REFUGEES IN THE SWEDISH MEDIA

A critical discourse analysis of the refugee crisis from the perspective of gender

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Abstract

This study is a critical discourse analysis of the gendered normative concepts that are attributed to refugee women and men in the Swedish printed press during the refugee crisis of the fall of 2015. Combining Fairclough’s analytical framework for textual analysis and gender theory, the study focuses on assumptions and representations of social actors to identify gendered normative concepts. The results indicate that there are gendered normative concepts in the refugee discourse. For example, refugee women assumed to be emotional, whereas men are assumed to be calm and refugee women tend to be in the background, whereas refugee men are in the foreground.
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Introduction

The fall of 2015 saw an unprecedented influx of refugees to Europe and to Sweden. More than a million entered Europe according to the UNHCR (Hereward Holland, 2015), and approximately 160 000 of them applied for asylum in Sweden (Migrationsverket, 2015). A hugely increased news reporting about refugees followed this unprecedented event. The media interest peaked when the photos of the drowned three-year-old Alan Kurdi were published on the third of September 2015. The photos resulted in an around-the-clock reporting, covering different aspects of the refugees arriving in Europe.

Research by Ylva Brune shows that the Swedish media often characterizes immigrants by oppression, religion, tradition, loyalty towards family and a patriarchal view of sexuality and relations between the genders. It is stressed that immigrants, often meant as people from the Middle East or non-westerners, separates clearly between the sexes and that women were oppressed in immigrant families and that this is a part of their culture (De los Reyes et al., 2012, pp. 165–176). Bernhardsson & Bogren have similar findings in their study about rape cases and the cultural representations that are found in the Swedish media. They find that the foreign culture associated with immigrants, especially immigrant young men, is portrayed as “particularly patriarchal and traditional” and that women are treated in brutal and condescending ways. (Bernhardsson and Bogren, 2012, pp. 5–7). Both studies conclude that their findings show that a certain perception of immigrants is reproduced in society by the Swedish media. This conclusion is supported by research about the effects that media has on public opinion, showing that it does have an effect on people’s perceptions and opinions (Maier and Rittberger, 2008, pp. 254–259).

So far there is little similar research about the recent refugee discourse in the Swedish media. The media focus on refugees has actualized the issue of how refugees are being portrayed in the Swedish media, because it can have an effect on people’s perception of them. This study will aim to add new knowledge of how the Swedish media represents refugees in the current refugee crisis. It will do so by using critical discourse methodology to study what gendered normative concepts that are attributed to refugee women and men following the refugee crisis during the fall of 2015.

Aim, relevance and scope

The aim of this thesis is to study what gendered normative concepts that are attributed to refugee women and men in the Swedish printed media during the refugee crisis of the fall of 2015. The study will attempt to answer the question:

What gendered assumptions and representations of refugee men and women can be found in the Swedish printed media during the refugee crisis of the fall of 2015?
The study is scientifically relevant because it will add to the knowledge of how the recent refugee discourse in the Swedish printed media is gendered. The recent increase of media interest in refugees following what has been called the “refugee crisis”, has exposed the need to know more about how refugees are represented in the media.

The study carries societal relevance because it adds to the knowledge of how the gendered structures that form and shape all parts of society affect the refugee discourse in the Swedish printed media. Since discourse can play a part in affecting our view of reality, the way in which media writes about refugees may affect peoples’ view of them. Consequently, if refugees are described in gendered terms in media they might be perceived as gendered.

The scope of the study is limited to the Swedish printed media because the timeframe does not allow for a bigger sample of material being studied from all media types. Moreover, the material is limited to the week following the publication of the pictures of Alan Kurdi, because it was the peak of the media coverage of refugees during the fall of 2015.

Theoretical framework

This section will serve as an introduction to critical discourse theory and as a summary of its central components. Discourse is defined, after which the characteristics of critical discourse theory are presented. This section will serve as the basis for the analytical framework of the study.

Critical discourse theory

First of all, the term *discourse* is used differently depending on the user and the context. This study defines *discourse* as a frame that structures the use of language within different fields. Thus, a certain type of language is used in, for example, politics or management, affecting how people relate to phenomena within the field (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000, p. 7).

There are different versions of critical discourse theory, the biggest difference concerns whether researchers only should study discourse in texts, or if they also should study how discourse relates to social life i.e. outside of texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 2). However, there are many commonalities as well, that define the research field of critical discourse theory.

Firstly, and most importantly to this study, critical discourse analysis is used to empirically analyze language in the social context where it is used. This statement might seem redundant but there are fields within discourse theory that do not study the use of language. Rather, they are more theoretical and study, for example, how discourses strive for hegemony over other discourses.
Secondly, a discourse is both constituted and constitutive. A discourse does not appear out of thin air, it is constituted by other related discourses. For example, an environmentalist discourse can contain other discourses like discourses on social justice, science, human rights, etc. A discourse is constitutive in the sense that an environmentalist discourse can be found within any of the previously mentioned discourses. This thesis explores if, and how, a gendered discourse is part of the refugee discourse. This means that if the texts are found not to be gendered, the conclusion would have to be that a gendered discourse is not part of the refugee discourse. However, this would be unlikely, considering Scott’s definition of gender, stating that it is a “constitutive element of social relationships”.

