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From vulnerable to criminal

A discourse analysis of unaccompanied children

in Swedish newspaper editorials 2015/2016

by

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Abstract

This master's thesis in gender studies seeks to critically analyze and problematize the general discourse on so called unaccompanied children in the Swedish context, as it was represented in newspaper editorials during six months between the years 2015 and 2016. The epistemological standpoint of the thesis is a social constructionist one, in which reality is created and recreated in language and discourse. This standpoint is combined with a theoretical framework of theories on different kinds of Othering and the method of Foucauldian discourse analysis in order to reach the aim. The aim of the thesis is to show how processes of power/knowledge in discourse (re)produce knowledge and assumptions that are laden with stereotypical preconceptions about the Other. The interaction of assumptions about power structures such as race, gender and age leads to the representation and understanding of unaccompanied children as in every way other to the nation state Sweden and the Swedish population, and as in essence a problem that requires measures of institutionalized control. The thesis find that the othering within discourse additionally form very limited subject positions for unaccompanied children. Not only do the findings of the thesis show that unaccompanied children are not recognized as children, they are predominantly represented to be and understood as culturally other men (rather than boys) and as a threat to the imagined community that is the nation state Sweden.

Keywords: othering, the other, unaccompanied children, discourse analysis, discourse, age, childhood, Foucault, power/knowledge

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1. Introduction

The number of people who have had to go through forced displacement globally reached new records during 2015. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) reported that more people are in flight now than at any other time since the founding of the organization in 1950.[1] The reasons for this situation are many and complex; armed conflicts, persecutions and human rights violations in several places all around the globe force people to leave their homes. Of the total number of people in flight, a relatively small percentage has arrived in Sweden.[2] Still, the numbers of asylum applications registered in Sweden reached an all-time high in 2015, with a 100 percent increase in applications compared to 2014.[3] The majority of the asylum applicants arrived in Sweden during the autumn, in September, October and November of this year.[4] Consequently, international migration – and particularly migration to Sweden – became the subject of intensive debates and a strong focus of the political discourse in Sweden during 2015 and onwards.

1.1 Background

Narratives about Sweden and its historical relation to asylum applicants and asylum applicant reception were retold in the public sphere also before 2015. These narratives were aimed at reproducing the image of Sweden as a country that stands for, and historically has stood for, solidarity with asylum applicants. They were rearticulated in politically important speeches in various arenas. In the autumn of 2014, the former Prime Minister Mr. Fredrik Reinfeldt of the Moderate Party (*Moderaterna*) called on the Swedes to "open their hearts" for asylum applicants, and show that "we" [the nation and population of Sweden][5] "have done this

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[1] UNHCR (2017) *UNHCR Statistics – The world in numbers*. 2017, available at:
http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/overview#_ga=1.68675793.1380221731.1485948900
[2] There are numerous ways in which one could categorize or name the millions of people who have to flee their homes. I will henceforth use the term "asylum applicants", even though it is not the most popularly used. See further discussions about the choice of terms below in Delimitations in the research process.
[3] Migrationsverket (2017) *Statistik. Antal asylsökande – aktuell statistik*, available at:
https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Statistik.html
[4] Migrationsverket (2016) *Inkomna ansökningar om asyl, 2015*, available at:
http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.7c00d8e6143101d166d1aab/1485556214938/Inkomna+ans%C3%B6kningar+om+asyl+2015+-+Applications+for+asylum+received+2015.pdf
[5] My clarification

before" by referring to previous times when Sweden had accepted large numbers of asylum applicants.[6]

A year later, in September of 2015, the succeeding Prime Minister Mr. Stefan Löfven of the Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokraterna*) followed in Mr. Reinfeldt's rhetorical tracks in a speech at a citizen-initiated manifestation for the human rights of asylum applicants and the need to continue to receive the asylum applicants that arrived in Sweden. Mr. Löfven stated that "my [his][7] Europe does not build walls", underlining that Sweden should be proud of its ongoing solidarity and acceptance of asylum applicants.[8] However, the building of actual walls throughout Europe turned out to be quite efficient as many EU member states gradually closed their borders to ensure that no more asylum applicants could enter their territories. Meanwhile, the Swedish state was confronted with serious problems when it came to organizing the reception of the asylum applicants. Civil society (both individuals and organizations) was the first to organize new ways to deal with the new situation, and several initiatives and new organizations, like the politically and religiously independent organization *Refugees Welcome,[9]* were established. These organizations started to assume responsibilities that in both legal and organizational sense should be taken care of by public sector - the government, regions and/or municipalities.[10]

1.2 Solidarity reconsidered in politics and media

Only two months after Mr. Löfven's speech on solidarity, the tables turned in relation to asylum applicants. In a press conference on 24 November 2015, Mr. Löfven stated that Sweden needed a "respite"[11] from the stress brought on by the continuing arrival of asylum applicants. The "respite" included a number of policy changes with practical consequences for all asylum applicants, such as the introduction of temporary residence permits for every asylum applicant except for quotas such, suspension of the right to family reunification, and

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[6] Rosén (2014) "Reinfeldt: Öppna era hjärtan för de utsatta", *Dagens Nyheter*. 16 August 2014, available at: http://www.dn.se/valet-2014/reinfeldt-oppna-era-hjartan-for-de-utsatta/ (my translation)
[7] My comment
[8] Bolling and Svahn (2015) "Löfven: Mitt Europa bygger inte murar", *Dagens Nyheter*. 6 September 2015, available at: http://www.dn.se/sthlm/lofven-mitt-europa-bygger-inte-murar/
[9] https://refugees-welcome.se/
[10] Eriksson (2015) "Frivilliga tar tungt ansvar för flyktinghjälp", SVT.se. 2015-10-18, available at: http://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/frivilliga-tar-tungt-ansvar-for-flyktinghjalp
[11] In Swedish: "Andrum"

medical age assessments of young asylum applicants, just to mention a few.[12] These political and legal changes increased the level of insecurity for asylum applicants, and especially for unaccompanied children who had applied for asylum.[13]

About five percent of the 162,000 persons who applied for asylum in Sweden in 2015 were so-called unaccompanied children – a total of 35,000.[14] According to UNHCR, the definition of unaccompanied children is as follows:

> An unaccompanied child is a person who is under the age of eighteen years, unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier and who is "separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.[15]

The definition of the Swedish Alien Act that governs asylum applications[16] follows the definition above and stipulates that there are special regulations for the reception of children under 18 years, who at the arrival in Sweden are separated from both parents, or from another adult who is found to have assumed the role of a parent, or who after the arrival do not have a legal guardian (i.e. unaccompanied children). The regulations are applicable only as long as the underage child is to be perceived as unaccompanied.[17]

One of the special regulations that follows from the Alien Act referred concerns the distribution of responsibility within and between different political spheres. Since 2006, the municipalities are responsible for the all administration of accommodation and care for unaccompanied children, as distinct from the case of adults, or of children who arrive with an adult.[18]

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[12] Holm and Svensson, (2015) "Regeringen utökade id-kontroller vid gränsen", SVT.se. 24 December 2015, available at: http://www.svt.se/nyheter/inrikes/regeringen-utokade-id-kontroller-vid-gransen

[13] Länsstyrelsen Stockholm. *Rapport 2016:25* (page 11)

[14] Migrationsverket (2016) *Inkomna ansökningar om asyl, 2015,* available at: https://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.7c00d8e6143101d166d1aab/1485556214938/Inkomna+ans%C3%B6kningar+om+asyl+2015+-+Applications+for+asylum+received+2015.pdf

[15] UNHCR (1997) *Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum*, p. 5, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf%20

[16] Utlänningslag (2005:716) 2017, available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/utlanningslag-2005716_sfs-2005-716

[17] Lag (1994:137) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl., (*Act on reception of asylum applicants and others*) 2017, section 1, available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-1994137-om-mottagande-av-asylsokande-mfl_sfs-1994-137

[18] Lag (1994:137) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl. (*Act on reception of asylum applicants and others*), section 2, (Others who apply for asylum are placed in special accommodation centres, administered by the Swedish Migration Agency, Migrationsverket).

Which municipalities that should assume the responsibility for recently arrived unaccompanied children, and how and where they were supposed to be accommodated within the municipalities became a subject of lively debates, clearly influenced by Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY)-attitudes.[19] These attitudes came to be materialized in the burning down of several specially assigned accommodation centers or properties that were planned to become such accommodation centers, both for unaccompanied children and for other asylum applicants.[20] The violent acts were covered by the media and discussed by both politicians and private individuals. In focus of the attention was the "refugee crisis", which did not mainly (or at all) refer to the dire situation of the asylum applicants, but rather to the crisis that the arrival of a large number of asylum applicants during a short period had led to for the state of Sweden.[21] To talk about and thereby construct asylum applicants as an inherently Other group has a long history in Sweden. A basic assumption of this thesis is that these othering processes continue, and especially so in the case of unaccompanied children. Another assumption is that othering processes of power are relevant to address and focus on in academic research, as a means and method to avoid the further reproduction of them.

As mentioned above, the unaccompanied children represented a small part of the total number of asylum applicants in Sweden in 2015. Nevertheless, this group came to be at the center of a lot of attention. They came to be viewed, discussed and understood in very specific ways. From a social constructionist point of departure, the speech about and the framing of events are what makes them intelligible. Nothing simply "happens" in society. Rather, events are constructed and understood in specific ways due to different power structures. According to the social constructionist point of view, which is the epistemological standpoint of this thesis, knowledge is something that requires a process of production. Knowledge can never just "be". In such times as these, I find it to be of utter importance to emphasize this standpoint. The media's representations of discourse are also part of the production of discourse, and hence also of the production of knowledge. It is thus important to critically investigate this, preferably within the frames of a discourse analysis

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[19] This was shown by Miriam Reuterstrand (2016) in her master's thesis (magisteruppsats): *RASRISKEN Nimby-reaktioner och bilder av ensamkommande flyktingbarn i Göteborgs stads information om temporära flyktingbostäder, februari - mars 2016*. University of Gothenburg.

[20] Lund (2015) "43 bränder – men få gripna för attackerna", *Dagens Nyheter*. 25 December 2015, available at: http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/43-brander-men-fa-gripna-for-attackerna/

[21] Brune (2000:15) showed that this tendency was also the case in the media of the 1980s. The fact that relatively many refugees came to Sweden for a period of time was then referred to as "the refugee invasion".

