Unaccompanied minors in Swedish media

A critical discourse analysis on media constructions of Afghan unaccompanied minors in
Aftonbladet and Expressen

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Abstract

The ability of media to create powerful images, which shape how readers understand certain issues, is very important, especially when linked to questions regarding the attitude towards the Other. This study focuses on a problem which has not been sufficiently addressed by researchers so far – how unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan are constructed in Swedish media. Using Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis in combination with postcolonial theory, eight news pieces were selected from two of Sweden’s leading newspapers; Aftonbladet and Expressen, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the discourses underpinning these constructions. Thus, this paper finds that the media coverage of the group is often negative and conflict-centered, framing the unaccompanied minors as either suspected liars or criminals which further contributes to the polarization between “Us” and “Them” in the Swedish society. Framing unaccompanied minors in this way, Aftonbladet and Expressen can contribute to the (re)production of stereotypes, affect public opinion and influence political decision and action regarding the group.

Key Words: unaccompanied minors, news media, othering, critical discourse analysis
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1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem

It has been estimated that 65.3 million people were on the move in 2015, which is one of the highest levels of displacements ever measured (UNHCR 2018). Hence, 2015 also marked the year where the largest amount of people sought asylum in Sweden than ever before, 162,877 people applied of which 20% (35,368) were unaccompanied minors (Migrationsverket 2017). Most of those unaccompanied minors are Afghans, as a result of the country’s conflict-ridden history. Thus, Afghanistan has been the largest refugee-producing country in the world for many years and as of 2019, the country is still facing intervention, conflicts and economic and political instability (IDMC 2019; UCDP 2019). Since 2015, a series of measures have been taken in Sweden due to the large influx of migrants, especially in relation to the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, who have become subject to medical age assessments and deportations to their country of origin (Migrationsinfo 2018). Unaccompanied minors and the issues related to them have become extremely problematized in the Swedish society since 2015 and consequently, becoming a well debated topic in news media. As many scholars have pointed out, news media is a powerful discursive actor in framing conflicts, affecting public opinion and political action (Carruthers 2011; Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010; Fairclough 2001). Hence, media holds a pivotal role in disseminating information, spreading knowledge and shaping ideologies, as well as influencing societies. Thus, focusing on discursive mechanisms of representing and interpreting the “others”, media can contribute to the reproduction of stereotypes, prejudices and eventually racism, making it a crucial component to people’s understanding of what is desirable or undesirable, normal or abnormal and realistic or unrealistic (van Dijk 1988). Consequently, media’s negative portrayal of unaccompanied minors can affect Swedish public perception, shape attitudes and thus generate action towards the group (Boréus 2015).

However, media can also promote alternative principles and perspectives by reporting a more nuanced narrative hence, media produces social standards and
values but can also maintain and change them. Thus, analyzing discourses in news texts is important since they tend to be decisive factors for social change in the long run; thus, by investigating how unaccompanied minors are framed in media can promote alternative aspects on how the group is understood and treated and impact the subjectivity of the Swedish population and the society at large (Fairclough 2001). Despite the increase of media reporting on unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, there has been little research done on how the group and its individuals are framed and the discursive mechanism underlying the portrayal. Therefore, this thesis will investigate media’s discourse on the construction of unaccompanied minors in Swedish media, which will be explored through Fairclough’s three dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA) in combination with postcolonial theory.

1.2 Aim and Research Question
Based on the research problem described above, the aim of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the constructions of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan through problematizing the hegemonic media discourse on the group in two of Sweden’s leading newspapers: Aftonbladet and Expressen. I have turned this aim into a central question and deconstructed it into operational sub-questions in relation to Fairclough’s (2001:21) three dimensional model. Hence, the main question is as follows:

How are unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan constructed in Aftonbladet and Expressen?

The following operational questions will be guiding the research process:

- How are the constructions situated textually?
- What are the underlying discursive practices of the constructions?
- What wider sociocultural practices are these constructions part of and what are the likely effects of these constructions?
1.3 Relevance to Peace and Conflict Studies

Why is it socially and theoretically relevant to study media constructions? And how does it relate to Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS)? This study documents a specific historical era, in the last four years more people have sought refuge in Sweden than ever before. A big amount of those refugees have been children from Afghanistan who have embarked on the long and dangerous route to Europe by themselves, without parents or guardians. Hence, the concern of this thesis is a vulnerable group in society, the unaccompanied minors, who find themselves in Sweden today as a result of a long history of war and conflict in Afghanistan, whereas of 2017, over 13 000 foreign troops remain and where economic and political stability has yet to arrive (IDMC 2019; UCDP 2019). Thus, war does not end because foreign troops return home or because peace is restored in some parts of a country, war continues in the shadows, involving every aspect of society (Nordstrom 2004:53). Hence, the study of war can be located in the Afghan unaccompanied minor’s dangerous and illegal route to Europe, in their vulnerable position in the Swedish society and the many issues connected to the group, such as criminality and drug abuse.

Thus, it is the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, that have been, an continue to be, a well debated topic in Swedish news since 2015. Media is an important contributor to how we understand a certain phenomenon or group and act towards it yet, research on how this group is represented in media and the potential effects of such portrayal is scarce, only one study could be found on the topic (see Stretmo 2014). Therefore, this study aims to decipher how media uses forms of othering to differentiate between “Us” and “Them” which can affect public perception thus legitimizing irregular political decisions, such as the many deportations to Afghanistan. Questions of othering (Said 1978), media’s discursive practices (Fairclough 2001; Carruthers 2011; Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010), structural violence (Galtung 1969) and exclusion (Schepert-Hugus & Bourgois 2004) are themes that are all relevant to understand war in the 21st century and therefore extremely important for the field of PACS. Thus, the main objective of the field is to diminish violence in all its forms – both cultural, structural and direct. Therefore, this thesis hopes to fill a gap in PACS literature on media constructions of
vulnerable groups in society with an interesting discussion on the stereotypes and hegemonic discourses which affects how we judge and act in regards to the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis consists of seven chapters. This introductory chapter has meant to outline the areas of interests and the focus of the research as well as announcing the choice of methodology and conceptual framework. Additionally, it has positioned this study within Peace and Conflict Studies. Chapter two, will provide background knowledge on unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan and their current situation in Sweden. Chapter three, will examine previous research on media constructions of migrants, both internationally and in Sweden. Chapter four, will outline the conceptual framework of the thesis which guides the analysis of this research. Chapter five, methodology, highlights the methodological underpinning of the study, aiming to make the procedure as transparent as possible. In chapter six, the conceptual framework in combination with CDA is applied to the material and the findings are discussed in relation to the previous research. Lastly, chapter seven, concludes the findings of the study in relation to the research question introduced above and ends with an identification of areas for future research.
2. Background

This chapter serves as a historical presentation of migration in the context of Sweden, which leads to date, since it also presents the legislative changes and other discussions that have been part of Swedish politics in recent years. The chapter will introduce the concept unaccompanied minors since it is the group this thesis is concerned about moreover, it will also include a background on the wars and conflicts in Afghanistan which has led to big refugee- and migration flows from the country.

2.1 Sweden's Refugee Reception Through Time

For a long time, 1992 marked the year when Sweden received the biggest amount of refugees, with 84,018 people seeking refuge that year as a result of the war in former Yugoslavia (Migrationsverket 2019). Since then the statistics have gone up and down and at the beginning of the 21st-century people also started seeking refuge from countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan and later on Syria (ibid). 2015 would become the year when the number of refugees seeking asylum in Sweden exceeded the ones in 1992. It has been estimated that around 65.3 million people were on the move in 2015, which is more than ever before (UNHCR 2018). According to the Swedish Migration Board, 162,877 people applied for asylum in 2015, 70,384 of those were children and around half of them were so-called unaccompanied minors ranging in ages from 13-17 (Migrationsverket 2016). Since then Sweden has received asylum applications in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 but to a much lower extent which can be understood as a repercussion of Sweden's restrictions on the legislation concerning migration that have been tightened since 2016.

Today, Sweden is characterized by the aftermath of the influx of people applying for asylum starting 2015, the discussions about refugees and migrants are widespread and have become extremely problematized in Swedish society. The debate has transcended into politics, there are parties who were in favor of Sweden's generous refugee reception in 2015 and 2016 but there are also some who were against it. Even though there are Swedish citizens and politicians who fight for the
rights of the refugees who managed to get into the country before the borders closed, there are also several who want to restrain refugees' rights further. In the summer of 2016, the legislation concerning asylum seekers were narrowed, a new law was introduced which implemented temporary restrictions on the possibility of obtaining a residence permit in Sweden (Riksdagen 2016:752). The law implies that asylum seekers get temporary residence permits (up to 3 years) instead of permanent ones to a larger extent. Moreover, the requirements for staying in Sweden after that period were also tightened and qualifying for family reunification has become tougher and were even prohibited for a while.