Thirdly, the processes of producing and consuming texts – our discursive practices – are regarded as an important form of social practice that contributes to constituting our social world. Discourse and social phenomena are thus in dialectic opposition to each other; they help create, form and change one another. For example, our social identities and relations are partly based on the texts that we read, and it is partly through writing texts that we create and spread our perception of the world. Relating to the topic of this study, how the media writes about refugees partly reflect society’s perception of them, but it also helps create and spread a certain perception of refugees in society. This is why studying discourses in the media is not only relevant for the sake of media studies, but also for other sectors of society, which are affected by the same structures and processes. Thus, part of the aim of a critical discourse analysis is to shed light on the discursive and linguistic elements of cultural and social phenomena.

Fourthly, discourse is ideological and ideology is closely linked to power. So discursive practices – defined above as the processes of producing and consuming texts – contribute to the creation and reproduction of unequal divisions of power between social groups. A fitting example for this study is the division of power between men and women. For example, if women are almost never allowed to express themselves in media, then men will be able to express themselves in public a lot more than women. This might affect which issues are brought up in the public debate or what women and men consider to be their respective roles in society.

Lastly, critical discourse theory is critical in the sense that its objective is to highlight the role of discourse in upholding the social order, in order to contribute to social change and a more equal distribution of power. This study is closely related to this objective, because it sheds light on what
image of refugees that is being upheld by the Swedish printed press. However, the power dimension will not be directly discussed in this study. (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000, pp. 67–70).

Analytical framework

This section shows how the theoretical background and aim of this study is operationalized. I have based the analysis on Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional critical discourse methodology. It is the most developed and recognized critical discourse methodology and provides a framework for studying texts. It also connects texts to higher levels of analysis which will allow for future studies to build on my results in order to understand them in more depth. (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000, p. 66) Fairclough’s methodology will be combined with gender theory to provide the necessary definitions to study what gendered assumptions and representations of refugee men and women can be found in the material. Lastly, the instrument of analysis will be described in order to show how I have applied this analytical framework to the texts.

Fairclough’s critical discourse methodology

In order to effectively apply critical discourse theory as an analytical framework, I will use parts of the critical discourse methodology developed by Norman Fairclough. The basis of Fairclough’s methodology is that, every time we use language it is a communicative event with three dimensions:

- a text (speech, writing, image or a mixture)
- a discursive practice (defined above as the process of producing and consuming texts)
- a social practice (the broader social context that the communicative event is a part of (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000, p. 74).

This study only addresses the first dimension—text—since studying discursive and social practices is beyond its scope. Indeed, the three dimensions are meant to be separated for analytical purposes, although Fairclough emphasizes that they are linked and depend on one another (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000, p. 81). Only focusing on textual analysis will limit the conclusions that can be drawn from the results, but it will provide a foundation for future studies focusing on the other dimensions.

The first dimension, textual analysis

Fairclough defines text in a very broad sense. Any instance where we use language is a text; anything from a scribbled note to a dictionary, or even images and sound effects, can be texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3). The analysis will focus on the formal features of the text, for example vocabulary and grammar. It is these formal features that form the discourse in a text (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips, 2000, p. 75). Fairclough presents a number of different tools to use in a critical discourse analysis of a text. However,
the idea is not that each tool should be used in every analysis; rather, they are meant as a tool kit from which the researcher can choose a sample that best fits his or her needs (Fairclough, 1992, p. 225).

First of all, Fairclough argues that texts are often oriented towards difference, and that studying these differences will tell you something about the texts (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 41–42). The definition of gender that is used for this study revolves around perceived differences between women and men (see below section about gender theory), it therefore corresponds with the aim to study difference. In order to find differences in the text, or perhaps a lack thereof, I will look at assumptions and representations of social actors for the reasons mentioned below.

The basis for all social communication and interaction is the common ground between the people who communicate and interact. If there was nothing that we could commonly relate to, it would be extremely hard to communicate with each other, at least in any meaningful way. For example, two people talking about cars will not get very far if they do not have a shared idea of what a car is. Finding this common ground is a constant process that is ever changing and a product of continuous debate. One way to shape what this common ground is, is to use assumptions. Assumptions can be either explicit or implicit, and can either state what is true or prescribe how something should be. By assuming something you are therefore stating that it is true or that it should be in a particular way. (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 55–58) For example, if a newspaper article contains an assumption that “refugees have conservative values”, then the author of that article is stating that this is the case, or if the assumption is that “refugees should get asylum” then it is stated that this should be the case. Thus, studying assumptions about refugees in the Swedish written media can indicate what is considered to be true regarding refugee women and men or how they should be, which in turn can indicate what normative concept that is connected to the assumption.