The media constitutes a central source of information and knowledge, as well as a forum for the debates in society. In Sweden, the media is sometimes unofficially referred to as the third power of the State[22], with the Government and the Parliament representing the first and second powers. This view ties in well with a Foucauldian understanding of power/knowledge, where the producer of knowledge also is a producer of power and vice versa. The media is thus also a producer of power; it produces and sustains certain discourses, forms societal attitudes, produces understandings of certain individuals as representative of a certain group or subject. Like Stuart Hall et.al. state; that which is represented and understood as reality is always based on certain assumptions:

> (the) process of 'making an event intelligible' is a social process – constituted by
> a number of specific journalistic practices, which embody (often only implicitly)
> crucial assumptions about what society is and how it works.[23]

Those crucial and implicit assumptions are defined within discourse. When tracing the discourse on complex matters in academic research, like the discourse on unaccompanied children, a study of the medial representations may shed light on how power is re/produced, sustained and stabilized through concepts of power/knowledge and can thus serve the aim to get a grip of the formation of the given discourse.

1.3 Aim and research questions

The aim of this master's thesis is to explore and analyze how the media as a body of power produces and reflects knowledge and/as social understandings of the group unaccompanied children, and how these children are constructed and represented as a specific group in relation to the wider discourse on the nation state and its legitimate subjects. A second aim is to address *how* this construction is done through othering processes that operate on the basis of certain assumptions about the nation state, gender, race and age that together form a wider discourse. The thesis focuses on the representations of the discourse as it occurred in editorial articles in the daily newspapers *Dagens Nyheter*, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, *Aftonbladet* and *Svenska Dagbladet* during six months; September, October, November and December 2015, and January and February 2016. The specific time frame is chosen because it is my experience that the discourse in focus intensified during this time.

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[22] In English, the media is commonly referred to as the Fourth Estate, as the judicial system is referred to as the third.
[23] Hall et.al (1978: 55)

1.3.1 Questions set forth in this thesis

o What assumptions and knowledges construct the general discourse on unaccompanied children as represented in newspaper editorials?

o How is this knowledge and assumptions related to other assumptions about the nation state, gender, race and age?

o How and in what way(s) do the discourse Other unaccompanied children?

o Which subject positions are made available to unaccompanied children within the discourse?

1.3.2 Delimitations and choices in the research process

In all research the choices of material, method and theories have great impact on the outcome of a specific study. My objective is to enable the reader to "follow my tracks" in the processes of designing the study, collecting with data and analyzing them. In order to be able for the reader to "follow my tracks" I have aimed at presenting clear and visible account of the choices I have made, to make them graspable and easy to understand.

As mentioned already in the introduction, my epistemological standpoint stems from social constructionism, in the sense that I find it of utter importance to be aware of and analyze how we talk about and name persons, things and events. I believe that we create our reality in language, and I believe that language in turn structures our reality into discourses. This position is my own, and also the foundation of my study and the reason why I wanted to conduct it in the first place.

With that being said, the very first step in the process was to narrow down the subject of analysis. In this thesis, I am interested in the processes that render certain constructions of the category in question, but not the category itself. In this case, this means that even though I am very interested in the actual situation and well-being of the unaccompanied children in Sweden, and also deeply worried about the violations of their human rights, this is not the focus of the thesis. To speak clearly: I will not study the persons who are categorized as belonging to the group unaccompanied children, but rather the power processes that enable the production of certain knowledge and the mutual expulsion of other kinds of knowledges, that in turn enables certain discursive constructions of this group.

1.3.3 Choosing terms – risking unwanted reproduction

The focal point of this thesis involves unaccompanied children who at some point have migrated to Sweden. However, I do not actually want to focus on the 'group', since such a focus would be part of the very issue I aim to problematize (limited subjectification, othering and stereotypical preconceptions). If and how I address the group may be to derail from the focus of the study since I am immediately exposed to a research problem inherent in discourse analysis. My aim is to critically analyze the terms and language the media uses in its discourse. Many of the terms used to describe unaccompanied children presuppose certain experiences, levels of dependence, and/or engage in inevitable preconceptions of victimhood. I would therefore like to address the difficulties I have had with naming the group in order to be able to write this thesis. With all this being said; how we speak about things and name them matter. Even though I am more engaged with how the media uses these terms in their discourse, I am at the same time aware of that the usage of the names and labels that are established within the discourse to a certain degree risks the reproduction of assumptions that I am so critical of. The terms that are used to address this category in international immigration policies vary. They are called "unaccompanied children"[24], "refugee and child migrants traveling alone"[25] or "unaccompanied or separated child migrants"[26]. In a Swedish context, the category is also named different things, the most common however being "unaccompanied refugee children"[27]. While none of the terms available felt perfect, after a number of turns, I however chose to simply call the category "unaccompanied children". I chose it because I wanted it to be a term that is still recognizable to the reader, and because I think that the term to the degree it is possible can be said to describe what the group actually have in common; they are children, and they are not accompanied by any legal guardian. The term "children" additionally points to something I think risks go missing when the term "minors" is used; that children are bearers of special and extended human rights. Further, there are also numerous terms one could use in order to categorize or name the millions of people who migrate. In this

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[24] UNHCR (1997) *Guidelines on Policies and Procedures in dealing with Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum*, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d4f91cf4/guidelines-policies-procedures-dealing-unaccompanied-children-seeking-asylum.html

[25] UNICEF (2017) Five-*fold increase in number of refugee and migrant children traveling alone since 2010 – UNICEF*. 2017, available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/media_95997.html

[26] European Parliament.(2016) *Vulnerability of unaccompanied and separated child migrant,* available at: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2016/595853/EPRS_BRI(2016)595853_EN.pdf

[27] In Swedish: "Ensamkommande flyktingbarn"

thesis, I will henceforth use the term "asylum applicants", instead of for example "refugees" or "migrants". I think that the term "asylum applicants" is a word less charged with specific understandings about the specific position, and also that it allows for more agency to the subject that holds the positions of "asylum applicant", than does the terms "refugee" or "migrant". I do not want to postulate the essentialization of the constructed categories "refugees" or "migrants". When other terms than the ones I have here declared are used to name the categories unaccompanied children or asylum applicants in the thesis, it is because it serves a certain point or because it is part of a citation.

1.4 My role as a researcher – views from somewhere in particular

I define myself as a feminist and anti-racist researcher with the aim to step away from the "traditional" way of doing and thinking of research, which was so well problematized by Donna Haraway.[28] Haraway described the traditional approach to research as when the assumptions, preconceptions and position of the researcher are not given any relevance. In fact, the researcher is thought of as invisible and without impact on the analyses of data. The ignorance of the role of the researcher is what enables the regrettable 'god trick', through which the researcher make claims as an all-seeing yet invisible expert. This mode of conduct reproduces the delusion that the choice of theory or material would 'speak for itself', and not through the researcher. Moreover, it presupposes that it would as a researcher be possible to place oneself outside of the act of producing knowledge. What is ignored in such an approach to research is that subjectivity and power are always present and active when knowledge is produced, as well as the fact that knowledge is something that requires production, rather than something that exists out there waiting to be discovered.

Haraway's critique towards the traditional approach to research is further strengthened when combined with Michel Foucault's argument for the necessity to understand the historicity of discourse in research. Foucault meant that things/statements can mean something and be thought of as true only within a specific historical context, and that the context therefore needs to be addressed.[29]

Informed by Haraway's and Foucault's approach to the process of knowledge production, I want to recognize the fact that I am writing this thesis within a specific time-period, and that

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[28] Haraway (1988)
[29] Hall (2013: 46)

this will enable me to notice certain things, while also place others outside of my reach. Additionally, as a researcher and human being, I make assumptions, have preconceptions and a specific position, which enable me to see certain things, but make others outside of my reach. Given that I am interested in the workings of power and its relation to the production of knowledge, it would be deeply problematic if I had omitted to take responsibility for why and what I have chosen to do, analyze and write. What is presented in this thesis – the arguments and conclusions – are unquestionably stemming from my own point of view. I am transparent of the fact that this study is grounded in my inherently critical view of the othering processes that limit subjectification, and reproduce and normalize hegemonic xenophobic rhetoric. Had another researcher without these or other ground assumptions performed this study, the result would have been another. However, this is both the beauty and complexity of conducting research within the social sciences. I do not see it as a contradictory that I at the same time are intent to follow good research practice, and make claims of producing situated knowledge.

Like Haraway says:

> The only way to find a larger vision is *to be somewhere in particular.* The science question in feminism is about objectivity as positioned rationality. Its images are not the products of escape and transcendence of limits (the view from above) but the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions – of views from somewhere.[30]

It is my ambition to be guided by the citation above in the process of researching and writing this thesis. I will not – and am indeed not able – to produce anything objective, but something positioned and therefore rational. My subject position entails a specific view and specific experiences, which definitely comes from somewhere in particular, at the same time as it also will enable me to see larger.

Moreover, I find it appropriate to mention that I beside my academic studies work part-time as a research assistant in a qualitative study together with a group of unaccompanied children. The specific aim of that study is to lift up their experiences of and stories about the asylum process in Sweden. Another key aim is to transcend the notion of unaccompanied children as objects of knowledge, and instead actively engage them as producers of knowledge in the study. My work includes structured interviews and/or unstructured assorts with around a

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[30] Haraway (1988: 590) (my italics)

dozen children, who have migrated to Sweden on their own. My practical and professional involvement in this project has also resulted in an emotional one, where the latter has increased steadily with time. I have come to care about the children I work with, and I believe that a consequence of this attachment is that I also have become extra observant of the medial representations of unaccompanied children. Thus, I had noted prior to the work with this thesis that the media's reports were characterized with what in my opinion are simplifying, homogenizing and depersonalizing representations of the heterogeneous group that can be described as unaccompanied children.[31] My work is a contributing factor to why I decided to look further into this phenomenon in my master's thesis. I wanted to get a chance to analyze the constructions and the discourse on unaccompanied children that I observed, to see if I might find something new and what that might be.