The Swedish Migration Agency makes continuous assessments of the security situation in conflict-ridden countries, such as Afghanistan. The institution is a Swedish state administration authority which works under the Ministry of Justice hence, they work in cooperation with the Swedish state and are responsible for areas related to asylum, visits, residence, and citizenships (Migrationsverket 2019). According to the Migration Agency, the security situation in Afghanistan has changed for the better since 2015 hence, the Agency argues that if people can't return to the provinces they are originally from, they can return to Kabul, which is regarded to be safe enough to live in (Migrationsverket 2019). Moreover, since most of the unaccompanied minors who arrived in Sweden during 2015 and 2016 were between 13-17 many of them have now turned 18 and have gained legal age in Sweden thus, they can be deported to countries where they don't have any family members to reunite with (Migrationsverket 2016). Many of the minors, together with both voluntary organizations and Swedish citizens, require amnesty for the group. They argue that many of the unaccompanied minors lack a social safety net in Afghanistan since they have grown up in Iran and that there is a high chance of being killed or seriously injured in Afghanistan due to the country's conflicts and political climate. Hence, politics, society and its inhabitants are all interconnected, arguments drift between citizens, public figures, the Swedish parliament and the media which will lay ground for the analysis in this paper. Media is a central and important part of society, wherever we go or whatever we do we get informed about different happenings in the world. In regards to news texts, it has been argued that they influence our understanding and perception of different phenomena. Thus, texts also show relationships between different groups of people and how certain
groups are framed (Boréus 2015). Media and the influence it can have on public opinion will be discussed later on in the theoretical chapter of this thesis since it is one of the conceptual frameworks this study builds on.

2.2 Unaccompanied Minors

One group which seeks asylum in Sweden are the unaccompanied minors, who are identified as people under 18 who are not accompanied by a custodian or parent upon arrival to the recipient country, in this case, Sweden (Migrationsverket 2015). Thus, the term only concerns minors who are seeking refuge from war, disease, persecution, and violence, and therefore does not involve minors that are arriving in Sweden as exchange students or are here on temporary visits (Fälldin & Strand 2010:11). When applying for asylum at the Migration Agency’s reception unit the minor enters the Swedish asylum process. In order to facilitate the investigation on the individual's rights to asylum and residence permit, the minor has to provide information about his/her background, reasons for applying and its ethnicity and origin (ibid). The minor is accustomed a temporarily home in the municipality it first contacted an authority in and a custodian who works as a link between the unaccompanied minor and the authorities and is responsible for the minor and its legal and financial matters (Fälldin & Strand 2010:11).

In the last phase of the asylum process, the unaccompanied minor gets his/her application for asylum either granted or rejected. If rejected, the unaccompanied minor can either accept the decision and return or appeal, which means that a court will examine the decision and if the application gets rejected again the rejection has won legal power. Hence, the unaccompanied minor has to leave Sweden and faces deportation to the country of origin. If an unaccompanied minor turns 18 before the decision has been made they no longer have the right to housing and financial support from the Migration Agency which can also decide if the unaccompanied minor needs supervision or detention before the day of return (Migrationsverket 2017).
2.3 Afghanistan

One of the countries from which many of the unaccompanied minors come from is Afghanistan. It is estimated that Afghans are the second-largest group of asylum seekers in Europe since migration flows picked up in numbers in 2015 (Eurostat 2017). Facing the worrying development in their country, where both economic and political stability has yet to arrive, many young Afghans have migrated to the neighboring country Iran and later on embarked on the long and dangerous route to Europe seeking safety, security and a chance at a better life (IDMC 2019). Thus, the most common country of origin among the unaccompanied minors who have applied for asylum in Sweden is Afghanistan, followed by Somalia, Syria, Eritrea, and Iraq (Migrationsinfo 2018).

Afghanistan's history includes eighty wars and conflicts, looking back at the last 50 years the country has had a continuous series of clashes. Following a communist military coup in Kabul in 1978, effective and widespread Afghan resistance against the Soviet occupation begun in the following year (Baker 2011:164). By 1980 the Soviet-Afghan war had broken out where Afghanistan's resistance forces, the Mujahideen, were fighting against the Soviet intervention thus, the same year also marked the first wave of internal displacement and refugee flow from Afghanistan to the neighboring countries Pakistan and Iran (Baker 2011:180). Eventually, in 1989, the Soviet Union had to withdraw its troops and Afghan refugees and the internally displaced started to return. Thus, political instability followed, in 1993 the Islamic State of Afghanistan was established which the militia leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was opposed to. A civil war broke out and people had to seek refuge again hence, in 1990 it was estimated that there was a total of 6.3 million Afghan refugees in the world, most of them hosted in Pakistan and Iran (The World Bank 2019).

In 1994, when peace finally was restored in the capital, the Taliban emerged as a new fraction threatening the stability in Kabul (Baker 2011:202-203). The Taliban rose to power in the following years until the US declared War on Terrorism in 2001 through Operation Enduring Freedom thus, the Anti-Taliban war started
(Baker 2011:207). A protracted and costly period of intervention followed and continues as of 2019 hence, Afghanistan has been the largest refugee-producing country in the world for many years. It was not until the civil war broke out in Syria in 2011 that more refugees in the world had a Syrian nationality than an Afghan one (The World Bank 2019). Moreover, the causes for Afghanistan's war-torn and conflict-ridden history can be concluded by both occupation by foreign troops, intertribal and inter-ethnic conflicts and also in recent year, conflict between progressive and conservative forces following social reforms and attempted secularization of the Afghan society (IDMC 2019; UCDP 2019).
3. Previous Research

This chapter argues that there is a substantial knowledge gap in the literature concerning media’s discursive practices of unaccompanied minors. The below sections will first discuss the research on vulnerable groups such as migrants, both internationally and in Sweden, exposing an understanding that they often are depicted as a negative Other posing a threat to the security of their host countries. However, both sections reveal that Swedish and international literature offers limited studies on how the group unaccompanied minors, are depicted in media. The aim of this thesis is to add to this gap.

3.1 Migrants in International media

There are several international scholars who have put their attention on identifying media discourses on immigrants and refugees (Schemer 2012; Kamenova 2014; Bhatia 2015). Teun Van Dijk (2000) discusses how media contributes to the reproduction of stereotypes, prejudice and eventually racism by focusing on discursive mechanisms of representing and interpreting the “others” (i.e. immigrants and refugees). In The Influence of News Media on Stereotypic Attitudes Toward Immigrants in a Political Campaign, Christian Schemer (2012) shows how campaigns that contain negative news about immigrants has created stereotypic attitudes towards the group. Thus, he argues that repeated exposure to news portrayals of social groups as economic, cultural, or security threats increase prejudice over time (Schemer 2012:742).

Some scholars go further and discuss how such a negative portrayal can influence public perception and action towards these different groups (Cheregi 2015; Gabrielatos & Baker 2008). For instance, by applying a frame analysis in combination with CDA of the British press, Bianca-Florentina Cheregi (2015) identifies anti-immigration discourses, such as the creation of stereotypes and the polarization between “Us” and “Them”. Through the practice of othering, which refers to treating people from another group as essentially different from- and generally inferior to the group you belong to (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2013:187), she notices forms of positive self-representation of British people and negative
other-presentation of Romanians and Bulgarians, which includes displaying them as a threat to the security of the citizens of England or as a threat to their jobs (Cheregi 2015:4). Such a self-representation is also observed by Aditi Bhatia (2015), who argues that by categorizing refugees as the Other helps Americans look more civilized and humane and can further be used as a rhetorical device in providing ground for future actions and help to attain and maintain moral superiority and legitimate power over others. Aditi Bhatia and Christopher Jenks (2008) explore similar findings in media portrayals of Syrian refugees in the US. They find that the American media orientates its readers to government policy through two narratives; one as homogenizing Syrian refugees as a dangerous Other who is a threat to national security and the American way of life, or as victims with a tragic past now pursuing the American Dream (Bhatia & Jenks 2008:223,225). Moreover, they argue that the media discourse has helped Trump in his efforts to secure the border to Mexico, decrease immigration and prohibit Muslims from entering the country by promoting the view that Syrian refugees are dangerous (ibid). Hence, by circulating “conflated and confused meanings” of refugees and asylum seekers media discourse can create a “moral panic” amongst a population and control the dominant understanding of the group and actions towards it (Gabrielatos & Baker 2008:33). It has also been argued that it is enough to only make the ethnicity of the news subjects visible in order to increase out-group hostility. Such information can then impact the behavior of the audience, as in Germany where an increase in extreme-right violence was an effect of the visibility of the asylum debate in the media (Koopmans 1996:655).