Fairclough defines a social actor as “participants in clauses”, which essentially means that social actors are the people mentioned in texts, although sometime social actors are excluded from a text, as will be explained below (Fairclough, 2003, p. 145). The social actors that will be studied here are refugee women and men. Fairclough, breaks down representation of social actors into several “variables” that can describe how the social actor is being represented. The “variables” chosen for this study are inclusion/exclusion and named/categorized. Inclusion/exclusion refers to the fact that one can be the main focus of a text, in the background or totally excluded. Named/categorized refers to that the social actor(s) in the text can be represented by name (e.g. Mikael) or in terms of category (e.g. woman, father). Furthermore, Fairclough talks about the “choice” of variables, meaning that the way a social actor is represented in a text can be connected to normative concepts relating to who should be present, excluded, named or categorized. For example, if a man is excluded from a text about
household work, or if a man is only mentioned as “the father”, this can be related to normative concepts of men’s role in the household or family. However, Fairclough underlines that the choice does not have to be related to normative concepts, for example, excluding someone from a text can simply mean that the person is not relevant to mention. (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 145–146). Thus, studying representations of social actors can indicate what underlying normative concepts are present in the texts.

**Gender theory**

This section will define the two key terms in the aim, *gender* and *normative concepts*, and how they will be used in this study.

There are many definitions of gender. One important debate within the field is whether there is such a thing as a biological sex or not. Some researchers like Judith Butler claim that sex is as much of a construction as gender i.e. that there is no distinction to be made between the two (*Feminisms REDUX*, 2009, p. 475), whereas other researchers, like Joan Scott clearly make a distinction between sex as biological and gender as a construct (Scott, 1986a, p. 1067). Essentially, this debate is about whether the biological differences between men and women matter or not, and if it is at all meaningful to categorize people into men and women. For this study I have used Joan Scott’s definition of gender. The fact that she distinguishes between sex and gender allows for the analysis to categorize the assumptions and representations in the texts according to whether the subject was a woman or a man. Moreover, Scott’s definition is good because it is both extensive and deep, in that it has two main components that are then divided into smaller subsets (Scott, 1986b, pp. 1067–1069). The two main components of Scott’s definition are that:

1. gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes
2. gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power (Scott, 1986a, p. 1067)

There are two things in the first part of the definition that need further explanation. Firstly, that “gender is a constitutive element of social relationships” means that gender is the very basis of how we interact with others. Thus, being male or female affects every relationship between people, no matter what that relationship looks like, and it therefore affects everything, from the way you are treated to the way you treat others. Secondly, “perceived differences between the sexes” means, as mentioned above, that Scott differentiates between sex and gender. Sex is biological - you are born as a biological man or woman – while gender is a social construct. The observable and non-physical differences between the sexes, for example personal traits and roles in society, are created and upheld by us, not given by nature (Scott, 1986b, p. 1054). The second part of the definition signifies that power
is implicit in the definition of gender, from which it cannot be separated. In the social construction of gender there is not only a division of, for example, labor and education according to sex. There is also a division of power between the sexes, a hierarchy where one sex becomes superior to the other (Scott, 1986b, pp. 1072–1073). This is not to say that gender is the only thing that signifies power, Scott stresses this point by mentioning class, race and ethnicity as other signifiers of power. (Scott, 1986a, p. 1069)

The focus of this study is on the first part of Scott’s definition. To study the gendered normative concepts that are attributed to refugee women and men in the Swedish printed media entails studying how the perceived differences between the sexes are expressed in texts. Thus, the second part of the definition, power relations between the sexes, will not be a central part of the analysis.

Furthermore, Scott develops her definition by dividing the constitutive elements of gender into four subsets: culturally available symbols, normative concepts, social organization and institutions, and subjective identity. They are all connected to one another, but Scott states that for analytical purposes they must be separated in order to function as analytical tools (Scott, 1986a, p. 1068). This study focuses on normative concepts.

Normative concepts that are related to gender usually take the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorizing and stating what is male/masculine and what is female/feminine. Therefore, normative concepts do not only create a male-female dichotomy, they effectively limit and contain what is considered to be male/masculine and female/feminine. Normative concepts are often conceived as being natural or fixed products of our environment. This hides the fact that normative concepts are instead produced from conflicts. Scott exemplifies this with fundamentalist religious groups endeavoring to restore a more authentic and traditional role for women, while there is, however, little historical evidence that such a role for women has been uncontested in the past. This is the very point of implementing gender in an analytical framework, highlighting that the male-female dichotomy and the perception of what is feminine and masculine are socially constructed, and that the prevailing norms can be contested and changed. (Scott, 1986a, pp. 1067–1068).

Instrument of analysis

To study what gendered assumptions and representation that are attributed to refugee women and men in the Swedish printed press, the following instrument of analysis will be used. The method that will be used to find gendered assumptions and representations of social actors is described in the table and text below.
Firstly, while reading the texts I identified the assumptions and representations of social actors that were related to refugees. I then identified if the subject of the assumption or representation was a woman or a man in order to be able to categorize the assumptions and representations according to sex. The categorization enabled me to see if the normative concepts found attributed to one sex has an opposite in the other sex, since gendered normative concepts often take the form of binary opposition. The last step in the analysis is to identify the normative concept connected to the assumption or social representation. This is a result of the two previous steps and connects to Scott’s definition of gender, i.e. “perceived differences between the sexes”. If refugee women are being represented a certain way that refugee men are not, then this indicates that the representation is a gendered normative concept attributed to women. If there is also an opposite representation for men, then it strengthens the indication that the normative concept connected to the representation is gendered. For example, if a refugee woman was only mentioned in a text as “a mother” and not by name, I would categorize it as a representation of a social actor, then as being related to a woman, and lastly connect it to a normative concept of refugee women being perceived as mothers. If it also turns out that men are often mentioned by name, and rarely as an unnamed father, then it shows that there is an opposite normative concept for refugee men in the material. Moreover, if the representation or assumption is repeated in the material this further strengthens the indication that it is a gendered normative concept attributed to refugee woman and/or men. On the other hand, if the same assumption or representation is attributed to both men and women, then it indicates that the normative concept is not gendered.