1.5 Material

Since I am limited in scope to fit the time frame of the master's thesis, I had to define which phase of the discourse I wanted to explore further. I have chosen a specific time-frame of a total of six months to delimit the empirical material on which the analysis will build. The choice is based on the political events described in the introduction. The fact that the majority of the asylum applicants in Sweden arrived during the autumn of 2015, lead me to conclude that the issue was well covered by the media during the time. Likewise, the rapid political changes in relation to migration and the necessity of legal changes in the department that was presented by the Government in November 2015 (the latter did not enter into force until 1 January 2016) gave the questions special attention in the media. The empirical material consequently covers six months, starting with 1 September 2015, ending with 28 February 2016. Since the assumption is that the discourse in focus intensified during the given time, I think that it is an important phase to study. If I have had more time, I would be interested in studying also the changes of the discourse over a longer period of time.

I have also chosen to exclusively focus on editorial articles in newspapers as the empirical material. Within journalism, the editorials are traditionally rendered a high-status position, and are considered to have great importance for the public political speech.[32] It is my hope

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[31] Brune (2006:93) refers to writings in which Kristina Boréus analyzes discursive discrimination where the (categorized) people are dealt with like objects, in ways that is not the case for those who take up the subject positions of the discourse. The text Brune refers to is however not published.
[32] Brune (2006:103)

that the specific status of the editorials are able to visualize the workings of knowledge production within the discourse. In the process of finding the appropriate empirical material, I used the search engine *Retriever*, which is the most comprehensive archive of Nordic press.[33] I concentrated the search on the Swedish words "ensamkommande"[34], and "flyktingbarn"[35], since those terms are most common to describe unaccompanied children within the Swedish context.

As mentioned above, the debate on migration and unaccompanied children was the focus of attention during the months in question. Consequently, my searches generated a huge number of articles of different kinds, such as columns (*krönikor*) and opinion pieces (*debattartiklar*) that in one way or the other were related to the words I had searched for. It was therefore necessary to limit my material further, which is how I decided to select only the editorials that were generated by the searches. After some rounds of reading and rereading the material, I further narrowed down the scope of material to editorials that clearly and directly spoke about the group unaccompanied children, and excluded articles that dealt with e.g. specially assigned accommodation centers for unaccompanied children or the conditions of the different professions that work with unaccompanied refugee children. The final selection consists of 23 editorials from the daily newspapers *Dagens Nyheter*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, *Sydsvenska Dagbladet* and *Aftonbladet*.

1.6 Previous studies on unaccompanied children, language, media and othering

As an introduction and background to the issues I will inquire into in my master's thesis, my aim for this section is to frame and illustrate the wider fields of research to which this thesis will become a contribution. The frames of the research field are drawn by myself and the studies I present below discuss subjects that in different are ways relevant for my thesis and its research questions. The research field is multidisciplinary and includes historical studies, sociological studies, critical media studies and linguistics studies. It can therefore be worth noting that I have not found any studies on the subject from my own discipline – gender studies. Within the field of research, three "tracks" of research can be found. The first concerns unaccompanied children as a category or group, the second treats the role of language in the construction of the nation and the Other, and the third focuses on the media

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[33] Mediearkivet. (2017) http://www.ub.gu.se/sok/db/show.xml?id=9607518
[34] In English: "Unaccompanied"
[35] In English: "Refugee Children"

and its role in the processes of constructing the Other. These three tracks together make up the field in which I situate myself and my master's thesis. They all have in common that they critically analyze and problematize othering processes.

1.6.1 Track 1 – studies on unaccompanied children as a category or group

As I declared above, I do not focus on the group unaccompanied children itself, but rather the general discourse and construction of the group as represented in newspaper editorials. However, I still find it appropriate and interesting to look further into some examples of the (mostly) sociological research on this group. The research within this track discusses the lives and experiences of unaccompanied children, as well as the representations and constructions of them as a group in different discourses.

In a literature review, Ulrika Wernesjö[36] summarizes the sociological studies on the topic of unaccompanied children. In the presentation of her findings, Wernesjö states that studies on or about unaccompanied children still are limited in number, and that the existing body of research focuses first and foremost on unaccompanied children's emotional well-being. She also notes that the research on unaccompanied children often positions against the perception of what a "normal" childhood is, with the result that unaccompanied children often are represented and understood to be a particularly vulnerable group of children and asylum applicants. This also constructs them as a group that is also in particular need of assistance and care. Wernesjö further addresses a severe lack of research that pays attention to the structural conditions and processes of power, racism and social exclusion in the host country – and how these factors affect the well-being and life situations of unaccompanied children. Studies with the aim to understand the position of the unaccompanied child instead predominantly focuses on themes such as loss, separation and trauma as explanatory factors. Wernesjö suggests that this tendency within research requires a cautionary note, and argues that consensual perceptions of unaccompanied children in relation to such themes run the risk of othering the unaccompanied children by constructing them as a deviant group. This othering includes the pathologization that follows with the construction of unaccompanied children as a group that compared to other children run greater risks to develop emotional problems and psychiatric diagnoses.

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[36] Wernesjö (2012) "Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children: Whose perspective?" in *Childhood* (19:4)

The particular focuses that are recurrent within the research about unaccompanied children that Wernesjö describes is confirmed by Åsa Backlund et.al.[37] In an interview-based report on unaccompanied children's perceptions of coming to a new country, Backlund et.al. look especially to the relationships between unaccompanied children and the municipal social services. The results show that social workers to a high degree perceive the unaccompanied children as entirely different from the rest of the children they work with, and understand them as Other children. Backlund et.al. also notes that the interest for more structured follow-ups on unaccompanied children who have arrived in Sweden during the last decades, and their experiences, is virtually absent within Swedish governmental reports and other research. This despite the fact that the numbers of unaccompanied children who migrate to Sweden has increased steadily over the decades. A consequence of the lacking documentation in research or governmental reports is that unaccompanied children in the Swedish context still are being discussed in relation to and in comparison, with the Finnish War children. Even though this group of children came to Sweden during the 1940s (over 70 years ago), they are still mentioned as the examples of this group of children.

Charlotte Melander & Live Stretmo,[38] also studies the relationships between unaccompanied children and the municipal services. In an interview-based report on the experiences of unaccompanied children and the professionals who work with them focuses especially on the positions of unaccompanied children within the Swedish school system. Similar to the results of Backlund et.al:s study, Melander & Stretmo's findings show that unaccompanied children often are constructed as a special or different group of pupils, with an extraordinary motivation to learn. Melander & Stretmo also assert that while studies that represent unaccompanied children as agents have been rare, such studies are today a growing scope of research.[39]

Live Stretmo's own doctoral thesis is a contribution to that scope of research.[40] Stretmo analyzes the media and policy discourse on unaccompanied children and thoroughly describes how stereotypical ideas and assumptions are produced and reproduced within these. Informed by Foucauldian perspectives, Stretmo analyzes how unaccompanied children have been constructed and governed as a specific group of asylum applicants, both within the media and

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[37] Backlund et.al (2012) *Ensam och flyktingbarn – barnet och socialtjänsten om den första tiden i Sverige*
[38] Melander and Stretmo (2013) *Får jag vara med? Erfarenheter från ensamkommande barn och ungdomar i Göteborgsregionen och arbetet med denna grupp*
[39] Ibid., 26
[40] Stretmo (2014) *Governing the unaccompanied child - media, policy and practice.*

within public policy in Norway and Sweden. The analysis also includes interviews with unaccompanied children on their experiences of being categorized as unaccompanied children. Stretmo's findings are that the discourses on unaccompanied children to a considerable degree is characterized by ambivalent standpoints. The perceptions and preconceptions on unaccompanied children in Sweden and Norway are not coherent, but contradictory in numerous ways. Stretmo concludes that unaccompanied children are constructed as either victims in desperate need of help – and thus as legitimate subjects of care – or as potential so-called strategic migrants, who come to the host country with the aim to take advantage of the welfare system. The idea of a clearly dividing line between the positions 'victim' and 'strategic migrant' is of utter importance for understanding the societal ambivalence towards unaccompanied children.

The ambivalence does not appear to just be a symptom of our time, but rather a constant attitude towards unaccompanied children. This is shown in research by Ketil Eide.[41] From a historical perspective, Eide focuses on Norwegian societal understandings of unaccompanied children, who applied for asylum in Norway in four different cohorts, between the years of 1938 – 1990. According to Eide, ambiguity is the key word to describe the Norwegian societal perceptions of unaccompanied children. The conflict primarily concerns the often times contradictory wish to merge what is the best for the individual child with the migration politics of the state. Eide's findings illustrate that the ambiguity towards and resistance to accept unaccompanied children remained unaltered during the extensive time-period which was the focus of the study. However, the consequences of this ambiguity was expressed in different ways at different times.

1.6.2 Track 2 – studies on discourse and the construction of the nation state and the other

Studies that elaborate on the different aspects of discursive constructions of the nation state of Sweden and its population are also of relevance when positioning this thesis within a wider field of research. The concept of the nation state presupposes that there exists someone else outside of the nation state – the others.

Christina Johansson's research studies the formations of discourses on migration politics in Sweden from a historical perspective, focusing on the latter half of the twentieth century.[42] Johansson's study shows how the nation state ideology with a (supposedly) ethnically

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[41] Eide (2005) *Tvetydige barn. Om barnemigranter i ett historisk komparativt perspektiv.*
[42] Johansson (2005) *Välkomna till Sverige? Svenska migrationspolitiska diskurser under 1900-talets andra hälft.*

homogenous population is manifested in discourses of migration politics, and that this manifestation has intensified from the 1960s and onward. Johansson identifies and discusses a number of turning points in Swedish migration politics, and how these turning points are all engaged in the reproduction of different aspects of the nation state ideal. The discourses of Swedish migration politics contribute to the view of Sweden as a welfare state and as an ethnically homogeneous society. Johansson also discusses the material effects of the ideology of the Swedish nation state by looking at how groups connected with Islam in 'the West' are constructed as inherently different and in contrast with what the 'West' is supposed to be. This Othering generates the discrimination of groups connected with Islam and the simultaneous singling out of them as being especially difficult to integrate.