Further developing on the topic, Denitza Kamenova (2014) explores how media discourse on migrants reflects and affects society's tolerance. She argues that media rather influences our emotions than our logical thinking hence, so it can touch on our subconscious and therefore create a fear of the Other. Therefore it plays a significant role in the origin, development, and expression of attitudes, reactions and behavior towards Otherness (Kamenova 2014:177-178). Thus, she elucidates how negative discursive practices can change through shedding light to the history, intentions, and capacity of migrants and thereby also transform people's perceptions of the group (Kamenova 2014:181). In the same vein, Viktoria M. Esses, Scott Veenvilet, Gordon Hodson & Ljiljana Mihic (2008) have conducted a study
showing how the dehumanization of refugees in the media determines people's attitudes towards both refugees and current refugee policy in Canada. Such dehumanization can promote negative consequences for the group in question such as denying them access to required resources (M. Esses, Veenvilet, Hodson & Mihic 2008:23). Thus, when refugees are dehumanized through claims that they are dishonest, antipathy and lack of admiration are likely to be evoked, resulting in prejudice towards the group members and lack of support for policies and programs designed to improve their circumstances (ibid). Their research also shows that the ingroup's (Canadians) unfavorable actions towards the outgroup (refugees) can become legitimized through depicting refugees as manipulative, opportunistic and immoral thus, an enemy image is created (M. Esses, Veenvilet, Hodson & Mihic 2008:18).

3.2 Migrants in Swedish media

As for media discourses in Sweden, Ylva Brune (1998) is one of the few researchers who have put their focus on identifying how the Other is constructed in the Swedish media when covering news about immigration. Her research concerns media coverage of immigrants from former Yugoslavia who came to Sweden in large numbers in 1992 and she argues that it is easy to distinguish the discourses since there is almost no coverage of the refugees' perspectives of their involuntary flight but more on the coverage of the Other depicted as something threatening that reaches Sweden through illegal means (Brune 1998:37). The use of metaphors such as “invasion” and “flood” justifies xenophobic actions on the ground that Sweden must be protected (Brune 1998:35). Birgitta Löwander (1998) also makes an important point in arguing that the discourses created by media can be understood as part of the journalist’s lack of personal experience of the migrants in general (Löwander 1998:93). Such negative portrayal could be overcome if journalists become more aware of the consequences that may emerge from their reporting on the topic, research on what such consequences could be is crucial for the future well-being and protection of asylum-seekers in Sweden. Moreover, the only research that can be found relating to how unaccompanied minors are depicted in the media is done by Liv Stretmo (2014), who finds the group being portrayed as either victims or strategic migrants, which in turn can affect how people react
towards them. Swedish media is depicting unaccompanied minors as adults who lie about their age, such representation can further restrain the possibilities for this group in the Swedish society (Stretmo 2014:252). The study indicates that the media often proposes what should be done to manage unaccompanied minors or to prevent them from coming into the country. Such a portrayal creates a view that unaccompanied minors are a group that should be treated and managed in a certain way and that the underlying factors for their refuge get neglected. An example of such measures is increased control and monitoring of the disappearance of unaccompanied minors, who presumably disappear in order to avoid deportation (Stretmo 2014:254).

**3.4 Summarizing the Literature and Identifying a Gap**

As discussed in this chapter, academic debates concerning the portrayal of unaccompanied minors in media is either non existing or very limited, both internationally and in Sweden. As this chapter shows, the literature on media’s discursive practice mostly relates to depictions of adult refugees in the British or North American press leaving a gap this thesis hopes to fill. Moreover, discussions about Afghan unaccompanied minors have become widespread in Swedish media in the last four years, especially in reference to the many deportations. The research done by Stretmo (2014), addresses the impacts of media portrayals but given the global rise of young asylum seekers, it is timely to update and critically examine if unaccompanied minors are constructed in particular ways through discourses of othering and security. Consequently, there is a need for empirical investigations of how this group is depicted in Swedish media, if there is a tendency in reporting about the Other in a certain way, and which consequences such a portrayal and reporting can have.
4. Conceptual Framework

This thesis is using critical discourse analysis (CDA), brought forward by Norman Fairclough (2001) as a method of analysis. When basing a study on discourse analysis, the method is not to be detached from its theoretical foundation consequently, for this study, the CDA employed will entail both theoretical and methodological considerations as these are intertwined (Jørgensen & Phillips 2013: 12). However, I will seek to make a distinction, developing the concrete methodological considerations in chapter five. This chapter will be divided into two parts where the first outlines the discourse analytical framework that this study is leaning on with a particular focus on news media. Thus, CDA should preferably be complemented with social and/or cultural theories (Fairclough 2001:135) therefore, the second part of this chapter will discuss postcolonial theory in order to create a conceptual framework for the coming analysis. By combining these perspectives, I hope that this thesis will provide an understanding of the oppressive and potentially dangerous view of unaccompanied minors as a homogenous group.

4.1 Discourse Analytical Framework

Discourse analysis is poststructuralist in nature, meaning that all social phenomena, including discourse, are constructed through processes of meaning-making which take place in social action and interaction (Baylis, Smith, Owens 2017:162-163). Poststructuralism implies that everyone should think critically about how we construct the world; hence, it is crucial to investigate how constructions, and the people and places within it, make particular policies and actions seem natural and therefore legitimate (ibid). Thus, language is essential to how we make sense of the world and therefore discourse can be understood to be a linguistic system that orders statements and concepts (Foucault 1972). Thus, discourse can be described as a way to link material such as texts, news, and art to practices and it can be argued that discourse does not only shape the way we understand the world but also how we act in it (Rose 2001:136). Consequently, the understanding of a certain discourse as positive or negative, can impact the way people react upon it and shape the social world accordingly (ibid). According to Norman Fairclough (2001:19), the general idea underlying the word “discourse” is that it is always through language that we get access to reality, discourse is thus used in linguistics to refer to extended
samples of either spoken or written language. Fairclough (2001), uses the term discourse to make the connection between texts and the social practice where language is understood as a system that not only communicates facts about the world but also generates them thus, language is a building block, forming the social world.

In order to analyze the relationship between discursive practices and social and cultural change in a given setting, Fairclough (2001:19), developed critical discourse analysis (CDA) with the underlying premises that social change is possible. Thus, discourses are not only forming the social world but can also be affected by practices and events that do not have a discursive character hence, Fairclough argues for the inclusion of both textual and social analysis when conducting CDA. Discourse, according to him, refers to the whole process of social interaction of which a text is just a part, therefore, a text should also be understood as a product and resource in the process of production and interpretation and we should be concerned about how these cognitive processes are socially shaped and relative to social conventions (Fairclough 2001:16,20). Moreover, discourses can be understood to contribute to processes of construction of social identity, social relations and knowledge production (Fairclough 1995). They can also be understood to function in an ideological manner where underlying ideologies create meaning that reinforces unequal social orders; hence, ideology can be understood as a constructed interpretation of reality which serves legitimizing purposes for power (Fairclough 1995:14).

In sum, CDA aims to investigate and analyze power relations in society, and it is used to acknowledge discursive practices with an eye on the possibilities for social change. The literature regarding the facilitation of the possibilities for such change is therefore crucial for the field of Peace and Conflict studies or else it can be argued that there would be no reason to engage in conflict transformation, resolution and the strive for peace. Moreover, Fairclough’s account of discourse as language makes one understand its dominance in societal structures. As argued by Galtung (1990), only with awareness of both the cultural and structural violence in society, positive peace can be achieved. I thus deem CDA theoretically appropriate in relation to Peace and Conflict Studies.
4.1.2 The Media

The media aims to produce information on specific events and as it is the medium through which we receive most of our information about the world, it can be argued that it upholds an incredible potential for power (Fairclough 1995:2). In Fairclough’s understanding, media is shaping the social world through framing debates and issues and through selecting, prioritizing and constructing information in accordance with other institutions in society (Fairclough 2001:41). He argues that producers of media content exercise power over consumers in the sense that they can decide what should be included and excluded when reporting on a specific event, how the event is represented, and the subject position of the audiences (Fairclough 2001:42). Through positioning the audience in a certain way, media discourse is able to exercise a pervasive and powerful influence in social reproduction (Fairclough 2001:45). Consumers are framed as spectators of events consuming entertainment, rather than participating citizens, which in turn affects the potential of agency, and sense of responsibility among readers; thus, audiences are argued to be passive recipients of knowledge (ibid). Consequently, there is an unawareness of the media as a discursive actor expressing particular representations of reality, by criticizing and investigating discourses found in media text, individuals can understand its importance in the creation of reality (Fairclough 1995:12). Therefore, investigating what discourses are prominent in the reporting of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan is important since the determines our perceived reality of the group and can thus legitimize action towards them.