To structure the reading of the material and apply the analytical table, I “asked” the following questions to the texts in order to break them down into smaller pieces to help me identify the gendered assumptions and representations of social actors. The questions all relate to Fairclough’s analytical tools for textual analysis.

- Are there any explicit assumptions in the text? Are there any implicit assumptions?
- Are the social actors in the foreground or in the background?
- Is there anyone relevant not present in the text?
- Are the social actors named or categorized?
Thus, the questions are used to identify the assumptions and representations of social actors in the material and the table describes how I identify what gendered normative concepts that are attributed to refugee women and men.

Selection of material

A number of criteria were set-up to select the sample of news articles for this study. First of all, the article had to have a refugee(s) as its main focus and be in the form of an interview, story or a personal portrayal. The point of this was to exclude the articles dealing with refugees in mostly quantitative terms, such as reports about the number of refugees arriving in Sweden, since they are likely to provide less information about assumptions and representations of social actors. The second criterion was that the article must have been written between 3rd and 9th of September 2015. The story about the three-year-old Kurdish boy Alan Kurdi was first published in Swedish media on the 3rd of September\textsuperscript{2}. This particular time frame was chosen because it was the peak of the media coverage of refugees during the fall of 2015.

The sample was selected from the four biggest Swedish daily newspapers: Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet and Expressen (TNS Sifo, 2015, pp. 1–2), by a search on the Mediearkivet website, where the articles from all of these newspapers are digitally archived. The search was made on December 1, 2015 with “refugee”- and “Alan”- related search words\textsuperscript{3}. The search generated 468 articles, among which 46 articles were assessed as meeting the above criteria. The extracts were chosen because they were seen as representative of the assumptions and representations of refugee women and men that were found in the material.

Limits to the methodology

Critical discourse theory has been used in this study because its purpose is to empirically study language in the context where it is used, and to highlight the role of discourse in upholding the social order. It therefore conforms well with the aim of this study. However, there are some limits to critical discourse theory that will be addressed below, including how they were managed in order to minimize their effect on this study.

Reliability is a general problem in social science research, and critical discourse theory is not an exception. A high degree of reliability entails that the study can be repeated by someone else with the

\textsuperscript{2} According to a search in Mediearkivet, the story of Aylan was first published in Expressen on September 3, 2015. Before this date there are no mentions of the boy’s name in the Swedish Media, according to Mediearkivet.

\textsuperscript{3} The search phrase was “flykting OR flykt OR Aylan OR Alan OR flyktingar”.

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same results, which is very hard to achieve when interpretation is an important part of the method. Moreover, there is an apparent risk that the researcher lets hers or his own values and opinions affect the result. This risk is not possible to eliminate, but it can be minimized by combining transparency with well-founded arguments, which will then improve the reliability of the study (Bergström and Boréus, 2005, p. 353). In order to be as transparent as possible I have clearly outlined my analytical framework and presented how it was applied to the material step-by-step. In the analysis, I use quotes and argue why each quote is relevant to the study and I reference other articles where similar assumptions or social representations can be found. Furthermore, the material has been selected according to clearly stated criteria and the selection process has been explained.

A problem with critical discourse analysis, and discourse analysis in general, is that the validity of the method is intrinsically low, due to the lack of easily measurable components. To tackle the problem of low validity, it is important, once again, that the analytical framework be transparent and clearly presents how the analysis has been done. This is necessary in order to show that the analytical framework actually corresponds to the aim of the study i.e. measures what you want to measure (Esaiasson et al., 2012, p. 216). I have clearly linked the analytical framework, the theoretical framework, the aim and the research question to one another. Critical discourse theory provides the theoretical background for the analytical framework. The analytical framework operationalizes the aim and research question of the study in that it provides (1) an instrument to study discourse in texts and (2) definitions of the key terms that are used in the instrument of analysis. The instrument of analysis describes how the analytical framework has been applied to the analysis of the material.

Furthermore, while studying a shorter time period to draw conclusions about a longer period of time there might be a problem of bias in the selected material. For example, the articles in the week after the publication of the pictures of Alan Kurdi could contain more, or less, gendered assumptions about refugee women and men than during the rest of the refugee crisis. The problem bias is that it will affect the possibility to generalize the results of the study to the full time-period of the refugee crisis. If the material is biased in some manner it means that it does not reflect the full time-period of the refugee crisis correctly. The best way to avoid bias is of course to study the exact time period you aim to draw conclusions about, but this would lead to an unmanageable amount of articles to analyze in the case of this study. Another less resource intense approach would be to study material from several shorter time-periods, thus minimizing the effect the bias of one time-period might have on the results of the study. The problem with such an approach regarding the refugee crisis of the fall of 2015 is that it is hard to define when it starts and ends, which makes it tricky to choose the time periods to be studied. I chose to focus on one consecutive time period that was linked to an event that was at the height of the refugee crisis, thus avoiding having to define the exact time frame of the crisis but still making sure
that the time period I studied was part of the crisis. Studying one consecutive time-period also enabled me to make it as long as possible with respect to the limited time at my disposal. The risk of bias decreases the closer the studied time period is to the full time period.