The reproduction of the nation state and the ideal of the ethnically homogenous population, presupposes the construction of the ethnical other as a threat to the nation state and its population. These constructions are also manifested in language. A study by Karin Hagren Idevall, a scholar of linguistics, shows how racism is reproduced in interaction in public debates on immigration, integration and asylum policies.[43] Hagren Idevall understands language as practices that compose and makes sense of our social world and everything that we perceive in it. The study describes the linguistic reproduction of racist discrimination and privileging in interaction, the role of language in various public arenas, and the norms and condition that enables participation in these arenas. Hagren Idevall's findings are that racism should be understood as something more than an abstract structure (that may have material effects). It can also be defined as practices, something that can be accomplished through specific acts in interaction. Through the racist acts, the reproduction of hierarchically structured differences and prejudiced stereotypes are performed and challenged in language. The media combined with speech acts set up the norms and conditions for participation in debates, which results in discursive processes that reproduce the relations and structures of power.

1.6.3 Track 3 – studies on media and its constituting role in the construction of the Other

The field of media studies also includes critical studies of the role of language within the media. This is a field within which the journalist Ylva Brune has made many contributions by her investigations of the medial constructions of immigrants and asylum applicants. In

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[43] Hagren Idevall (2016) *Språk och rasism: Privilegiering och diskriminering i offentlig, medierad interaktion.*

Nyheter från gränsen […][44], (News from the border […], the word *gräns* (border) has a twofold meaning; it refers to the actual border of the nation state Sweden, but also to the constructed border in Sweden – between the categories 'Swedes' and "immigrants". According to Brune, this border is primarily constructed in the press. In her study, Brune compares different medial material focusing on the alleged link between migration politics, refugees and crimes that were performed by refugees or immigrants in 1976 and 1993 respectively. The comparison of the two years clearly visualizes the stability of the othering discourse on migration and refugees. The results of the study show that news texts about asylum applicants and migration politics constructed asylum applicants as a threat – a security problem for the nation state Sweden – both years studied. The subjectivity of the people categorized as asylum applicants was consistently excluded, and terms like "flow of refugees"[45] were used recurrently, thus constructing human beings as a threatening natural disaster.

Brune's study also illustrates the reproduction of racial stereotypes within the media, such as the 'immigrant man' and the "immigrant woman". The latter is understood to be a suppressed victim in a position of immediate dependence to the 'immigrant man'. The "immigrant man" is by contrast constructed to be characterized by constant ambivalence between older patriarchal values, associated with his "original culture", and the new life and values of Sweden. The ambivalence experienced by the "immigrant man" is represented to be materialized in the "immigrant man's" despise of, but also abuse of "Swedish" girls.

Birgitta Löwander is another contributor to the research track on how media invokes and reproduces racist discourse.[46]Löwander states that the Swedish news media has a number of self-imposed and assigned objectives that may be contrarious at times, and become especially complex when dealing with the issue of racism. On the one hand, journalists in public service have the explicit responsibility to counteract racism and promote pluralism and democratic values. On the other, Löwander claims that they have the objective to direct attention to so-called national interests, and to strengthen the national identity of the population. The latter often entails a reproduction of suspicion towards the Other. Further, Löwander addresses how a static perception of culture has rendered the status of hegemony in the public sphere. This

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[44] Brune (2004) *Tre studier i journalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasistiskt våld*
[45] In Swedish: "Flyktingström"
[46] Löwander (2001: 90 - 91) "Rasism i verkligheten och i nyheterna" in Brune, Ylva (ed.) (2001) *Mörk Magi i vita medier – Svensk nyhetsjournalistik om invandrare, flyktingar och rasism.*

directly affects the construction of the group "immigrants". The "immigrants" are represented as the primary ingredient in certain conflicts, especially in relation to criminality. This enables the construction of "immigrants" as criminals – the enemy within society. Such representations have enabled conclusions like "no immigrants = no problems" to reach a status of almost common sense in Sweden. Löwander also lifts that the image of the "immigrant" as criminal however not is the only disputing one. In the 1990s when the news media first started to report on racism and its related violence, the group "immigrants" may have been more positive described than is the case today, but the group was never included in the presumed 'we' – the nation state of Sweden. Instead, "immigrants" were primarily constructed as victims. While the group was made vulnerable due to the racist violence, the position of the victim also suggested a legal incompetence of "immigrants". This suggestion was strengthened since "immigrants" consistently were left out of the analysis of racism and acts of violence.

As mentioned above, I have identified three tracks of research within the research field I have sketched; the first focusing on unaccompanied children as a group, the second focusing on the role of language in the construction of the nation state and the Other, and the third focusing on the media and its constituting role in the construction of the Other. My ambition is to have a dialogue with all three tracks of research and to combine them when conducting this study on how unaccompanied children are constructed as a group through language in the media, and how these constructions in turn correlate to ideas about the nation and the Other. I am hoping to contribute to the field with a perspective on the subject informed by the discipline of gender studies, and more specifically a perspective on how one aspect of power cannot be studied without the other. Lastly, my ambition is that that this thesis with its aim to grasp the general discourse on unaccompanied children will illustrate the necessity to look into the combination of several power structures, and how they together construct and represent unaccompanied children in very specific ways.

2. Theoretical perspectives: language and the media, discourse and power, knowledge and Othering

In the same way as I defined the three tracks of research that form the field to which I see this thesis as a contribution, I have in the choice of theory combined a number of theoretical perspective as to enable me to analyze my material. While Michel Foucault's extensive views of discourse and power/knowledge to a great degree influences the aim of the thesis, the complimentary theoretical perspectives serve as analytical frameworks to reach the aim through the analysis. The theories I have chosen are social constructionist theory on language and the media, and theories on Othering, which stem from different scholarly perspectives like postcolonial studies, gender studies and critical youth studies. I will first present the chosen theory on language and the media as to further clarify my epistemological standpoints. I will then present the chosen theories on Othering thematically in relation to power structures that in interaction shape the othering processes that the discourse on unaccompanied children reproduces.

2.1 Language and the media

While the question of what language is remains a question well worth lengthy answers, I will not elaborate my point of view further than to subscribe myself to the social constructionist understanding of language: language are the different systems through which we create meaning in our worlds. Michel Foucault once defined language as "(…) a system for possible statements, a finite body of rules that authorizes an infinite number of performances."[47] With this definition follows the understanding that there cannot be any reality prior to language. Rather than seeing language as just systems of descriptions of an already existing reality, reality is understood to be *created* through and in language.[48]

The media composes the most important sign systems of our times[49], comparable to other kinds of languages. To recognize the media as an important form of language and body of power implies also to recognize its way of shaping realities. The media generally operates by addressing a form of a public who are constructed as to be sharing at least temporal interpretational commonalities. These interpretational commonalities are administered through the specific system of language that is the media.

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[47] Foucault: (1972: 27)
[48] Winther Jörgensen and Phillips (2000:15)
[49] Hartley (1996)

One of the ground assumptions of this thesis is that the media is a language system and body of power in its own right: a condition for communication on a societal level, in which discourses are articulated and rearticulated. The representation of discourses in the media therefore needs to be studied critically.

2.2 Discourse and Power/Knowledge

Michel Foucault highly influenced the emergence of new approaches to the creation of meaning in relation to language. In the prominent semiotic approach, focus is upon the production of meaning through language. Foucault's contribution was to redirect interest to the production of knowledge (and thus meaning) through what he called *discourse*.[50] While the concept of discourse terminologically derives from the linguistic disciplines and refers to connected passages of text or speech, discourse is in Foucault's hands not solely about linguistics. Discourse refers to the sum of what is said and understood about something in a certain context and time, but also to the discursive practices and subject positions that follow as a result. Discourse also refers to the *underlying processes of power* that open up for the uttering of some statements, and the dismissal of others.[51] With this being said, discourse shall not be interpreted simply as 'all the things that are said', or 'the ways in which they are said'. Discourse defines also what is *not* said, what is *not* understood to be true, what is consensual, and what is assumed.[52]

To speak about discourse is thus to speak about the many processes that are constituting knowledge and social practices, to the subject positions and power relations that is inherent in such knowledges and to the relations between them. The close relationship to power is very significant for Foucault's conceptualization of discourse and the production of knowledge. Foucault views power not as a force that is transferred from point A to point B, but something that circulate everywhere.[53]Power are the ruling and regulating mechanisms that run like webs through society which at the same time are productive mechanisms. The existence of power is a prerequisite for the production of discourse, knowledge and subject positions. Power forces the subjects to produce knowledge, since power needs knowledge for its own continued legitimization. Power will institutionalize the search for knowledge – it will professionalize it

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[50] Hall (2013: 42)
[51] Foucault (1993)
[52] Foucault (2008: 186)
[53] Ibid., 42

and reward it.[54] Power mechanisms are engaged in the immediate everyday life which categorizes the individuals, and attaches them to their own identities. In and through power, the individuals are formed as subjects.[55]

What is recognized as knowledge is a product of our world and in the Foucauldian sense to be interpreted as a variety of kinds of knowledges.[56] What all knowledge has in common that it exists only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint – power structures that enable certain kinds of truths and practices and represses others.[57] In the citation below, Foucault clarifies the relationship of power/knowledge:

> […] power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.[58]

Discourse, power/knowledge and the formation of subject positions are thus intertwined. Certain knowledges will be available and produced due to certain power relations, and certain power relations will be available due to certain bodies of knowledge. Discourse structures the limits and forms for what we see as 'true' – that which is thinkable, valid and possible to express, but also the untrue, that which is unthinkable, invalid and impossible to express.[59]

2.3 Othering

Othering as a theoretical concept for grasping relations of power and definitions of self, has been used and discussed within various scholarly disciplines, such as psychology, ethical philosophy and postcolonial studies. The verb othering points to the process in which the perception of the Other simultaneously create a perception of a "we". The notion of the Other is positioned as distinctively different in relation to the normality that the implicit or explicit 'we' stand for. A key difference between 'the Other' and the 'we' is the superiority of the latter, which is grounded in the assumed differences between the two. The 'we' view the Other as fundamentally lacking what the 'we' has, but fails to apprehend the complexity in what the other have and is.[60]

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[54] Foucault (2008: 38)
[55] Foucault (1982: 781)
[56] Nola (1998: 115)
[57] Foucault (1980: 131)
[58] Foucault (1979: 27)
[59] Foucault (1991: 61)
[60] Hall (1992)

Othering processes take place repeatedly in society, and are often expressed in the everyday social interaction in the shape of prejudice and stereotypical preconceptions about other persons. The characteristics, actions or problems that the "we" ascribe the Other, are unwished for and alien, and represented and understood to be threating to the "we" and its identity.[61]

The critical literary and theoretical discipline known as postcolonial studies have contributed new perspectives on the notion of othering. Postcolonial studies confront and analyze the function of the Other within a number of dichotomies such as colonial – postcolonial, west – east, and white – colored. One of the starting points for postcolonial studies as a genre was the critical writings of Frantz Fanon. In *Black Skins, White Masks*[62], Fanon asserts that black men are the Other of the white man. Fanon may rightfully be criticized for speaking from a very androcentric perspective. In his arguments, he excludes other experiences of the oppression of people of color, and to the extent he mentions women, it is in rather condescending manners. That aside, his analytical point remains; that people of color are not viewed as real human beings, but are depicted as having no thoughts and no historical presence.