Moreover, the analytical terms new media ecology and the mediatization of war have been brought forward by Andrew Hoskins and Ben O’Loughlin (2010:2), in order to provide a theoretical understanding of media’s role in today’s conflicts. The concepts refer to the argument that organized violence today, cannot be fully understood without taking the role of the media into account hence, they challenge preceding theories on audiences and propaganda and argue for a new environment where previous assumptions about their affects have to be rethought (Hoskins & O’Loughlin 2010:185-186). However, it can be argued that media representations are not only important when trying to legitimize a war, they are also required with regard to secondary issues such as, e.g. political decisions in whether or not to invest
in the weapon industry (ibid), or in framing asylum-seekers in a certain way in order to legitimize irregular politics. For instance, if a group is systemically referred to as trouble or disruption, it will systemically affect people’s perspective on the specific group (Fairclough 2001:42). Consequently, media representations of a specific conflict or issue can have definite and identifiable effects on those being represented since they can make some aspects of certain issues prominent and some invisible hence, media representation suggest how certain issues should be understood- and dealt with (Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2010:164).

4.2 The Process of Othering
Media can contribute to the reproduction of stereotypes, prejudices and eventually racism by representing and interpreting the “others” (van Dijk 2000). Hence, the notion of such “others”, the creation of “Us” and “Them”, and the process of othering are concepts that have their origins in postcolonial theory thus, the concepts have been brought forward in order to shed light to, and criticize divisions of people in terms of culture and ethnicity (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2013:186-188). Postcolonial scholars, such as Edward Said (1978), have exposed and criticized the colonial view of the world which legitimizes oppression, discrimination, and racism and argue that colonial ascendant is still present even if colonialism as a formal social structure is over. Basic queries in postcolonial research center on how cultural identity is constructed, maintained and reproduced in the global society, and further explore what possibilities there are to construct alternative identities that move beyond that of the hegemonic Western norm (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn 1999:15). In his work Orientalism, Said (1978:1), examines how the processes by which the “Orient” was, and continues to be, constructed in Western thinking and how, through academic discourse, an explicit distinction is created between the “Orient” and the “Occident”. It can be argued that Orientalism is a classic example of Foucault’s definition of discourse since it can be understood to be the Western corporate institution for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (Said 1978:3). Thus, the significance of Orientalism is that it is a useful example of the construction of the Other and that the orientalist discourse persists into the present, shaping Western
views through media representations of e.g. Muslims as backward thinking and dangerous to the Western world.

Moreover, postcolonialism discusses the stereotypical and negative view of the Other, which in general terms can be identified as anyone who is separated from one’s self thus, the creation of the Other is argued to be a crucial factor in locating one’s place in the world and in defining what counts as “normal” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2013:186-187). In a similar vein, othering refers to the social and psychological process in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group in order to create an “Us” and “Them” or a significant Other (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 2013:188). Humans tend to use stereotypes in order to simplify the image of the collective Other and it is when stereotyping is done in a negative way an enemy image can take shape (Petersson 2009:46; Harle 2000:10). The media is a medium that often uses stereotypes in order to simplify the description of reality which then can be argued to create or reinforce the perception of the Other and create a division between “Us” and “Them”, good or evil, civilized and uncivilized (Hultén 2006). Hence, stereotyping creates inclusion and exclusion in society through misrepresentations of certain groups and Xenophobia can develop as a consequence of portraying immigration as something threatening towards the nation and culture, which is done through media representations of immigrants as the Other (ibid). The notion of immigrants is an example of a concept that has been attributed negative features and is often linked to societal problems such as youth crime (Groglopo 2015). Consequently, to know, to name, to fix the Other in discourse is to maintain political control, to legitimize irregular politics and erroneous decision-making and to justify conflict.

In sum, direct or organized violence is not the only consequence following stereotyping and the creation of “Us” and “Them” thus, it can be argued that the interrelated concepts also refer to how cultural violence serves to legitimize structural violence against the target group (Galtung 1990). One can suffer great harm, both physical and psychological, if deprived of social and economic security thus, Galtung’s notion of structural violence has made an important contribution to Peace and Conflict studies and has helped scholars in investigating how violence can pervade the structures of society and oppress marginalized groups.
5. Methodology

This chapter starts with providing an overview of CDA and introduces the methodological tools used in the analytical stages. Section 5.2, discusses how the methodological tools of CDA are operationalized in regards to this paper. In 5.3, the empirical material will be introduced and critically discussed. Lastly, in 5.4 the role of the researcher will be discussed.

5.1 Method of Analysis

This research is constructivist in nature as the presumption of discourse analysis is that reality is constructed through language (Fairclough 2001:19). Thus, the strength of approaching an issue with an inherently social constructivist view is that it is oriented towards critiquing and changing society as a whole (Wodak, Meyer 2009:6) thus, it conceptualizes the possibility for change necessary to Peace and Conflict scholars. For the purpose of this study, I use Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a method of analysis since it is suitable for discourse analysis in media and he has himself dedicated much time to analyze news media specifically (see Fairclough 1995). As argued above, media holds a great amount of power since it produces knowledge and is the medium through which we receive most of our information about the world (Fairclough 1995:2ff). To question the media is particularly interesting since media is often understood to be right or neutral when writing about different matters. CDA is a suitable approach to investigate newspapers because of its capacity to provide insights into the way in which language use possibly can produce negative discourses in relation to the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan. Moreover, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality (Fairclough 2001). Therefore, CDA has been chosen for this study because it can highlight issues of power asymmetries and structural inequalities in the case of a vulnerable group in society, the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan.

In order to facilitate CDA, Fairclough has developed a three-dimensional model to guide such an analysis as outlined in Figure 1. I use the analytical tools as described in his work since it has provided me with an extensive set of examples on how to
conduct the analysis. Fairclough sheds light to two different aspects when analyzing discourse; the communicative event and the order of discourse, where the communicative event is understood to be the specific text being investigated and the order of discourse as the collective sum of the various discourses used within a social institution (Fairclough 2001:22-23). Thus, the communicative event in this study would translate into the selected news texts from Aftonbladet and Expressen, and the order of discourse into the discursive practices of news media. Each communicative event can be understood to have three dimensions in total; the first dimension is concerned with the specific text under investigation, either written, spoken or visual, or all three of them. The second dimension focuses on the discursive practices and refer to the intertextualities and interdiscursivity of the material where the production and consumption processes of the text are being investigated by looking at how the text draws on other texts and which assumptions of the world have shaped the text (Fairclough 2001:118,127). Lastly, the third dimension refers to the sociocultural practice, where social theories are applied in order to contextualize the discourse in a broader societal framework (Fairclough 2001:21-22). Essential for each communicative event is that all three dimensions of the model have to be studied in order to make a comprehensive CDA (ibid).

![Fig. 1: Fairclough’s three dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough 1995:59)](image-url)
5.2 Operationalizing CDA

CDA is a comprehensive approach that offers a lot of analytical tools but due to the limited scope of this thesis, the choice has been made to only focus on the most prominent aspects. Hence, my analysis falls in three parts, each part reflecting one step in Fairclough’s model. In the first step, the text dimension, I examine the content, structure, and meaning of the text hence, I will focus my attention on how unaccompanied minors are constructed linguistically. Thus, practically, CDA requires of the researcher to formulate questions that allow for this, and being newly introduced to this method I am guided by Fairclough’s own questions which are relevant for this study (Fairclough 2001:92-93 – Appendix I). I also make use of the linguistic constructions in relation to the postcolonial concepts; the Other, othering and the creation of “Us” and “Them”, elaborated on in chapter four. Discourse analysis is sensitive to both what is in the text and what is excluded. Therefore, in the second step of the analysis pertaining to the discursive practice dimension, I explore how the producers of the articles make use of other discourses in order to generate certain meaning and beliefs (Fairclough 2001:117-118).