Another way that the material could be biased is if the selection criteria skews it in some way. For example, this study is limited to interviews, stories or personal portrayals thus excluding a large part of the articles about refugees. If the excluded material contains gendered normative concepts that the included material does not, then it affects the ability to generalize the results. However, the reason for focusing on interviews, stories and personal portrayals is that this is where I am most likely to find assumptions and representations of social actors. This lessens the risk of a biased material since as many assumptions and representations as possible will be included in the material with respect to the very limited scope of the study.

Analysis
Assumptions

The two most apparent assumptions in the material directly concern women. The first is from an article in Svenska Dagbladet. The author describes that because of the pictures of Alan Kurdi that were spread throughout the world, refugees have gone from being an anonymous mass to being seen as real people with names with the following quote:

“The refugee is no longer a shapeless fleeing mass of people that are crossing railway tracks, he is not just a dirty child with torn clothes, a desperate, crying woman being pushed away by the border police, an old man being carried on his children’s back. The refugee has now been given a name.”

(“Mustafa Can,” 2015)

Having in mind that these are representations of “the refugee” it is notable that the woman is crying and desperate but neither the old man nor the child are characterized by their emotional and/or mental state. Thus, the assumption seems to be that refugee women are emotional.

The second assumption is found in a short personal portrayal of a Syrian refugee in Hungary. He is indirectly quoted as saying:

“And there are many women and children out in the cold, but no one cares.”

(Carl Fridh Kleberg et al., 2015)

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4I have personally translated all the quotes from Swedish to English.
Here women are placed in the same category as children when it comes to vulnerability. Because there are women and children out in the cold, the assumption is that people should feel bad about not caring. Men are likely also out in the cold, but since they are left out of the text, the conclusion must be that it is not as bad.

These assumptions refer to how women are while men’s emotional state and vulnerability is left unmentioned. According to Scott, normative concepts usually take the form of a fixed binary opposition. Therefore, it should be expected that the assumptions that women are vulnerable and emotional have male counterparts.

First of all, the theme of refugee women showing emotion is prevalent in the media texts, but of equal importance there are many examples of the opposite normative concept being attributed to men, just as Scott predicts. An article in Svenska Dagbladet about three refugees from three different countries gives a good picture of how women and men are assumed to be or not to be emotional beings. First, there is a quote from a male refugee talking about his crossing the Mediterranean.

“I was locked away below deck with around a hundred other migrants. We were forced to breathe in the fumes from the boat engine while the boat tossed in the waves. I was sure I was going to die. No one was steering the boat. They had just let us out onto the sea. Everyone thought that we would perish.” (Gunilla von Hall, 2015)

This quote is informative and devoid of any explicit expressions of emotion, even though the journey described sounds dreadful and frightening. This can be compared with the following quote from the female refugee in the same article, speaking about why she fled her home:

“I’m so afraid, they’re coming closer and closer. We didn’t dare wait any longer. We didn’t want to be crucified on a street by those lunatics. We had to flee’, she says with a barely audible voice.” (Gunilla von Hall, 2015)

Here, the emotion is very explicit and the author even added a description of the woman’s voice to emphasize her fright. These are of course the refugees’ own words about their situation or what they had been through. It might be argued that the journalist was simply reporting what these people told her and that these are not assumptions of how refugee women and men are. However, the same discrepancy between male and female refugees is found when the journalist uses her own voice to introduce the reader to the man and woman in the article:

“He stands half-hidden behind a pastel-colored house in Europe’s biggest reception center for refugees [...] Looking at the ground, he talks about the
ulcer that made him flee, and he shows me his deformed throat. It hurts, is bleeding and leaks smelly liquid. ‘I look like a monster’, he sighs. He has been operated on several times but has only gotten worse. Finally, he decided to flee.” (Gunilla von Hall, 2015)

“She stumbles ahead in the red dust with tears running down her cheeks and a handicapped child in her arms. Drops her bags on the ground and tries to bend over, but is shoved to the ground by fleeing people [...] I help her up and she gives me her first name, Zeinab.” (Gunilla von Hall, 2015)

Here it is even more obvious that the woman is emotional, but she is also vulnerable and in need of help, which she gets from the journalist herself. Again, the man is described as calm, factual and showing a lot less emotion than the woman; although there is a brief expression of emotion, it cannot be described as representative of the text as a whole. Regarding vulnerability, the material does not reveal any opposite assumption for men, but it does not seem as if men are attributed the same normative concept as women. Thus, men are neither assumed to be vulnerable, nor assumed to be a possible opposite normative concept, like being capable or strong.