2.3 Orientalism

Edward Said discussed the notion of the Other in relation to colonizing systems of knowledge production. In his groundbreaking *Orientalism*[63], Said follows Fanon while identifying the position of the Other as conceptually essential for the specific dichotomy of us and them, which is what rationalizes colonialism. He also uses Foucault's conceptualization of discourse to illustrate how colonial perspectives of the so-called oriental region through processes of power/knowledge have become recognized as actual knowledge. This position of knowledge have consequently determined the way in which the West represents and understands and hence treats the East. Said's point is that those bodies of knowledge are discursive and othering constructions that in the West have come to be accepted as the truth. Said further opposes by arguing that those bodies of knowledges are in fact *orientalism*: stereotypical fantasies, with little or no relation to the actual cultures they supposedly describe and understand. He analyzes the emergence of orientalism as a field from a historical perspective, and highlights the relevance of analyzing discourse and the production of truths in order to

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[61] Brune (2006:91)
[62] Fanon (1995)
[63] Said (1978)

understand the origins of orientalism. Said asks: "How does one know of 'that which exists' and to what extent is 'that which exists' shaped by the one who knows it?"[64] This question echoes of Foucault's concept of discourse and power/knowledge in that it underlines the through power structurally shaped processes of knowledge production within discourse.

Said defines four fundamental dogmas of Orientalism, which he claims to be reproduced also within contemporary studies about and preconceptions of Middle Eastern cultures and Islam. The first dogma is the construction of the total and systematic difference between the West, which is represented as rational, developed, human and superior, and the Orient, which is represented as deviant, undeveloped and inferior. The second is the preference of abstract and essential images of the Orient; where texts that represent the "classic" oriental civilization, are preferred over actual images stemming from the reality of today. The third is the image of the Orient as eternal, coherent, and without the ability to define itself. The fourth and final dogma is that the Orient in essence is something that should be feared or controlled.[65]

Sara Ahmed draws on Said's discussion when she claims that the creation of "the Orient" as an ontological and epistemological reality first and foremost is an exercise of power. It is because it is subjected to the authority of "the Occident" – the West, that the region becomes oriental. Ahmed argues that Orientalism includes the transformation of "remoteness" from a spatial marker of distance to a characteristic that can be found among people and places.[66]

Unfortunately, Orientalism cannot be rendered a remnant from a colonial past. It is rather the case that the stereotypical fantasy and discursive construction that is orientalism to a great degree still holds the position as a body of knowledge that relates to and define relationships of power and cultural domination. Foucault once said; "it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together."[67] This citation could very well be applied to the practical consequences of the discursive construction that is Orientalism. The Other, here the non-western, is still today often constructed as an object of knowledge, rather than an as a subject in its own right. Homi K. Bhabha[68] addresses this relationship and claims the need to rethink the traditional notion of cultural identity, which he means have informed the processes of decolonization. For Bhabha, the oppositional relationship between previously dominant

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[64] Said (1978: 444)
[65] Ibid., 445
[66] Ahmed (2011: 158)
[67] Foucault (1978: 100)
[68] Bhabha (1994)

cultures and the Other lingers also in the postcolonial setting. The opposition might be understated and somewhat denied, but are still there. Bhabha demands a reconfiguration of this relationship. There needs to be a zone, (Bhabha calls it *the third space*) in which the cultural relationship between former colonizers and nations that were formerly colonized can surpass the historical antagonism between them. The Other should not be perceived as a constant submissive. Therefore, Bhabha argues for an abolishment of the concept of cultural diversity, in favor of a concept of cultural difference- this to in order to have any chance to enter into the third space. Within the concept of cultural diversity, non-western cultures are understood as objects of knowledge, this in contrast to the western cultures, which are constructed as subjects of production of knowledge. The results of this position as the producer of knowledge is that their cultures also remain unnoticed and unproblematized. Consequently persons who in any ways are perceived as to be culturally different, are continuously called into being exclusively in relation to an otherness – they become subjects in its locus, like Bhabha puts it.[69]

2.4 Context and Othering processes intersected

Of the 35,000 unaccompanied children who applied for asylum in Sweden 2015, about 32,000 of them were boys.[70] The majority of them came from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq,[71] places that by the West to a high degree have been understood and represented in accordance with orientalistic preconceptions. Moreover, many of the unaccompanied children in question did not possess identity documents of a type that is recognized by the Swedish state. Consequently, they could not prove their chronological age, (and hence their position as children), which is demanded that the asylum applicant can do.[72] Given the legal changes that took place in relation to migration, to be defined as a child has become one of the few things that may (at least in theory) possibly protect a person from, or at least, postpone deportation. In the case of unaccompanied children, the definition of what a child is, and what it is entitled to, are in some ways renegotiated. A child is still defined as someone who is under the age of 18. For unaccompanied children, their position as children has to a great degree become

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[69] Bhabha (1994: 44)
[70] Migrationsinfo.se (2016) *Ensamkommande barn*, available at:
http://www.migrationsinfo.se/migration/sverige/asylsokande-i-sverige/ensamkommande-barn/#
[71] Migrationsverket (2016) *Inkomna ansökningar om asyl*, 2015, available at:
http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.7c00d8e6143101d166d1aab/1485556214938/Inkomna+ans%C3%
B6kningar+om+asyl+2015+-+Applications+for+asylum+received+2015.pdf
[72] Rättsmedicinalverket (2017) *Medicinska åldersbedömningar i asylärenden*, available at:
https://www.rmv.se/verksamheter/medicinska-aldersbedomningar/medicinska-aldersbedomningar-asylarenden/

questioned and neglected. From this I conclude that the notion of childhood can be more than a product of what Elisabet Näsman[73] calls the societal order of age. Childhood is also tied to assumptions about race and gender in relation to a specific nation state. In the case of unaccompanied children in Sweden, is this intersection of power structures constructing childhood and the child as a position unattainable for certain subjects?

I will look into the multifaceted processes of Othering that open up for certain discursive constructions of the group unaccompanied children and rule out others. In line with what Foucault defined as relevant for discourse analysis, I will pay attention to the specific historical context, while staying true to my objective as a researcher which I mentioned above. I, and this study are somewhere in particular. The assumption is that the discourse on unaccompanied children engages in othering processes that draw from several different norms and power structures. The construction of gender and its specific intersections with age, race and the construction of the nation state is therefore relevant for the coming analysis of the Othering processes that are manifested in the discourse on unaccompanied children. The analysis of the discourse on unaccompanied children would not have been as comprehensive as possible, had I not addressed the inevitable intersections of power structures. I will therefore discuss Othering in relation to the power structures of race, the nation state, gender and age and in the analysis show how these with joined forces place unaccompanied children in a very specific position.

2.4.1 Othering based on assumptions about race

Said's discussion of orientalism and Othering is closely connected to the power structure of race. The usage of the term "race" has been lively debated as a concept within research, and very much so in Sweden.[74] Regardless of what one may think about the term, race is a power structure that undoubtedly affects social interactions and behavior. Language does race in the sense that it is euphemistically codes "ethnic Swede" as equaling "white Swede", and "immigrant" as equaling "nonwhite non-Swede". The construction that is "Swedishness" is thus interfused with assumed whiteness, and whiteness is consequently constructed as the all-encompassing norm that every body within the nation state Sweden is related to.[75] It is

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[73] Näsman (2004)
[74] Hübinette et.al (2012)
[75] Ibid., 29

therefore very relevant to take it into account when looking into how the Other is constructed and understood within a discourse.

The practice of Othering based on assumptions about race is often called racialization. Racialization is a theoretical term that is built on social constructionist ground, where race and ethnicity are seen as social constructions. It refers to the immediate practice of perceiving people in a certain ways based on stereotypes and prejudice about their backgrounds or origin. The term was mentioned early by Fanon[76] in a reasoning about the racialization of the thought, but coined in the way it is commonly used today by Robert Miles, who defined it to be:

> a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically.… The process of racialization of human beings entails the racialization of the processes in which they participate and the structures and institutions that result.[77]

Racialization and its workings is an integral part of the power structure of race. Othering processes based on assumptions about race begins and ends with racialization, and results in very limited subjectification of people who are subjected to racialization.

2.4.2 Othering based on assumptions about the nation state

Othering based on assumptions about race often draw from ideals of the ethnically homogenous nation state. The racially and/or nationally Other is constructed as a threat to *the imagined political community*[78], that Benedict Anderson proposed the nation state to be. Anderson's arguments underline the function of the nation state as a limited entity, as much a reflexive imagining as a positive one, and othering in that it is defined in opposition to other nations, which define what it inherently is. I think that the Othering notion of the imagined community can be extended, and argue that a core aspect of the reproduction of any nation state is its opposition or exclusion of non-members of the imagined community – the others. If the imagined community constitutes the inside of a given nation, then other imagined communities must exist outside that nation. Anderson also addresses the limits of the imagined communities: "even the largest of them... has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond

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[76] Fanon (2001: 171)
[71] Miles (1989: 76)
[78] Anderson (1983)

which lie other nations".[79] The Other is thus ubiquitous for the nation state's possibility as imagined community.

