamic State (Tonzari Greenwood, 2017:89; Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:41). There are on the other hand also information that certain women, especially Western women, have been allowed to engage in in administrative work, act as recruiters or control other women but this opportunity have only been available for a very small minority of the women (Eggert, 2015:367). Can the different roles for men and women within the Islamic State explain the difference in how these men and women are portrayed in Swedish media? And can these different roles within the Islamic State also legitimize the fact that men are portrayed as more active and guilty for their time with the Islamic State than have the women?

When considering the different roles within the Islamic State for men and women, it does however also seem reasonable to ask the question, are those Western women whom travelled to the Islamic State in Syria or Iraq terrorists? The above mentioned roles or activities of women in the Islamic State may not, for the general public, be such which are automatically considered as terrorist actions. It can however also be important to consider that women have played a symbolic as well as a practical role in establishing the society of the Islamic State, and women have been included in such ways as an effort of making extremism appear like a normal lifestyle decision (Tonzari Greenwood; 2017:91; Eggert, 2015:367). The women have thus been of great importance to the Islamic State just as the men, but with another role. The women have
also fulfilled the roles which they have been recruited to fill, to take care of the family and to raise children. From the above mentioned background, can it really be legitimized to continuously portray these women as innocent and as victims when what they have done during their time with the Islamic State commonly have been the roles which have been laid forward to them? And as the women have fulfilled the roles within the group as expected, just as the men may have fulfilled their roles as expected, why should there be a difference in whom are labeled terrorist or not? Is it really possible to weigh the different roles of men and women against each other and conclude that the either is worse or indicate more guilt than the other?

Besides the above mentioned reasons, Nacos have further pointed out that there is no evidence that male and female terrorists are fundamentally different in terms of recruitment, motivation ideological fervor or brutality (Nacos, 2006:436). Instead, men and women often have similar reason for joining a terrorist group; for example revenge, redemption, relationship, respect (Ortbals & Polini-Staudinger, 2018:33). With this in mind, can it really be legitimized that the Swedish news media portrays the male and female recruits so differently? As previously mentioned, there is a general view among the public that news media are objective and have the purpose of informing the public about what is going on in the world (Machin & Mayr, 2012:22). For this reason, it is important to recognize that the public may receive an bias image concerning these recruits when the media portrays the men and women differently. This is an aspect which also Martini discusses in her research and she brings forward that this may lead to a loss of opportunity in understanding these women correctly (Martini, 2018:471).

Besides the practical considerations reflected on above, there is also the question concerning morality. As mentioned, there are often the recruited men whom are presented as guilty and as active actors within the Islamic State. It is also men whom often are suggested to have lured down the women to Syria or Iraq or in other ways are responsible for their recruitment. And in the case of women, these are often suggested to have been lured down to Syria or Iraq, and not to have known what was expecting them. Is the image portrayed correct, or is the image spread out unfair for both the sexes? From the articles examined, it was shown that there were both men and women whom in different interviews have mentioned that life with the Islamic State wasn’t as expected or that they regret their decision to join the organization. In these articles, it was however noticed that the men more commonly were quoted in a way which lowered the certainty of what they said in comparison to how the women, saying similar things, were quoted. Can men not regret their choice to join the Islamic State to the same extent as women? And is
it always the men whom have lured down the women to the Islamic State or can it be the other way around? Can women not have made their own choices of joining the Islamic State, considering that Nacos have suggested that there is no evidence that male and female terrorists are fundamentally different in terms of recruitment, motivation ideological fervor or brutality (Nacos, 2006:436)?

5.4 Consistency
Above, the research concerning how the Western recruits to the Islamic State are portrayed in Swedish media was presented. The news articles examined was published from 2014 to 2018 in Swedish news papers, and the question for this thesis was whether the portrayals of these Western recruits remained constant throughout this time period. From the results above, there is no indication in the material suggesting that there have been any change in how the Swedish media writes about these men and women during this time period. Instead, what can be seen from the results presented above, it seems as the media have been fairly consistent in their portrayals of these individuals and thus reproduced itself during this time period. As previously mentioned, during the time period for this thesis, the Islamic State as an organization have been a stable actor in the international context and it is during this time that the organization have been commonly mentioned in media. It was in 2014 it became clear for the public that the terrorist organization existed and it was then the group began making these brutal beheading videos as well as then many individuals began traveling to the caliphate (BBC B, 2019). By 2018, the group was losing territory but was still a powerful actor in the international context with many members (BBC, 2018). As the Islamic State itself have been rather consistent during this period, this can be something which explains also the consistency in media reporting during this time period. It could however be interesting for future research to further examine the consistency in how the Swedish media presents these Western recruits post 2018, as the Islamic State caliphate during 2019 have fallen and as there is a lot of media reporting whether these Western recruits should be allowed back to their Western nations or not (The Guardian, 2019). This is however beyond the scope for this thesis, but an interesting field for future research to consider.