Fairclough argues that news texts authors favor certain words, descriptions and interpretations which often originate from high-status groups. This affects the knowledge spread, and the design of the discourses as it is based on a people’s interpretation of a phenomenon or group (ibid). Hence, I examine the intertextuality and interdiscursivity in the articles in order to examine what discourses the text production rely on and whether they are reproduced or changing. The second and third stage of the three dimensional model are intertwined, both are connected to the reproduction processes (Fairclough 2001:135). Therefore, the social practice dimension, I will focus on the discursive practices in a wider societal setting where the news texts are understood as expressions of sociocultural practice, such as being part of the constructions of identity, influence people’s perception of a certain phenomenon or group and affect security measures and political action. The third stage of the analysis will mainly focus on the social outcomes of the discursive practices thus, it has been suggested to use complementary theory in order to fully comprehend and theorize the sociocultural reality of the text (Fairclough 2001:135; Fairclough 1995). Therefore, I complemented the theoretical framework of CDA
with postcolonial theory outlined in the previous chapter and compare it to the previous research done on the topic in chapter three.

5.3 Material

The Swedish press has a great influence in our society and several instruments helping it to convey its messages to the public such as morning-, evening- and online newspapers (Ljuslinder 2011). The empirical material for this study consist of news and debate articles from two of Sweden’s leading newspapers; Aftonbladet and Expressen, who have a total of 5.5 million readers on a daily basis (Aftonbladet 2019; Expressen 2019). Both newspapers are available online and free of charge unlike most other Swedish newspapers that are available online such as Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Sydsvenskan. Therefore, the articles in Aftonbladet and Expressen can be argued to reach out to a wide range of readers based on their accessibility. Aftonbladet has a social democratic political background and was established in 1830 (Nationalencyklopedin 2019). Today it is owned by a Norwegian media company called Schibsted and has about 3.8 million readers on a daily basis (Schibsted 2019). Expressen, on the other hand, has a liberal political background and was established in 1944 (Nationalencyklopedin 2019). Today it is owned by the Swedish media company Bonnier AB and in 2018 it was estimated that 2.5 million people read the paper daily (Expressen 2018).

To gather my material I consulted the online editions of Aftonbladet and Expressen and searched for the key terms “Afghan unaccompanied minors”, and “unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan”. I got 12 037 hits on Aftonbladet.se and 310 on Expressen.se hence, I chose to narrow down the search to articles published in 2017 since that year had the most results regarding unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan and the issues concerning the group. After narrowing down the search I had a total of 150 articles to go through. Discourse analysis asks for careful and detailed reading (Fairclough 2001:3) thus, a drastic selection of the material was made. I specifically looked for articles discussing the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan that live in Sweden and the recurring issues concerning the group such as age assessments and drug abuse consequently, ending up with four articles from Aftonbladet and four from Expressen that were relevant for this study (see p. 44 under References). Hence, a targeted selection of material was done which implies
that the data was selected strategically so that it would be relevant to the research question and purpose of this study. Using this sort of purposive sampling and selecting few representative texts is common in qualitative research, in particular when the topic is not well-researched, as in the case of media constructions of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan (Cresswell 2009:268-269). It also needs to be highlighted that the selected articles all present unaccompanied minors in negative ways which means that the articles which are reporting on positive aspects regarding the group have been excluded. This selection was done so it would fit the aim and relevance of this study. Quotes will be used from the different articles in the coming analysis which I have translated to English as it fits better with the language of the thesis thus, the original text has been included in footnotes.

Moreover, this study is limited to a specific time frame hence, it concerns articles discussing unaccompanied minors during 2017. I selected this period because it is linked with the intensification of the migration theme in the Swedish press. Thus, it also reflects a moment in time that is characterized by the aftermath of tightened legislations concerning asylum seekers, such as medical age assessments, the implementation of restrictions on the possibility of obtaining a residence permit in Sweden and the many deportations to Afghanistan. Consequently, in the summer of 2017, hundreds of people started demonstrating against the deportations, claiming that many of the minors face prosecution and death if they return to their home country.

5.4 Research bias
My own understandings of social relations and identity are a part of this study which can be deemed problematic because my own worldview and opinions influence how I understand the data. However, by acknowledging and describing such critical point of departure helps this research to differentiate herself from general interpretations (Fairclough 1989:141). Discourse analysis is often criticized for failing to generalize results to a larger population (Jørgensen & Phillips 2000: 28). As I do not claim to generalize my results, the study of material is limited to a one-sided understanding of a phenomenon and the material of this study is collected from only two newspapers, while other types of media have been excluded. By only choosing two newspapers and narrowing down to analyzing only eight articles
allowed me to examine the language in the media texts in-depth which can contribute to an understanding the ways of the creation and reproduction of discourses in society and thereby to potentially reducing negative impacts on the text consumer’s worldviews. On a final note, it also needs to be highlighted that this study is limited in the way that it focuses on media constructions of unaccompanied minors, which limits its generalizability to other vulnerable groups in society. Moreover, the focus is on unaccompanied minors with Afghan nationality which further excludes minors from different backgrounds. However, generalizability is not a goal for this study, as the aim is to shed light on how a specific group is framed in the selected media.
6. Analysis

The analysis falls in three parts, structured around the operational questions which reflect each step in Fairclough’s three dimensional model as presented in the method chapter. The first part of the analysis explores how the unaccompanied minors are constructed textually by looking at the author’s choice of vocabulary and what relational values the grammatical features of the texts have (Fairclough 2001:92-93). Throughout the process, the material has been encoded for recurring constructions therefore, the first part of my analysis will categorize the findings into; Unaccompanied minors as suspects, Unaccompanied minors as perpetrators and The creation of “Us” and “Them”. The second part is concerned with the discursive practices in the production and interpretation of the texts hence, the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of the texts are explored (Fairclough 2001:118). In the last part of the analysis, I will critically discuss the discursive findings and contextualize them to the social context in which they take place by using the framework of postcolonial theory in combination with the previous research done on the topic.

6.1 The Textual Dimension

The textual dimension of the analysis is focused on mapping out linguistic elements which show how discourses are manifested textually and thus provide backing for a particular interpretations (Fairclough 2001:91). Looking at the relational value of words and grammar, the author’s level of agency and relation to their own statements can be examined. Detailed analysis of the linguistic characteristics of the texts is done through using analytical tools such as modality and transitivity. In order to investigate if the author agrees with what is written, modality can be applied to the text, which also explores the writer’s authority with respect to truthclaims or representation of reality. When analyzing transitivity, the focus is on how events and processes are connected with the subjects, in this case the unaccompanied minors. The texts are also analyzed by exploring if the pronouns we and you are used and what they imply, and if the author is using metaphors, which refers to a figure of speech that describes an object or action that is not literally true, but helps explain an idea or make a comparison (Fairclough 2001:99-100,105-106).
6.1.1 Unaccompanied minors as Suspects

In some of the analyzed articles, unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan have been portrayed as presumed suspects in relation to arguments concerning their age. For instance, the age estimations of the unaccompanied minors, undertaken by the Migration Agency, is a well debated topic in the articles. The Swedish government has deemed it necessary to carry out medical assessments of unaccompanied minors since many of them lack documentation stating their age (Migrationsverket 2017). In the articles analyzed, unaccompanied minors have been depicted as a group of people who collectively lie about their age and therefore cannot be trusted. By using modality, it is evident that the authors of the following examples have a high degree of affinity with- or affiliation to their statements:

Three out of four unaccompanied minors who have undergone age assessments are over 18, according to the Swedish Medicines Agency. The results come as no surprise to the Migration Agency1 (Aftonbladet 30-05-2017)

A large group of Afghan men, led by a young Afghan woman, who migrated to Sweden together with her parents in 2015, require amnesty for all unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan”2 (Expressen 27-08-2017)

The statement “The results are no surprise to the Migration Agency”, can be understood as a claim of truth since it implies that the author knows that the results are no surprise to the Swedish Migration Agency thus, the author believes that the assessments that have been made are trustworthy and confirm the assumptions that unaccompanied minors have lied about their age even though the specific article discusses the age assessments as being questionable. This formulation shows that modality is high since the author agrees with his statement and thus believes it to be true. Moreover, in the second quote it is argued that the individuals who demand amnesty for all unaccompanied minors and demonstrate against the deportations to Afghanistan are men and not minors. The term “Afghan men” is used in contrast to “Afghan young woman” which implies that there is an age difference between the

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1 ”Tre av fyra ensamkommande som hittills fått genomgå åldersbedömningar är över 18 år, enligt Rättsmedicinalverket. Resultatet förvånar inte Migrationsverket.”