The only article where a man is emotional is in an article about a former refugee from Lebanon who now is a billionaire. However, when the journalist writes about the billionaire’s fear it is interesting to note that he is not described as a refugee:

“It is really rare that a top male Swedish businessman tells a journalist or author that he was so afraid that he was shaking and crying.” (Birgitta Forsberg, 2015)

Other articles where the woman is emotional and/or vulnerable: (Jenny Stiernstedt Pi Frisk, 2015) (Kerstin Weigl, 2015) (Daniella Backlund, 2015) (Carl Fridh Kleberg, 2015)

Other articles where the man is calm and factual: (Kassem Hamadé, 2015a) (Axel Öberg and Kassem Hamadé, 2015)

Another assumption is that when women are represented as mothers they are concerned with matters in the private sphere, whereas men represented as fathers are implicated in the private sphere by providing for the family, but are otherwise concerned with events taking place in the public sphere. An example of this is in an article from Expressen about a Syrian family living in the Bekaa valley in Lebanon. The father gets to talk about the fact that the family cannot afford the expensive trip to Europe, the hardships they are suffering and the shame he feels at not being able to provide for his handicapped daughter. The mother is given very little space to elaborate on her thoughts, and all of it
is filled by answering two undisclosed questions about her family. All the other questions are directed towards the father of the family. The short sentence that introduces the reader to her thoughts:

“Also his wife, Fatma, is distraught about the family’s situation” (Kassem Hamadé, 2015b)

Her answers to the undisclosed questions are very interesting:

“We live like animals. This is not a worthy life. It’s no wonder that people commit suicide or face the risks of going by boat to Europe” (Kassem Hamadé, 2015b)

“Risky for my son, son-in-law and three-year-old grandchild to travel by boat to Europe? Yes, but that’s better than living like we’re living here. It feels like the whole world is against us.” (Kassem Hamadé, 2015b)

Even though she is expected to talk about the family’s situation, it is not the only thing she is doing, she is also commenting the general situation. Her answers indicate that she is both capable and willing to discuss matters outside of the private sphere, but it is nonetheless only her husband that is asked questions unrelated to family. It seems as if the journalist or editor does not expect her to step out of the private sphere, indicating that there is an assumption that family is regarded as the woman’s domain, but that the public sphere is reserved for the man.

Another example is found in a three-page article in Svenska Dagbladet about a family that recently arrived in Sweden, but there are also many aspects of this text that are not gendered. For example, the woman and the man are introduced in the preamble as follows:

“But Ahmad and Jihan are very aware of the fact that it will take time before their dream of having jobs, an apartment and a fryer to make French fries for César, aged 1.5, will come true.” (Hannes Delling, 2015)

The woman and the man are introduced at the same time and the reader is given an equal amount of information about both of them (as will be shown further down, it is common in the material that men are in the foreground as they are often introduced first and more information is divulged about them). Throughout the whole article the woman and man are given approximately the same amount of space to elaborate their thoughts and opinions on various subjects. For, example the woman gets to elaborate on what the situation was like in war-torn Damascus and on Syrians’ work ethic, and there is this brief quote from the man about his son:
“He [the father] also plays chess sometimes. ‘But César [the son] loves to throw away the pieces’, says Ahmad and laughs.” (Hannes Delling, 2015)

However, regarding the assumption that women are concerned with matters in the private sphere, only the woman is asked a question about the children.

“Jihan answers that the children are okay, when asked about their thoughts on fleeing and why they are here.” (Hannes Delling, 2015)

The man mentions his son in the above quote, but he is never asked a direct question about his children. Moreover, there are two quotes in the article itself that are highlighted with bigger font, one each from the woman and the man.

“We need a human-trafficker to get to the real Sweden” (Hannes Delling, 2015)

“Maya, 5, understands. If you ask her she will answer you that we were dying. She understands, says Jihan.” (Hannes Delling, 2015)

The first quote is from the man as he talks about how hard it is to meet Swedes and become integrated in society. The second quote is from the woman and is about her daughter. Thus, out of everything that the woman has said the thing that is highlighted concern her child, whereas the man’s quote concern something unrelated to family. Because the woman and the man are in large part treated equally in this article, the above examples might not have stood out if the text was analyzed by itself. However, in the context of the analyzed material having several examples of refugee women and men respectively separated into the private and public sphere respectively, it indicated that the differences in this article are due to this assumption.

Articles where women are concerned with matters in the private sphere and men with matters in the public sphere: (Carl Fridh Kleberg and Lisa Mattisson, 2015) (Tomas Kvarnkullen, 2015a) (Kassem Hamadé, 2015c) (Jenny Stiernstedt, 2015a) (Roger Turesson and Jan Lewehagen, 2015)

An article where a man is only talking about matters concerning the private sphere: (Fredrik Samuelsson, 2015)

Representation of social actors

The most apparently gendered aspect of the text, when it comes to representation of social actors, was touched upon briefly in the “assumptions” section above. Refugee men are in the foreground more often than refugee women, which is seen in two ways. Firstly, there are more articles about men than about women. However, secondly and more important for the aim of this study, in news articles
featuring both women and men, there is a difference in the degree of inclusion between the sexes. Women tend to be in the background and men in the foreground. Women are, with a few exceptions, constantly introduced and mentioned after men. The following introduction of a family in an article from the newspaper Aftonbladet is common in the material:

“The father Mohammad Soleman says that he was a construction worker in his home country before he was forced to leave everything and flee with his wife Najah, 28, and their three sons Farhad, 7, Janiar, 4, and Hanen, 10.” (Micic Hammarström, 2015)

Not only is the man introduced first, the reader gets to know a lot more about him than about the woman. She is his wife and of a certain age and nothing more. If this were an article where the woman was not present, focusing this much on the man would be understandable, as the article would be about him and his life, not about his wife. In the rest of the text, the man is directly quoted several times, but the woman only gets one short indirect quote.