2.4.3 Othering based on assumptions about gender

The ongoing project of feminist postcolonial research has often entailed the adding of a critical racial perspective to feminism, as well as adding a feminist perspective to the studies of colonialism.[80] Within this theoretical tradition, a key standpoint is to view gender as a power structure that is produced through multiple axes of power, and thus as something that must be analyzed and understood in its relation to other power structures. Postcolonial feminist thinkers often emphasize how colonial discourse as well as sexist discourse are maintained by the Universalist claims that Western feminism makes, which shut out women with other experiences and strengthens the construction of non-westerners as the other.[81] This has been addressed by scholars like Sara Ahmed[82] and Chandra T. Mohanty.[83]

In this thesis, the postcolonial feminist understanding of gender is relevant for many reasons. Gender as an ontological category, will necessarily mean different things in different locations. Gender relations and identities are performed and established through many bodily and social practices. Through the repetition of these human become intelligible as gendered subjects, and usually identified according to binary gender systems, which are made up by two separated sexes; the masculine and the feminine. These two positions are thought of as inherently different. Judith Butler[84] is critical of this mode of explanation for a variety of reasons, among these in relation to notions of 'global' feminism, in which the shared identity as "woman" is thought of as enough for a struggle that is one and the same. Butler means that the presupposition of a specificity of the feminine decontextualizes and both politically and analytically separates gender from the constructions of class, race, ethnicity and the other axes of power. This is a mistake since all those categories together are constituting identities, and "make the singular notion of identity a misnomer."[85]The critique of talking about the binary category "women" as if its inherent subjects were one and same is also applicable to the category of "men". The position of a masculine gendered subject is not fixed, but related to

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[79] Ibid., 7
[80] de los Reyes (2011: 21)
[81] Farahani (2007:33)
[82] Ahmed (2011)
[83] Mohanty (2003) *Feminism Without Borders – Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*
[84] Butler (1990)
[85] Ibid., 6

other axes of power. For example, Frantz Fanon discusses how othering processes define black men as primarily sexual beings, defined in relation to their assumed hyper-sexuality.[86]

2.4.4 Othering based on assumptions about age – the child as other

Age has relatively seldom been accounted as a relevant power structure within feminist research on intersecting power structures, or within feminist activism.[87] However, a prominent norm that structure society is the norm of naturalized adulthood. Adulthood is assumed and naturalized to the degree that it is required to be recognized as a sound human being, which generates the position of children as not yet complete human beings. In this sense, age is reproduced to be a "legitimate" power-structure. Children's subordination in society is seen as unproblematic, since children are thought of as "under development", and additionally in need of the protection and care of adults.[88] Elisabet Näsman describes the notion of childhood as a product of the societal order of age. To be a child is to a great degree to be defined by your relationships to others (like adults) and by constructed binaries, such as child – adult or child – parent. Children are constructed as social category based on assumed differences between children and adults, which are marked within different legislations, the sciences and by informal norms. Children are constructed as *future* individuals,[89] as first and foremost "not yet adults", and thus "not yet citizens".[90]

Categorizations based on age are built on stereotypes rather than on individual evaluations and are anchored in the formal as well as the informal sphere. Normative assumptions built on age are common to ascribe individuals with different characteristics, rights, social status and so forth.[91] In general, children lack political and economic power in practice, as well as enjoyment of some civil rights. It could be argued that children *are made* vulnerable due to this lack of power and rights, rather than that they *are* vulnerable simply by their age.[92]

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[86] Fanon (1995: 145)

[87] This was addressed by Shulamith Firestone in the *Dialectics of sex* (1970), where she states that not including children to the feminist revolution would be repeat what men have done to women; to not recognize oppression simply because it did not directly concern them. For a discussion about this in a Swedish context see Krekula, Närvänen & Näsman (2005)
[88] Sundhall (2012)
[89] Näsman (2004: 3)
[90] Moosa-Mitha (2005)
[91] Näsman (2004: 4)
[92] Landsdown (1994)

The tendency to define children through their relationships with others (adults), and as "not yet citizens" in need of protection and special rights also constructs them as Other – as (soon to be) subjects that (until then) need to be governed. The construction of the group children is thus subjected to constant processes of Othering. Children become other to adults due to the norm on naturalized adulthood which constructs the child – adult binary. This is also what produces the meaning of adulthood; to be an adult is to not be a child, and vice versa.

Kenneth B. Nunn[93] argues that there are both positive and negative aspects of the child as Other, and that both demonstrate the typical features of otherness. In the positive conception children are valued, and seen as sweet, kind and vulnerable. In the negative conception children are not valued, and seen as burdens or threats- dependent and costly. The positive aspect of the child as Other can however entail things that in practice are not positive for children as a group. To view children as in essence vulnerable is also often used as arguments for excluding children from actual political and civil power. Nunn claims that there is an obvious link between the othering of the child and the othering based on race in the way children are treated in society. If we want to understand the deeper implications of the societal order of age for specific groups of children, like unaccompanied children, it is important that we add the intersections with other aspects of identities and positions to the analysis of the binary of child – adult. [94]

Maria Eriksson and Elisabet Näsman discuss how preconceptions about children and childhood, the dichotomy of victim - perpetrator, and about boys and girls work together and leave some children with rather narrow possibilities for agency in relation to the Swedish social services.[95] The construction of and following treatment of a victim is dependent on the constructed dichotomy of the positions victim and perpetrator, as two mutually excluding categories that are defined in relation to each other. Within this dichotomy characteristics and/or experiences that are "victim-like" cannot at the same time be "perpetrator-like". Further, Eriksson and Näsman argue that the dichotomy of victim and perpetrator is both gender and age specific. That which is traditionally associated with the position of the victim – such as to be the object of someone else's actions, passivity, dependence and helplessness goes along with well-established constructions of children and childhood, as well as of femininity. In contrast to this, that which is associated with the position of the perpetrator –

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[93] Nunn (2002)
[94] Taft (2007: 223)
[95] Eriksson, Källström Cater & Näsman (2015: 61–76)

such as agency, dominance/control over the situation and violence is in line with well-established constructions of adulthood and of masculinity, the latter especially in relation to violence. This results in the following equation; the more "childlike" the child – the more likely to be conceived as a victim. The gendered aspect of the victim – perpetrator dichotomy further adds to the table that a child who is defined as a girl is more likely to be treated like a victim, than would a victim that is defined as a boy in the same situation.

3. Method – Discourse analysis

I have chosen a Foucauldian inspired discourse analysis as my method. Discourse analysis is a theoretical and methodological entirety, which explains why discourse analysis has also been discussed as a part of the analytical framework. It is based on certain ontological and epistemological assumptions, specific methodologies in relation to the field of research, and special techniques for language analysis.[96] As a concept and specific scientific technique, discourse analysis can be used to study different kinds of language such as speech, texts and social interaction at large. The objective of a Foucauldian discourse analyses is often to uncover and explore the underlying power relationships that enable certain understandings on a subject and rule out others by critically deconstructing the knowledge that is taken for granted.

According to Foucault, discourse always presupposes some kind of power in the way in which it imposes its order on to the world – bodies of knowledge and the formation of subject positions have to conform to the parameters of discourse to be recognized as legitimate. The relationship between notions of power/knowledge within discourse is at the core for Foucault's concept of discourse analysis.[97] Thus, discourse shall not be interpreted simply as 'all the things that are said', or 'the ways in which they are said'.[98] Discourse defines also what is *not* said, what is *not* understood to be true, what is consensual, and what is assumed. A discourse analysis in a Foucauldian sense means that the researcher has to embrace his view of power. Power is productive; it produces discourse, new knowledge, subject positions, and new social practices, and should thus be thought of as a productive web that runs through the entire societal body and not simply an oppressing force.[99] Trying to define what knowledge *is*

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[96] Winther Jörgensen and Phillips (2000:7-11)
[97] Nola (1998: 143)
[98] Foucault (2008: 186)
[99] Foucault (1980: 119)

is therefore an obsolete project within discourse analysis. Instead, discourse analysis will study the processes of *how* knowledge comes to be understood to be knowledge.

The practical whereabouts of discourse analysis in the case of this specific thesis has been about establishing a relationship between the researcher (myself) and the material that is both close and distant. It could also be called a relationship in the sense that it entails different phases. The first phase was to study the material up close, to read and reread it, and take notes so many times that I ended up feeling quite lost, and as if the material did not say anything at all. The feeling of being lost also entailed a much needed distance to the material, which enabled the second phase. In the second phase, I read the material again, this time in relation to the theoretical frameworks that I had chosen. In the second phase, new and perhaps broader meanings were found. The objective of this phase was to combine the findings in the first phase with the ones I experienced in the second. After the second phase I took about a week's break from the material. Then I returned to it, and the return is the third phase. Upon my return, I had digested some of the findings, and could begin to look at what the material actually says, what it not says, what it takes for granted, and what it rules out entirely.

3.1 On translation

While I have studied, and written academic texts in English for two years now, the fact of the matter is that Swedish is my first mother tongue (the other being Farsi). My English, and my ability to express myself in English will never be comparable to my other languages. Therewith, the subject of this thesis is placed within a Swedish context, and the empirical material is written in Swedish. When studying the material, I will do the analysis in Swedish and then translate my thoughts into English.

Discourse analysis concerns the function of language and its relation to power. To translate the analysis from the language in which its preceding thought processes were carried out, could be thought of as ruling out the entire purpose of the method, and may have done so if one for example intended to do a more linguistically-oriented discourse analysis.[100] My aim is however to do discourse analysis in the Foucauldian sense. The ways in which the language operates within the empirical material or "'what a text does' rather than 'what it says'"[101] will thus be at the core of the analysis, rather than linguistic workings; the grammar, placement of

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[100] See for example Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis: Winter Jörgensen and Phillips (2000: 70-92)
[101] Czarniawska (2004: 88)

words and intertextuality of the material. In the kind of analysis I will perform, I believe the act of translation makes less harm to the method.

However, the impact of the translation required should not be underestimated. Translation is violence, especially when it regards translation from your mother tongue into your second or third language. That practice is not household even for professional translators, who always translate from other languages to their mother tongue. All I can promise as a laywoman is that I will try my very best to mediate the meaning of the Swedish original, while remaining aware of and transparent about the fact that the translation will be done by myself, and therefore in all senses colored by me and my linguistic shortcomings. As Walter Benjamin put it in his influential text on the subject:

> The translator's task is to find the intention toward the language into which the work is to be translated, on the basis of which an echo of the original is awakened in it.[102]

It is my ambition to make the analysis echo the original material. Should the echo not be loud enough for the reader to hear it, and understand what I mean, the responsibility will be all mine.