2 “En större grupp afghanska män, anförda av en ung afghansk kvinna som invandrade till Sverige tillsammans med sina föräldrar 2015, kräver allmän amnesti för alla afghanska ensamkommande barn.”
male and female participants hence, portraying unaccompanied minors as a group of people that are older than 18 and thus have lied about their age.

The following quote is also an example through which modality can be shown:

He meets young unaccompanied minors, mainly from Afghanistan, who are active, or risk getting involved in, criminality and drugs. Some of the really young ones are being exploited by the older ones who lie about their age\(^3\) (Expressen 12-03-2017)

The quote implies that unaccompanied minors are being dishonest about their age, thereby, portraying the group as suspected liars. The authors of this article are using objective modalities, which refers to the way the authors speak in objective terms, assuming that one (rather than multiple) truth(s) exist. In the statements: “… unaccompanied minors that primarily come from Afghanistan…” and “…take part in, or risk being pulled into, criminality and drug abuse” the authors assume that only one truth exists and they consent to this truth by making their claims in a confident manner. Consequently, they appear authoritative with a high affiliation with their claims as there is no uncertainty related to their arguments. Modality is high in the texts.

Another example through which modality is apparent is in the quotes from an article discussing Swedish aid:

The aid should not go to refugees in Sweden\(^4\)
(Aftonbladet 08-12-2017)

The fact that the government authorizes amnesty for unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan, where some may completely lack grounds for asylum, while the efforts concerning refugees internationally are way too weak in comparison to the aid budget, is a strange priority\(^5\)
(Aftonbladet 08-12-2017)

The first quote refers to the headline of the article where modality is expressed through the usage of the modal auxiliary verb *should* in combination with the word

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3 “Han möter ensamkommande unga killar från främst Afghanistan som håller på med, eller riskerar att dras in i, kriminalitet och droger. En del av de riktigt unga utnyttjas av äldre som ljuger om sin ålder.”

4 “Biståndet ska inte gå till flyktingar i Sverige”

5 “Att regeringen beviljar amnesti för ensamkommande från Afghanistan där visa kanske helt saknar asylskäl, samtidigt som insatserna för flyktingar internationellt är alltför svaga I förhållande till biståndsbudgetens storlek är en märklig prioritering”
not thus, the author expresses authority (Fairclough 2001:105). In the second quote the author uses *assumptions* by stating that “…where some may completely lack grounds for asylum,...”. Thus, the author implies that unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan might not have grounds for asylum but fails to argue why such claims are being made or from where they originate (ibid).

In sum, attributing unaccompanied minors negative features helps in the construction of the group as the Other in the discussed articles (Said 1978). By portraying them as a group who has lied about their age can restrain their possibilities of inclusion in the Swedish society since they can come to face suspicion in relation to e.g. employment and financial matters. Moreover, stereotyping them as liars can lead to stigmatization and discrimination of the group (Hultén 2006), and affect the present asylum system they are in by confirming their rejections for asylum. Simplifying the image of the group as the collective Other can help the Swedish government to maintain political control over the unaccompanied minors who can become deprived of social and economic security and consequently become oppressed in a structural way.

### 6.1.2 Unaccompanied Minors as Perpetrators

A second theme can be identified in the news text, of unaccompanied minors as *perpetrators*. By using the conceptual tool *transitivity*, the connection between events and subjects can be identified in the following quotes from an article in Expressen that discusses unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan in relation to crime and drug abuse in a Swedish small town:

The selling of drugs, Afghans banned from community centers and jealousy drama. In Hörby, the battle of the square has created big tensions between different ethnic groups

(Expressen 04-08-2017)

Many people experience that the unaccompanied minors have brought trouble and insecurity to the town

(Expressen 04-08-2017)

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6 “Knarkförsäljning, afghaner som portas från kulturhus och svartsjukedrama. I Hörby har slaget om torget skapat stora spänningar mellan olika etniska grupper”

7 “Många upplever att de ensamkommande har fört med sig bråk och otrygghet till orten”
Unaccompanied minors are linked to either criminal business or conflict in both quotes and the second quote even states that unaccompanied minors as a group have brought strife and insecurity to the Swedish small town, Hörby. It is argued that unaccompanied minors are the problem. The group is understood to be the sole cause of the insecurity in the town, and it is “we”, the Swedish citizens who live there, who are affected by this.

Moreover, in the following quote the word “mob”\(^8\) is used, clearly holding a negative meaning:

> One evening, in the beginning of the summer, a large mob of about fifty people, children, teenagers and adults, try to assault a HVB residency (homes for care or residence) in Hörby, just a few meters from the centrally located Nya Torg\(^9\)
> (Expressen 04-08-2017)

Hence, it can be argued that by using such a word in combination with unaccompanied minors frames the group as a dangerous one and can further affect how the readers come to understand and act towards the minors. Transitivity is also evident in the following quotes where the author makes a connection between unaccompanied minors and drug abuse:

> Many unaccompanied minors are stuck in drug abuse. In Stockholm, it is usually Afghan teenagers who abuse heroin, while in Gothenburg it is mainly teenagers from North Africa who smoke cannabis\(^10\)
> (Aftonbladet 15-01-2017)

> A heroin wave strikes against Uppsala where 100 unaccompanied minors, mainly from Afghanistan, are stated to be stuck in heavy drug abuse – financed by thefts and robberies\(^11\)
> (Expressen 03-03-2017)

Thus, both modality and the use of metaphors are also apparent, in the first quote the type of modality being used is _truth_ hence, the author commits himself

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8 A mob can be defined as a large crowd of people, especially one that is disorderly and intent on cause trouble or violence (Oxford Dictionaries 2019)
9 ”En kväll i början av sommaren försöker en stor mobb på ungefär femtio personer, barn, tonåringar och vuxna, storma ett HVB-hem I Hörby, bara några meter från central belägna Nya Torg”
10 ”Många ensamkommande flyktingbarn är fast i ett drogmissbruk. I Stockholm är det oftast afghanska ungdomar som missbrukar heroin, medan det i Göteborg främst handlar om ungdomar från Nordafrika som röker cannabis.”
11 ”En heroinvåg slår till mot Uppsala och 100 ensamkommande ungdomar, främst från Afghanistan, uppges vara fast i tungt missbruk – finansierat av stölder och rån”
completely to the statement “Many unaccompanied minors are stuck in drug abuse”. Consequently, the author presents the particular knowledge-claim as true even though no statistics have been brought forward. It can further be argued that by adding “may” to the statement would, in this case, express a lower degree of certainty; “Many unaccompanied minors may be stuck in drug abuse”. In the second quote the author uses the metaphor wave in relation to the heroin abuse. Metaphor is a means of representing one aspect of experience in terms of another and the use of them in representing social problems is very common (Fairclough 2001:99-100). By using a metaphor that is associated with weather conditions such as “wave” implies that the heroin abuse is something that must be dealt with immediately since it can be understood as a security issue for the society and its inhabitants. The newspapers use metaphors in different ways that can have implications for the significance of them and for the individuals they are associated with them (ibid). “Heroin wave” in this text is also linked to thefts and robbery which is presented as further security concerns for the inhabitants in the city, the author is also interviewing one elderly Swedish man that has been robbed by an assumed unaccompanied minor from Afghanistan thus, no evidence is presented which suggests that the link between the robbery and the drug abuse of unaccompanied minors only are speculations.