5.5 Discursive Practices in Swedish Media
From examining how the Swedish media have portrayed the Western male and female recruits to the Islamic State, several things can be considered to have been suggested regarding the current discursive practices of the Swedish media in this field.
As mentioned under the analytical framework of this thesis, the discourse of terrorism changed after 9/11 and the attitude towards terrorists became hardened. Now, terrorists, sympathizers of terrorism and individuals in other ways associated with terrorism are considered illegitimate opponents and any means necessary from Western states are considered legitimate in exterminating these (Toomey & Singleton, 2014:188). This is a discourse which is commonly outsourced in media, and it can be seen to be especially evident concerning the Western male recruits. From the material examined from this thesis, it became clear that the recruited men continuously are portrayed as the enemy of the current world order and as evil individuals continuously committing crimes. What is interesting however is that the same cannot be suggested concerning how the Swedish media portrays the female recruits to the Islamic State. In Swedish media, as shown in the results above, the recruited women are not portrayed as equally responsible for their actions in the Islamic State or mentioned as terrorists. Instead, these women are continuously portrayed as victims or individuals whom have been lured into making the choice of traveling to the Islamic State. The portrayal of these female recruits to the Islamic state in Swedish media does thus not seem to correspond with the current discourse of terrorism where all those associated with terrorist groups or members of such groups are considered the enemy and as an equally big threat as those whom may act on the frontline for these groups (Ibid, 2014:188).

The difference in how the male and female recruits to the Islamic State have been portrayed in Swedish media can further be traced back to theories and discourses concerning femininity and masculinity. The portrayals of the recruited men and women are heavily linked to the stereotypical gender roles commonly portrayed in media concerning gender, and with femininity and masculinity. The Swedish media does thus seem to reinforce the historical discourse of stereotypical views of the sexes, for example concerning male aggressiveness and the female compassionate nature (Wood, 1994:31). The aim of feminism and radical feminism is to abolish the patriarchy in order to create an equal society for women and men. This struggle can be done by challenging the concept of gender roles, and raise problems such as violence against women and opposing the sexual objectification of women (Thomson, 2001:134-136). Sweden is a feminist country and have the first feminist government in the world, which means that gender equality is central to the governments priorities (Regeringskansliet, 2019). Sweden is also in the top five countries in the world on equality (Telegraph, 2017). For this particular reason, it is interesting to note that the Swedish media in this field, despite the context in which
it is produced, do not seem to correspond with the overall feminist discourse in Swedish society. Instead, the women whom have been recruited to the Islamic State suggests lacking agency and to be subordinate to men. The discourse in Swedish media concerning these Western recruits seems instead to be linked to theories of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity is defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell, 1995:77, Lusher & Robins, 2009:387). When the male recruits to the Islamic State are presented in the way previously stated in relation to the female recruits, it suggests that the men are the norm within terrorism and that it is the men whom in that context have all the power while the women lack agency. The recruited male and females are thus portrayed in line of what’s expected from theories of hegemonic masculinity.

The way Swedish media presents the Western recruits to the Islamic state does thus seems to be more in line with theories of hegemonic masculinity and historical discourses of masculinity, than any feminist theories or current discourses regarding femininity. Concerning the field of terrorism, there are indicators that the Swedish media to a great extent does not correspond with the otherwise political stance of the Swedish government concerning feminism and terrorism as well as many of those general thoughts found in the civilian population of different western nations. The discursive practices of the Swedish media in the field of these Western recruits to the Islamic State do from the above mentioned to certain extent seems to be contradictory to several of the other discourses found in the Swedish society. In Swedish media concerning this subject, it does seem as historical discourses of masculinity and thoughts of hegemonic masculinity have president over current discourses concerning terrorism and femininity.

6. Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Swedish media have portrayed those men and women whom have left their Western countries to join the Islamic State, with a special focus on if there is any difference in how the media presents these men and women. What have been shown is that there is a difference in how Swedish media writes about these men and women, and this difference seems to the largest extent to regard the question of guilt and innocence, and men and women are often portrayed as each others opposite. Men are often portrayed as guilty, both regarding different crimes in Sweden and during their time with the Islamic State while women often are portrayed to have been lured down to the Islamic State or being unaware of
what was going on. The image of the lured and naive woman is the image which is consistent through all media reporting concerning this subject, both in regard to the women and the men. Since men and women are known to have different roles within the Islamic State it is interesting to consider whether this portrayal is legitimate or not. There is no correct answer to this, but there are many aspects which should be taken into account when reflecting over this. Aspects such as stereotypical gender roles and expectations seems to be of specific importance for this purpose. What is however further interesting is how the Swedish media representation of these women and men seems to be contradictory to many of the other current discourses found in Swedish society, for example discourses of terrorism and femininity. The portrayal of the recruited women as being lured down and as an innocent bystander is for example contradictory to the current discourse concerning terrorism and how all those associated with terrorism should be considered as enemies and as terrorists. Besides this, the portrayal of the lured and fooled woman in Swedish news articles does not seem to correlate with the current feminist discourse in Sweden either. Instead, the presentation of women in the Islamic State is more in line with women lacking agency or women as incapable of making decisions on their own. The presentation of the recruited women and men does instead seem to be in line with thoughts of hegemonic masculinity, where men are considered dominating over subordinate women. This is something which can be seen in how the recruited men have been presented in media, as well as in how the recruited men and women have been presented in relation to one other.

6.1 Contribution and Future Research

This thesis have contributed to current research by further highlighting how media writes about a topic which have been of great significance these past years, and showed that the presentation in the media concerning these Western recruits is not always as objective as often thought. This is something which may have great consequences for a society and for the general public. Future research within this field can develop from the results of this thesis, but also do further research with an increased scope from this thesis. Future research should include also the year of 2019 in their scope to see if the consistency of Swedish media reporting of these recruits have changed after the Islamic State caliphate now has fallen.

The thesis has further contributed to research by showing that presentation of these Western recruits to the Islamic State in Swedish media does not not correspond with the context in which it has been written. This is a field which can benefit from further research, as it may have a large impact on the Swedish society due to the power of media.
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