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[102] Benjamin (2000: 79)

4. Analysis

In this section, I will set the wheels in motion and use my method and the theoretical framework to analyze the material. I will start the analysis with a summary of the more general tendencies of the discourse on unaccompanied children as represented within the material, and then further address the constituting themes of the discourse. The discourse is constituted by a number of themes that render specific forms of othering, based on assumptions about gender, race, the nation state and age. The themes interact and place unaccompanied children in specific positions. I will also discuss the othering processes in relation to Foucault's view of knowledge and subject positions as produced in and by power in discourse.

4.1 Different labels

There is no stringency regarding the terms or labels that are used to name unaccompanied children within the material. "Unaccompanied refugee children"[103] is the most common, but other terms like "unaccompanied young asylum applicants"[104], "unaccompanied"[105], "lonely children"[106], "street children"[107] and "unaccompanied minor asylum applicants"[108] are also used. The flourishing of different terms may indicate what Eide's[109] results show: that the group "unaccompanied children" are constructed as ambiguous and unclear subjects, within this specific context too. Through the different potential labels, we become aware of that this group in several ways are seen as *exceptions*. 1) They are exceptions to the naturalized adulthood, in that they are labelled as something *other* than adults – children or adolescents; 2) They are exceptions in that they are not accompanied by adults. Since children usually are defined by their relationships to adults,[110] unaccompanied children are lacking a fundamental aspect that defines the normative child. This also categorizes them as other children; and 3) they are exceptions to the nation state, in that they are categorized as refugees; a term that is typically equated with an Other as non-white, non-belonger to the nation state. This further

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[103] In Swedish: " Ensamkommande flyktingbarn"
[104] In Swedish: "Ensamkommande unga asylsökande"
[105] In Swedish: " Ensamkommande"
[106] In Swedish: "Ensamma barn"
[107] In Swedish: "Gatubarn"
[108] In Swedish: "Ensamkommande unga asylsökande"
[109] Eide (2005), as was mentioned in the second track of previous research.
[110] Näsman (2004:4)

generates understandings of them that are in line with orientalistic depictions of the Other and their cultures.

It should also be noted that the term children are commonly avoided even though the definition of a child is a person who is under 18. Other terms, like "adolescents"[111], or "youngsters"[112] are used to remind the reader that this is not "real" children i.e. small and cute. Consequently, the process of othering unaccompanied children and constructing them as suspected subjects is initiated already in the labelling. What can furthermore be said in general terms about the material is that the role of age-limits, and the strict definitions of children and childhood in relation to such are not problematized or questioned. The material is to a remarkable degree holding similar standpoints on the subject. There are hardly any countering arguments to be found within the material, which surprised me. I can only speculate about the reasons to why this is the case. Because the discourse experienced an intensification, and debate was rather intense, I find it to be possible that alternative standpoints simply was not included in the representation of the discourse in newspaper editorials, perhaps in order to not complicate the understanding of the subject for the reader.

4.2 Four main themes

The discourse appears to be formed around four themes, which all are dependent on and interact with each other. The first is a "truth theme" that is constructed around arguments about an (unspoken) truth – the truth that unaccompanied children must be understood as a new and particular kind of problem in society. The theme thus constructs unaccompanied children and their presence in Sweden as a problem. What is further depicted as significant for this specific problem is that it is represented as a truth that somehow is ignored and masked. The truth theme is about the problem that unaccompanied children are constructed to be – as *the* truth.

The second theme is the unreasonable theme. The discourse constructs the situation (of the entire migration to Sweden) as something unreasonable. While unaccompanied children are represented and understood to be a societal problem in the truth theme, within this theme they are represented as unreasonable/impossible subjects; a problem that results in consequences

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[111] In Swedish: "Tonåringar"
[112] In Swedish: "Ungdomar"

that are unreasonable and intolerable. The ones responsible for the unreasonable development are understood to be the politicians and authorities, but also the children themselves.

The situation is further constructed as one that requires some kind of control, which brings us to the third theme in the material; the control theme. Control is suggested to be lost, but reclaimed primarily by the introduction of medical age assessments, a practice that will have tangible consequences for unaccompanied children. The truth, unreasonable and control theme in turn all rely upon assumptions about the nation state Sweden, which is the fourth and final theme.

In the nation state theme, the position of and consensus about unaccompanied children as a problem, as unreasonable subjects, is already achieved. Not only are unaccompanied children represented as problems for and within the nation state theme, but also as threats to the entire nation state of Sweden. The assumed threat opens up for several narratives about what Sweden inherently is, and how unaccompanied children by all means are other to that which is Sweden.

4.3 The truth theme

Like Foucault stated, there is no truth to be found outside of discourse. Truths are statements that are produced in discourse, and granted the status of truth due to multiple processes of power/knowledge.[113] Within the material the issue of truth is debated; what it really is and how it needs to be treated. Truth is represented to be something that should be guiding the discourse, but that for some reasons are ignored or masked in various ways, by various actors. The commonsensical representation of what the truth is within the material is that unaccompanied children are a problem; a symptom of an even bigger problem, which is understood to be the "uncontrolled" migration situation in Sweden, and a problem in themselves. Within the truth theme, the subject position of unaccompanied children as a problem is defined. They (as the problem) are constructed as a homogenous group with a clear-cut agenda represented to be to lie about their age and their reasons to apply for asylum in Sweden. This is among other things what define them as a problem. Other actors, such as the police and politicians, are represented to be well aware of the problem that is unaccompanied children - but not acting upon it.

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[113] Foucault (1980: 133)

4.3.1 Numbers as symbols of truth

A great majority of the editorials mention numbers in one way or the other; numbers of asylum applicants and unaccompanied children among these, percentages of the gender division within the group unaccompanied children and numbers of the costs for unaccompanied children in Sweden. The numbers are understood to represent the problem and by the continuous reference to them, a certain distance is created, which masks the fact that there are human beings behind the numbers. The most common way to discuss numbers is to make simply state the exact numbers of asylum applicants that came to Sweden during 2015 and how many of them that were unaccompanied children. What usually follows are clarifications of how many percentages of the unaccompanied children that were boys. The recurrent specifications of this kind indicate that the position of unaccompanied child within the wider group of asylum applicants is remarkable in itself, and further that the gender division within this group is particularly relevant.

> In the case of Sweden, the sex balance is particularly askew among the unaccompanied teenagers, 91 percent of these are boys.[114]

In the editorial from which the citation above is taken, the gender division of the "flow of migrants" is discussed in terms of "sex imbalance" and "sex balance". Sweden is depicted as a very specific case where, according to the writer, the balance is "particularly askew" and hence also particularly problematic.

> Sweden accepted over 160,000 asylum applicants during 2015. Around 70 percent of these were men. 90 percent of the over 35,000 unaccompanied refugee children were boys. Many of them come from patriarchal cultures. This is a challenge for society – both in terms of gender equality and the freedom of the individual. [115]

The numbers of asylum applicants, and the gender division among the unaccompanied children within this group are usually presented as if they were telling a certain story or even revealing a shocking fact by themselves. Like the citation above shows – the numbers – is a "challenge" for society. Why that is so is however left to the reader to read between the lines. The sex division is consequently suggested to be alarming, as are the sheer numbers of

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[114]*Aftonbladet* 29 November 2015. In Swedish: "För Sveriges del är könsbalansen särskilt skev bland de ensamkommande tonåringarna, 91 procent av dessa är pojkar."
[115] *Sydsvenskan*. 13 February 2016. In Swedish: "Under 2015 tog Sverige emot över 160 000 asylsökande. Omkring 70 procent var män. Av de drygt 35 000 ensamkommande flyktingbarnen var 90 procent pojkar. Många av dem kommer från patriarkala kulturer. Detta är en utmaning för samhället – både vad gäller jämställdhet och individens frihet."

asylum applicants that have come to Sweden. This is what is understood to be the main problem, which is further represented as a problem which is ignored or at least not mentioned enough. In relation to this, we shall remember that discourse is not simply the things that are said;[116] it also defines which statements that are assumed and not explicit. And in all probability, few people may be assumed to have the information and knowledge needed to be able to know what the numbers actually may tell. The fact that the numbers constantly are mentioned however shows that they are granted importance and meaning and this to the degree that they need no further explanation. What is suggested is that the numbers are unusually high – in fact actually *too* high. What can be further drawn from the high numbers of asylum applicants (which of course always is a relative notion in itself) is that it also is to be understood as leading to an equally high number of problems. As mentioned above, to speak about asylum applicants and unaccompanied children in particular, solely in relation to numbers shadows their positions as human beings and bearers of rights, and instead constructs them as costs, challenges and problems. Thus, other other potential perspectives on the meaning of these numbers are discursively ruled out– for example more human rights-oriented ideals, which would likely focus more on the people that make out the numbers; the fulfillment of their human rights such as the one to apply for asylum and the struggles that lead them to Sweden.

The citation below is taken from an editorial with the title "the Truth is not dangerous". The writer is positioned as a champion of truth; as someone who advocates for telling it no matter how uncomfortable it may be. In this specific editorial, the notion of truth is extended and constructed to be more than that unaccompanied children are a problem. What is suggested is that many unaccompanied children, who have applied for asylum in Sweden have not done so to escape war and persecution, but "only" to escape poverty. These two "reasons" for migration are described as clearly separated, and ascribed with different kinds of meaning where the former is more "noble" or understandable than the latter. The writer claims that the truth is that unaccompanied children are not in specific need of asylum, and is critical of that this is the prevalent image of them as a group.

> There is a tendency in Sweden to ignore information that is considered to be "beneficial" to the wrong powers. But the result is quite often the opposite – the

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[116] Foucault (2008: 186)

unaccompanied has instead been surrounded by rumors, prejudice and stories about underhand "beard children".[117]

In a rather explicit manner, a "tendency" in Sweden is accused of ignoring the truth – the problem. What is not as explicit, however is what or who is understood to be the "tendency", and thus who or what should be held accountable for it. It is the reluctance to accept the truth that is represented to be the reason as to why the group unaccompanied children have been surrounded by rumors and prejudice, not Othering structures in society. Such are not addressed or recognized in the editorial. The writer uses quotation marks around the term "beard children" (*"skäggbarn"*)[118], perhaps as a way of distancing themselves from the term. However, the choice of the specific word in a national daily newspaper editorial legitimizes the usage of this truly condescending term which is constructed racist lingo about asylum applicants who claim that they are underage, but in reality are way older.