In sum, portraying unaccompanied minors as perpetrators can increase prejudice over time, which in turn can affect the Swedish society’s tolerance in regards to the group (Schemer 2012; Kamenova 2014). If a group is systemically referred to as trouble or disruption, this will systemically build people’s perspective on the specific group (Fairclough 2001:42). Through linking the unaccompanied minors to societal problems such as crime and drug abuse can in turn create xenophobia and racism (Van Dijk 2000; Groglopo 2015). Moreover, by using metaphors such as “wave” in relation to the group can create a fear of the Other and justify xenophobic actions towards them, who need to be dealt with in order to achieve security in the Swedish society (Brune 1998). Consequently, by portraying unaccompanied minors as something threatening towards the security of Swedish cities can further legitimize irregular and erroneous decision-making in regards to the group.
6.1.3 The Creation of “Us” and “Them”

The above examples have all indicated the framing of unaccompanied as both suspects and perpetrators thus, this thesis argues that the news articles create the image of unaccompanied minors as “Them” while the Swedish citizens, are understood to be “Us”. As argued by Adrian Groglopo (2015), it is often minority groups that are portrayed as the Other, and the unaccompanied minors are no exception. In the below quote a creation of “Us” and “Them” can be identified through the distinction between what is normal and abnormal in relation to drug abuse:

They do not follow a traditional Swedish addiction career when you start by smoking cannabis and then gradually start abusing heavier drugs, but instead it seems to that they jump over many steps and start with an advanced addiction, often smoking heroin at once.\(^{12}\)

(Aftonbladet 15-01-2017)

Through claiming that “They do not follow a traditional Swedish career…” and that the unaccompanied minors, are argued to “…Jump over many steps and start with an advanced addiction…At once” implies that there are differences between they, the unaccompanied minors, who are not using drugs in the same way as we, Swedish people are. Hence, Swedish substance abuse is differentiated from that of unaccompanied minors, which is described as being of more advanced nature which in turn portrays the minor’s abuse as abnormal and problematic. Thus, forms of negative-other presentation can be noticed which helps the Swedish citizens – even if drug-addicts - look more civilized and humane in contrast to the unaccompanied minors. Such representation can further be used as a rhetorical device by politicians to maintain moral superiority over the group and provide ground for future actions towards them (Bhatia 2015). Consequently, it seems like, even in the case of drug abuse, that there is a “right” or “Swedish” way to use drugs which explicitly shows how deviant the unaccompanied minors are portrayed. Additionally, the claims are being made without providing any background knowledge; the unaccompanied minors might have already used other drugs prior coming to Sweden and thus have climbed the steps in the “Swedish” drug ladder.

\(^{12}\) “De gör ingen klassisk svensk missbrukarkariär där man börjar med att röka cannabis och sedan successivt tar allt tyngre droger, utan det verkar som om de hoppar över flera steg och börjar med ett avancerat missbruk, oftaft rökheroin, på en gång”
A second tool that can be used in the linguistic analysis of texts to examine the creation of the Other is to explore if the pronoun *we* is used and if so, how and to what extent (Fairclough 2001:106). The *we* can both be inclusive and exclusive thus, when the *we* is exclusive it doesn’t include those addressed and only refers to the writer (ibid). In the following quotes the author repetitively uses the *we* pronoun, by discussing how *we*, the Swedish citizen, have responsibilities and rights in regards to the unaccompanied minors who, in the author’s opinion, need to be deported if they do not have grounds for asylum hence, a clear division between “Us” and “Them” is made (Hultén 2006). Such usage of the *we* pronoun is evident in the following example:

As citizens, we have a number of obligations – to respect Swedish law, to contribute to the best of our abilities, to loyally defend our country if necessary. We also have rights, in case of safety and security, support, medical care when needed, i.e. access to the social welfare system. The author continues by arguing that those who are not Swedish citizens should not have the same rights as *us*:

Anyone who is not a citizen should not have the same rights. He or she has rights in terms of being human – but the human rights are less extensive than the civil rights. When the interest of citizens and non-citizens are in conflict with each other, the interests of the citizens should be prioritized” [My translation] (Expressen 27-08-2017)

In the second quote it can be argued that the author makes an implicit authority claim by speaking on behalf of others and clearly marginalizes the unaccompanied minors in arguing that “our rights” should be prioritized over theirs (Fairclough 2001:106). On a final note, it can be argued that by using subjective modalities in the statement “…Our security, our safety, our right to medical care…” the author

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13 "Som medborgare har vi ett antal skyldigheter – att respektera svensk lag, att bidra efter bästa förmåga, att solidariskt försvara vårt land vid behov. Vi har också rättigheter, till säkerhet och trygghet, till stöd, vård och omsorg vid behov, det vill säga tillträde till det sociala välfardsystemet”

14 ”Den som inte är medborgare bör inte ha samma rättigheter. Han eller hon har rättigheter I egenskap av att vara människa – men de mänskliga rättigheterna är mindre omfattande än de medborgliga”

15 ”När medborgares och icke-medborgares intressen star I konflikt med varandra bör medborgarnas intressen ges företräde”
can create an understanding that unaccompanied minors do not have the right to feeling secure and the right to medical care if they are ill; we, the Swedish citizens and they, the unaccompanied minors, are put in different categories. Such polarization between “Us” and “Them” can further create inclusion and exclusion for the group in the Swedish society, reinforcing the discourse on unaccompanied minors as the Other who are threatening the rights of the Swedish citizens (Cheregi 2015).

6.2 Discursive Practices

Moving from the textual stage in Fairclough’s three dimensional model, this chapter will analyze the discursive practices of the news texts. The relationship between text and social structures is a crucial one since it is indirect and mediated through the social interactions in which a text is produced and interpreted (Fairclough 2001:117). First, by analyzing the intertextuality of the texts the researcher identifies which people are interviewed and quoted in the articles and how they intertextually draw on other texts (Fairclough 2001:127). Secondly, the degree of interdiscursivity in the texts is explored through investigating which assumptions and understandings of the world have shaped the text hence, what discourse the text production rely on and whether they are reproduced or changing (Fairclough 2001:118).

6.2.1 Intertextuality

Power relations and the hierarchization of voices in news media production can become evident through analyzing the intertextuality in the different news texts (Aftonbladet 2017; Expressen 2017). Both websites, Aftonbladet.se and Expressen.se, provide suggestions of which texts the reader should consume next hence, the suggestions are examples of texts which the producers deems relevant for the consumer. Hence, the suggestions often refer to articles that highlight the same issues concerning unaccompanied minors (for instance Aftonbladet 2017-08-09, Expressen 2017-03-12). Thus, the construction of the group as the Other (as suspected liars, criminals) is reproduced. Moreover, the people interviewed and quoted in the texts are often officials from the Migration Agency or politicians as people whose voices are considered to be qualified to engage in the knowledge
production around unaccompanied minors. Such referencing can become problematic since the people interviewed can be argued to contribute to the same universalist discourse as the authors’. Furthermore, there is also a tendency to quote and refer to individuals who have been negatively affected by the unaccompanied minors (such as an old man who was robbed supposedly by an unaccompanied minor) (Expressen 2017-03-03), and people who are feeling insecure (Expressen 2017-08-04). In both examples the voices of the unaccompanied minors have been left out, without giving them a chance to share their experiences and thoughts on the matter thus, the discursive practice which reinforces the existing asymmetrical power relation between civilians and officials represented in the text (see section 4.1.2), are effectively reproduced. Consequently, unaccompanied minors are only referred to within the hegemonic postcolonial framework which reinforces the dominant construction in the news material of the group as the Other.

6.2.2 Interdiscursivity

Both Aftonbladet and Expressen take part in the same discursive practices in the production and presentation of their texts. There are numerous accounts of statistics from authorities and statements from experts and official representatives in the different articles which the authors use in order to present their own interpretations as facts (Fairclough 2001:159-161). Hence, the analysis of the textual dimensions shows that the authors use different techniques in order to appear authoritative such as writing in an objective manner, having high affiliation with their claims and using assumptions when presenting a statement. Such techniques are often used by the mass media and are argued to reinforce their authority (ibid). By reporting on unaccompanied minors in a certain way, Aftonbladet and Expressen are able to frame the debates regarding the group and influence their readers in how to understand the issues connected to unaccompanied minors. The two newspapers thereby exercise power over its consumers (Fairclough 2001:41). As the textual analysis has shown, unaccompanied minors are repeatedly presented as a group of liars or as a group involved in criminal activities which means that they are often constructed in a negative way. Thus, it can be argued that the constructions contribute to an order of discourse that already exists, since they are similar to the constructions of migrants discussed in the previous research chapter. Therefore, the articles have a low degree of interdiscursivity which signals the reproduction of the
established order and limits the degree of possible change within the discourse (Fairclough 2001:160).

Furthermore, there are several common-sense assumptions in the different texts that underlie the arguments in the discussion concerning unaccompanied minors. Quotes such as “the results are no surprise to the Migration Agency” (Aftonbladet 2017-30-05) or “drug sales, Afghans banned from community centers and jealousy drama” (Expressen 2017-04-08), demonstrate the general truth claim that can be found in all eight articles concerning the group. Namely, that unaccompanied minors are a group that cannot be trusted and are associated with criminal activities. In sum, interdiscursivity is generally low in the articles as the texts mainly reproduce hegemonic discourses surrounding unaccompanied minors as the Other. This contributes to an Orientalist framework and a division between “Us” and “Them” (Said 1978).