“The time in Hungary, where they were for three days, they’d rather not talk about. The mom says that it was tough for the children.” (Micic Hammarström, 2015)

The woman is introduced second and clearly consigned to the background, and the article does not provide any explanation. Furthermore, the only thing that she says is related to her children, another example of the above assumption that women are concerned with matters in the private sphere. However, relating to the same assumption, among the things that the man talks about are his children and how they experienced the difficult travel from Syria, which opposes the assumption that men are not concerned with matters in the private sphere.

Being introduced first is no guarantee that a woman will be in the foreground. As mentioned earlier in the analysis, there is an assumption that we should feel more sympathy for or feel worse for a woman in hardship than for a man in the same situation. In an article in Expressen, the journalist or editor plays on this assumption to the maximum. The headline reads:

“She fled with 13 children” (Kassem Hamadé, 2015d)

In the preamble, the reader finds out that the woman referred to in the title is “watching over the children”. The reader is led to believe that the article is about a woman and 13 children, or at the very least that the woman referred to is the main subject of the text, especially since she is the only one in her family quoted and introduced by name in the preamble. However, that role is handed to her son, the one who tells most of the family’s story of living under the Islamic State and the journey to Europe.
The woman is only quoted once in the article after the headline and the preamble, and that is a repetition of the quote in the preamble.

“`ISIS made us hate life itself and prefer death rather than living under their rule. For the first time in my life I take the leap and leave my home’, she says”
(Kassem Hamadé, 2015d)

However, the above quote is central to the article since it explains why they fled their hometown of Deir Az-zour. Thus, the woman is consigned to the background once she has fulfilled her role of attracting readers, but the small role she has is indeed central. This is an extreme example but it is part of the bigger picture, in which refugee women are put in the background by being given less space than their male counterparts.


Another difference between how refugee women and men are represented is that women are almost always categorized as mothers, wives or sisters, whereas men can be either categorized according to their family relations or as individuals. This is especially obvious when comparing the articles where a woman is the main social actor, and the articles where a man is the main social actor. Two such articles will be compared below. The first article is from Expressen and is about a woman making the journey through Europe to reach Sweden. The following extract is from the preamble:

“`Yesterday the Awad family was reunited by a warm hug at Gothenburg central station. ‘Now we’re hoping to be reunited and to live in peace’, says the very happy mother, Amal.’” (Christer El-Mochantaf, 2015)

The reader is immediately informed that she is a mother. The reunification she is referring to is the reunification with her husband. Thus the article is centered on two things: that she is a mother fleeing with her children and that she is a wife seeking to be reunited with her husband. The man in the article is also categorized according to his family ties as a husband, but this is not where you will find the difference. It is instead found in articles where men are the main social actor. Such texts can either categorize the man according to his family status, or they can also categorize the man as an individual, in the sense that no information about his family relations is revealed. Some of the examples in this analysis, represent men as fathers but the following extract, also from Expressen, is from another type
of article that is also common in the material. The extract is from the preamble, where the male main social actor is introduced:

“Azhy Taha Faraj, 22, smiles broadly. Yesterday he stepped off the train in Germany – the 30-days-long trip from Iraq is over. Now he is living in a temporary camp for 800 refugees. ‘We get to stay here for ten days now before we know what’s going to happen’.” (Tomas Kvarnkullen, 2015b)

Not a single piece of information is revealed that might suggest anything about his family status. And the rest of the article is devoted to him commenting on the situation in the camp and what his dreams are; nothing is revealed about his family status there either. To further emphasize this point, it is interesting to study a special issue of Expressen containing 102 short personal portrayals of refugees in different parts of Europe and Turkey. The information about each person is summarized and is in the form of indirect quotes or summaries of answers to questions, providing an easily comparable impression of how refugee women and men are represented. Almost all of the texts portraying women divulge their family status, either directly by including their children in the picture or by stating housewife as her profession, or indirectly like in this extract from a portrait of a woman at the train station in Budapest:

“After five days here it’s hard to sleep. My children have fevers and they’re puking. It’s a two hour wait to go to the toilet.” (Carl Fridh Kleberg et al., 2015)

In contrast, most of the personal portrayals of men provide no direct or indirect information about their family status as in this extract about a man in the illegal refugee camp in Calais, France.