6.3 Sociocultural Practice
This section provides an analysis how the discursive practices in a wider societal setting, such as being part of the constructions of identity, influence people’s perception of a certain phenomenon or group and affect security measures and political action. Since the previous section already discussed how the discourse concerning unaccompanied minors as the Other is reproduced and whether it is offering possibilities for change (Fairclough 2001:135), this section will mainly focus on the social outcomes of the discursive practices.

All analyzed texts are clearly connected to the sociocultural practices of media and the influence it has on social constructions. It can be argued that the authority of the news producer remains unchallenged through the subjective position of the authors and the suggestions for which texts to read next on the websites. Such factors indicate that there is a tendency to rely on the content which calls for little action and responsibility regarding critical reading and source criticism. As pointed out earlier, there is an absence of unaccompanied minors’ voices in the articles as only the perspectives of authoritative individuals are being heard which can be argued helps the legitimization of the texts as truths or facts, consequently shaping a sort
of common-sense or universal knowledge about the issues concerning unaccompanied minors (Fairclough 2015:79-80). Such creation constitutes a dilemma upon further news production since it can control what is acceptable to write, making it difficult for text consumers to find new perspectives on the matter. The discourse becomes reinforced (Boréus 2015:226). Media produces knowledge and “facts” about the world around us and thus influences our perception of reality. Hence, it holds a crucial role in the formation of social standards, individual’s attitudes and views and can therefore contribute to the reproduction of stereotypes, prejudice and eventually racism (Van Dijk 2000). Portraying unaccompanied minors as either suspects or perpetrators can therefore have negative consequences for the group such as discrimination, stereotyping, marginalization and oppression (Schemer 2012:739).

Moreover, excluding the voices of unaccompanied minors in news texts can also complicate the consumer’s perception of the group since it becomes hard to understand their individual characteristics and experiences. Consequently, unaccompanied minors can come to be understood as strangers differentiated from “Us”, the Swedish citizens. Additionally, giving the group negative traits such as “addicts”, “liars” and “criminals”, can enforce the polarization between “Us” and “Them”, thus leading to the exclusion of the group. Within the analyzed articles, the unaccompanied minors and the Swedish citizens are posed as opposites, such as in terms of “rights” and the in the usage of drugs, which has clear implications of the power relations between “Us” and “Them”, where “we” get to decide what counts as normal or abnormal. Through the practice of othering, forms of positive self-representation of Swedish citizens can be noted while unaccompanied minors are presented as a negative Other who are engaged in criminal activities and posing a threat to the security in various Swedish society (see section 6.1.2), similar to the anti-immigration discourses Cheregi (2015) finds in the British press. By categorizing unaccompanied minors as the Other can help Swedish people see themselves as more civilized and humane and can further be used as a rhetorical device by politicians in providing ground for actions towards the group and help them to maintain superiority and legitimate power (Bhatia 2015). Through stigmatization and othering, unaccompanied minors can come to be understood as a group threatening “our” Swedish identity, social order and security which in turn
can lead to the legitimization of irregular political decisions, such as the deportations to their country of origin, Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the unaccompanied minor’s country of origin is repeatedly mentioned in the articles, making the minors seen as inferior to the Swedish norms related to their nationality. The stigmatization of unaccompanied minors does not only determine people’s attitudes towards the group but can also have negative consequences in the sense of denying the group access to required resources, restraining the possibilities for this group in the Swedish society (Stretmo 2014). Thus, when unaccompanied minors are depicted as manipulative, opportunistic, immoral and dangerous, antipathy and hostility are likely to be evoked, resulting in lack of support for policies and programs designed to improve their circumstances (M. Esses, Veenvilet, Hodson & Mihic 2008).
7. Conclusion

This study aimed to provide a deeper understanding of the constructions of unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan in Swedish media through answering the research question: How are unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan constructed in Aftonbladet and Expressen? This aim has been reached through conducting a critical discourse analysis of eight articles from Aftonbladet and Expressen by using the conceptual framework of discourse, news media and the process of othering. Guided by Fairclough’s three dimensional model this study has explored how the unaccompanied minors are constructed textually, what the underlying discursive practices of those constructions are, what wider sociocultural practices the constructions are part of and the potential effect of those. In the final chapter of this thesis the results from the analysis are summarized into general conclusions and the main research questions of this thesis are answered. Lastly, I reflect upon what this study has contributed with to Peace and Conflict Studies and made suggestions for further research.

7.1 Concluding Remarks

The analysis of the empirical material shows that media constructions of unaccompanied minors can be categorized into three recurring themes: unaccompanied minors as suspects, unaccompanied minors as perpetrators and the creation of “Us” and “Them”. In regard to the first theme the unaccompanied minors are constructed as a group of people whose grounds for asylum are being questioned, they are framed as being dishonest, having lied about their age in order to gain residence permits in Sweden. This contributes to the discourse of migrants as being strategic and immoral individuals who are falsely claiming refugee status in order to gain entry into desirable host nations (M. Esses, Veenvilet, Hodson & Mihic 2008). In regard to the second theme unaccompanied minors are framed as a group of people creating disorder and insecurity in the Swedish society through connecting them to criminal activities such as robberies and drug abuse. This contributes to the discourse of migrants as being both violent and dangerous, posing a threat to the safety and security in their host countries (Bhatia 2015). The last theme refers to the polarization between “Us”, the Swedish citizens, and “Them”, the unaccompanied minors, who are described as not having the same rights as
“Us”. This contributes to the discourse on migrants as being different and deviant. Consequently, when the group is presented in the analyzed articles, it is framed as either economic, cultural, or criminal threats hence covered in a highly unfavorable way. Moreover, since the knowledge about the group is given by journalists, politicians and officials, who have a high position in the power structures of society, the information being produced can come to be regarded as facts or truths about the unaccompanied minors. This can in turn can have great influence to the creation of the reader’s understanding of the group. Hence, by portraying unaccompanied minors as suspects and perpetrators can evoke the understanding of unaccompanied minors in general, such that the group may be perceived as less than human and thus not worth of fair treatment which in turn may not only result in hostility, but also in unfavorable attitudes toward the group and toward current policies related to migrants and immigration in general.

In sum, the analysis has shown that the results of this CDA are similar to the findings of previous research on media depictions of migrants. The creation of stereotypes, framing the unaccompanied minors as the Other and the polarization between “Us” and “Them” are similar to the research done by e.g. Cheregi 2012; Schemer 2012; Bhatia 2015. The analysis has also shown that the results of this study correspond to Brune’s (1998) research on media portrayals of migrants as a threat to Sweden which is quite surprising since her research was done about two decades ago. Hence, this study is similar to Brune’s in the way it identifies unaccompanied minors as a threat to Swedish authorities and society. Such portrayal can justify xenophobic actions which in the case of unaccompanied minors can refer to the age assessments or the many deportations to Afghanistan. This study has shown that the media productions in focus in this study are produced through and reproduce the hegemonic discourse of unaccompanied minors as the Other. This study has thus contributed to the knowledge gap in the portrayal of unaccompanied minors in the Swedish media and to the consideration of the impact such negative portrayal can have on media users understanding and perception of the group. Through investigating how this vulnerable group is framed in the selected articles this study promotes alternative aspects on how unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan should be understood and treated, highlighting both the structural violence and the exclusion in reference to the group.
7.2 Suggestions for Further Research

As this is a qualitative study with limited resources, much more can and should be done on the topic concerning media’s constructions of vulnerable groups in society, such as the unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan. The media plays a key role in reflecting and reproducing harmful constructions and if they are not addressed, discursive practices will maintain an asymmetrical power relation and limit possible change in how we understand and act towards the group. Moreover, this study is based on material that is two years old and refers to the time where Sweden still received a lot of asylum-seekers, in comparison to today. Hence, it would be interesting to conduct a new study if unaccompanied minors from Afghanistan still are portrayed in negative terms or if the discourse is changing. The future challenge becomes to further question the underlying assumptions about the group and work towards a more nuanced understanding of the issues concerning unaccompanied minors in order to create policies that support rather than restrain their possibilities in Sweden and other host countries. To create awareness of structural violence in regards to vulnerable groups in society, such as the unaccompanied minors, becomes increasingly important for the future well-being and protection of asylum-seekers in Sweden.
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Appendix I

In order to analyze the material in the textual dimension, I follow Fairclough’s (2001:92-93) questions relevant for this study:

Vocabulary:
• What expressive values do words have?
• What metaphors are used?

Grammar:
• What experiential values do grammatical features have?
• Are sentences positive or negative?
• What relational values do grammatical features have?
• How is modality and transitivity used?
• Are the pronouns we and you used, and if so, how?
• What expressive values do grammatical features have?