“We’re not getting any help from the government. There is no health care, barely any food, we eat one meal a day. I hope we’ll get more help, a place to sleep in, a home. I will be happy to stay in France if they help me. But they also have to open the border to England.” (Carl Fridh Kleberg et al., 2015)

Thus, the difference is found in how refugee women and men are categorized, rather than in whether they are categorized or named. Refugee women and men are always named in the material, they are never just the woman/man or the mother/father, regardless if they are in the background or foreground or assumed to be concerned with matters in the public or private sphere etc. All of the people in the extracts are named, either in the quotes or in the article, and this is representative of the rest of the articles. In this respect, refugee women and men are treated equally.


Conclusion

It is not always a given to separate the analysis of assumptions and representations of social actors since they often interact. For example, the second assumptions in the analysis was relevant partly because men were excluded from it i.e. not represented. However, the two were separated for analytical clarity. To summarize the analysis, the results will be presented in tables with following explanations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORMATIVE CONCEPT</td>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Calm, factual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Private sphere</td>
<td>Public sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vulnerable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The normative concepts connected to assumptions found in the material concerned: the emotional state of refugee women and men; that refugee women keep to the private sphere, whereas men’s role in the private sphere are as providers and that they otherwise keep to the public sphere; that women are presented as vulnerable, whereas there was no opposite normative concept for men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBJECT</th>
<th>Woman</th>
<th>Man</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NORMATIVE CONCEPT</td>
<td>Background</td>
<td>Foreground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mother, wife or sister</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mentioned by name</td>
<td>Mentioned by name</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The normative concepts connected to representations of social actors found in the material were: that men are more often in the foreground whereas women are in the background of texts, particularly in
texts where there are both a male and a female social actor; that women are almost always categorized as mothers, wives or sisters, whereas men are either categorized as fathers, husbands or brothers, or as individuals; that refugee women and men are almost always named in the material, and are thus represented equally in this respect.

The analysis of the 46 articles also showed that there were two articles that did not fit into any of the above categories. They did not connect to any other pattern found in the material that could have motivated adding an additional category. (Mira Micic, 2015b) (Jan Lewenhagen, 2015c)

Discussion

The aim of this thesis is to study what gendered normative concepts are attributed to refugee women and men in the Swedish printed media during the refugee crisis of the fall of 2015. The analysis of the material shows that refugee women and men are attributed different normative concepts in the Swedish printed media. However, normative concepts are not clear-cut. They are, as Scott points out, a product of conflict, meaning that several normative concepts operate at the same time. Hannes Delling’s article in Svenska Dagbladet is a good example of how a text can be both gendered and not gendered. However, the results show that for the normative concepts found here, refugee women and men are often attributed different normative concepts in the Swedish media. Furthermore, it is not only the texts in the material that make it gendered, the texts that are not there have an equally large part in the assessment. Where are the texts with women without any reference to their family relations? Where are the texts with crying and powerless men? If there were several texts like these in the material, the texts with emotional women and with men without any reference to their family might not have been considered gendered.

It might be argued that the texts in this study reflect reality, that reality is gendered and therefore the texts will of course be gendered. I do not contest this view, indeed gender theory argues that our society is gendered, and critical discourse theory argues that societal phenomenon will affect texts. However, as touched upon in the introduction, the issue is that texts also affect societal phenomenon, so when refugees are presented as gendered in many aspects this will contribute to establish a view of refugees as gendered. In other words, the less nuance there is in the media reporting about refugees, the less nuance there might be in people’s view of them. Consequently, If the refugee discourse in the Swedish media becomes less gendered, by for example producing more texts that challenge the prevailing normative concepts, it could contribute to establishing a more nuanced view of refugees in society. By highlighting that in some ways refugee women and men are attributed different normative concepts in the Swedish printed media during the refugee crisis, this study has taken a step (albeit a small one) towards understanding more about the current refugee discourse in
the Swedish media. The results of this study will hopefully contribute to people reading news about refugees more critically and actively look for news that challenge the prevailing normative concepts regarding refugees. This being said, there are examples in the material, some of which have been given as examples in the analysis, where refugee men and women are presented equally or less gendered in some aspects. This indicates that there is an awareness of the issue of gender in the refugee discourse, and hopefully it is a sign that the refugee discourse is moving in the direction of equality between the genders.

One shortcoming of this study is that it lacks what Fairclough calls the second and third dimensions of discourse analysis, i.e. discursive practices and social practices. My findings show how the texts are gendered, but studying discursive practices could help us explain why. For example, it would be relevant to know what the journalist and editor takes into account when s/he produces the text and how the reader analyzes the texts while reading them. Perhaps it is for reader’s the sake that the journalist writes a certain way, hoping to sell more newspapers. Or is it rather the reader that is influenced by the writing of the journalist? It would also be relevant to study whether the sex of the journalist affects how the texts are gendered, especially since most of the journalists in the material are men. Studying social practices could also explain why the texts are gendered. It has been argued in this study that texts affect societal phenomena, but also that societal phenomena affect texts. Thus, it might be that refugee women are often in the background because of a normative concept in society pushing women to take a background role and letting men move to the foreground when being interviewed by a journalist. The answers to these questions will enable a more holistic view of the results of this study. Studying the second and third dimensions of discourse would therefore be a great point of departure for further research on the subject of refugees in the Swedish printed media.
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