> The police will not disclose information about crime related to the refugee situation […] the police may hold the monopoly of violence, but in the public discourse the authority seems to have become crestfallen. It is deeply troubling.[119]

> Groping hands, young guys who persisted in spite of reprimands and chocked girls and young women who sought help from the police. That was the reality during the youth festival *We are Sthlm* in Kungsträdgården [a city park][120] this summer. Although a reality that the police did not impart to the reporter from *Dagens Nyheter*, who raised the questions about what transpired in August."[121]

In the two citations above, the police is directly accused of not having disclosed the truth - the problem that unaccompanied children or asylum applicants in general are understood to be, and the greater problem of "uncontrolled" migration, that they are a symptom of. The problem is here referred to as "the refugee situation", which is directly related to criminality. The specific crimes regards cases of sexual abuse of women and girls that occurred during a music

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[117] *Dagens Nyheter*. 30 December 2015. In Swedish: "Det finns en tendens i Sverige att blunda för information som anses kunna "gynna" fel krafter. Men resultatet blir inte sällan det helt motsatta – de ensamkommande har istället omgivits av ryktesspridning, fördomar och historier om lömska "skäggbarn."

[118] This is a newly constructed term that was created with the purpose to question unaccompanied children. It draws on preconceptions about their race (they get a beard "early"), gender and age.

[119] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 21 January 2016. In Swedish: "Polisen lämnar inte ut information om brottslighet som berör flyktingsituationen […] Polisen må inneha våldsmonopolet, men i det offentliga samtalet tycks myndigheten ha blivit strykrädd. Det är djupt oroväckande."

[120] My comment

[121] *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. 12 January 2016. In Swedish: "Händer som tafsade, unga killar som fortsatte trots tillsägelser och chockade flickor och unga kvinnor som sökte hjälp hos polisen. Det var verkligheten under ungdomsfestivalen We are Sthlm i Kungsträdgården i somras. Men en verklighet som polisen inte berättade om när Dagens Nyheters reporter i augusti ställde frågor om vad som hänt."

festival in Stockholm. The police was allegedly reluctant to disclose that (some of) the culprits were unaccompanied children, since this should be a direct support to the Sweden democrats. The writers argue that authorities like the police should not be afraid to speak up, and that such hiding of the truth will in turn create even more problems. What type of crimes that are included in the "criminality relating to the refugee situation" is not expressed. Is burning of asylum accommodations and hate crimes against asylum appliers also included in the concept? If not, I assume that "criminality relating the refugee situation" in this case equals "crimes that are committed by asylum applicants."

A practical consequence of the problem that is the "uncontrolled" migration and unaccompanied children in particular is thus understood and represented to be that it affects the police´s position in society. The speech about unaccompanied children in relation to criminality reveals the workings of gender in relation to the dichotomy of the victim – perpetrator, as is discussed by Eriksson and Näsman.[122] The unaccompanied children who allegedly committed the specific crimes mentioned in the second citation are defined as perpetrators and additionally as boys. Consequently, all other positions than that of the perpetrator are ruled out. The boys in question are to be understood only as boys (or rather young guys) who have groped girls. To understand them in relation to the "victimlike" position associated with children and childhood, or as experiencers of war and flight is thus no longer a possibility – if it ever was. What was stated within the truth problem theme is that the truth is that unaccompanied children are a symptom of the great problem for Sweden, which is the increased migration, but also that they are a problem in themselves. That the truth is albeit understood to be ignored and disregarded is constructed to have fatal consequences, such as the silencing of a very important authority in society – the police.

4.4 The unreasonable theme – unreasonable situations – unreasonable subjects

The second theme within the discourse is linked to the truth theme presented above. It is constructed by repeated speech and suggestions about the unreasonableness (even impossible nature) of the situation. All editorials address the current migrant situation as a problem both in terms of sustainability and sense. This speech about unreasonableness, unsustainability and senselessness further complicates the issue of truth and the representation of the problem that is unaccompanied children. The unreasonableness and unsustainability of the situation is often

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[122] Eriksson & Näsman (2015)

addressed in relation to all development in society that can be related to migration, which is understood and represented to be a development that is out of control. It is not the situation of the asylum applicants in Sweden that is understood to be unreasonable, but rather the effects that the arrival of asylum applicants and of unaccompanied children in particular, are assumed to have on Sweden and its population. Besides this, unaccompanied children are constructed as a specific group of asylum applicants, unreasonable subjects whose mere existence is evidence enough of the unreasonableness of the situation. This understanding is not in any way linked to the incapacity of the Swedish state to procure the human rights of unaccompanied children.

What is represented to be reasonable on the other hand, is both defined and not defined. While never explicitly addressed, one does not need to read twice to understand that reasonableness is a state that in all aspects is different from the reality of today. As we will see further in the third theme about the nation state, Sweden is understood and represented to be a place characterized by reasonable values. The reasonableness is now perceived to be under attack.

> Prime Minister Stefan Löfven now openly states that the situation is "unsustainable". In a normal political climate, such a statement would have prompted immediate action. In Sweden, however, for many years we have suppressed an open debate on immigration policy.[123]

In the citation above, the prime minister's statement about the unsustainability of the situation is depicted to be impossible to be discussed, due to the abnormal political climate that Sweden is represented to have. Abnormal in the sense that the unsustainability is not recognized – and therefore not dealt with.

The reception of unaccompanied children costs a certain amount of money for the Swedish state. This is a fact that is hard to argue against, and hence it is also used by several writers as a proof of the unreasonableness of the situation. Behind the recurrent mentioning of the costs involved for the reception of this group of constructed "outsiders" lie nationalist ideals, rather than the norms formulated in the Convention of the Rights of the Child, which stipulates that every child on flight has the right to protection.[124] It also constructs the image of the Swedish population as in the midst of an unfair battle of resources, in which unaccompanied children

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[123] *Svenska Dagbladet.* 28 October 2015. In Swedish: "Statsminister Stefan Löfven säger nu öppet att situationen är "ohållbar". I ett normalt politiskt klimat hade ett sådant konstaterande lett till krav på omedelbara åtgärder. I Sverige har vi dock under många år undertryckt en öppen debatt om invandringspolitiken."
[124] UNICEF (2017) *The Convention of the Rights of the Child. Protection Rights: Keeping safe from harm,* available at: https://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Protection_list.pdf (article 22)

are the winners. The underlying understanding of the cost argument is that while it is reasonable that a nation state has the duty is to provide for its citizens, it is unreasonable for it to provide for others, regardless of their age or situation. The others are not part of the imagined community[125] and can thus not expect to be treated as such. In the citation below, the costs for accommodation and studies for unaccompanied children are described as unreasonable.

> …the prospects of finding accommodation for these adolescents are – like for most others – very bad. The consequence is that the municipalities now pay unreasonable sums for their accommodation.[126]

The citation above points to the negative Otherness of children that Nunn[127] discusses, in which children are constructed as problematic and costly, and where their special rights[128] are constructed as a problem, resulting in unreasonable costs for the municipalities.

There are also racializing and orientalistic dimensions to the speech about the unreasonableness that the presence of unaccompanied children is represented to entail. Within the material, the situation is also constructed as increasing the level of another kind of unreasonableness – the unreasonableness of the Other, which can to be related to the view of cultural identity and diversity, discussed by Bhabha.[129] By ascribing the stable identity of the Other culture to the subjects that come to Sweden, they get further constructed as representatives of Other, unreasonable, undeveloped cultures. This locks them to a definition and subjectification solely within the locus of Otherness.[130] The assumption is fueled by the orientalist and colonial dichotomy between the West and the East, and reproduces the first dogma of Orientalism as defined by Said, in which the West is understood to represent reason and development, in stark contrast to the East – the unreasonable and undeveloped.[131]

With the increased migration from the East or the orient, or "the stream of refugees/migrants" it is assumed that also the level of unreasonableness increases. The unreasonableness of the situation addressed is often discussed in terms of the unreasonable costs for the unreasonable

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[125] Anderson (1983)

[126] Dagens Nyheter 4 October 2015. In Swedish: "Samtidigt är förutsättningarna att finna boenden för dessa ungdomar – precis för de flesta andra – mycket dåliga. Konsekvensen är att kommunerna just nu betalar hutlösa summor för boenden åt dem."

[127] Nunn (2002)

[128] Among those in the case of Sweden - to live in specially assigned accommodation centers. (my remark)

[129] Bhabha (1994)

[130] Ibid., 44

[131] Said (1978: 445)

subjects that are unaccompanied children, and the unreasonable values that they are equated with as belonging to Other cultures. This is put in relation to the nation state of Sweden: the financial costs for unaccompanied children is constructed to be at the price of the security and welfare of its population. What is unreasonable are the unaccompanied children, their costly rights (like the right to special accommodation and to studies) and their cultures.

> Then it is the question of costs, as this group is estimated to nearly 28 billion SEK next year, which constitutes 46 percent of the total cost of migration. Regardless of one's view of the undertaking, it is entirely legit to question whether public money is used as intended.[132]

In the citation above, the costs for unaccompanied children is put in relation to the costs associated with the migration in its totality. What this cost entails is not specified. The comparison of costs does however construct the unaccompanied children as a specific group of asylum applicants. A group where costs have to be considered separated from the costs of other asylum applicants and regardless of the commitment of the Swedish state. The writer states that it is "fully legit" to question whether public money is used as intended. What is thus suggested is that public money – the money of the Swedish tax payers - is not used whichever way they is should be used. It is instead used to support unaccompanied children.

Another writer states:

> Just the cost for the unaccompanied young asylum applicants, the majority of whom are from Afghanistan, is 2019 estimated to reach 23 billion SEK. It is more than what the Afghan state pays its over 800,000 employees in salaries. It is not reasonable.[133]

In the citation above, the unreasonableness is represented by a comparison between the Swedish state's expenses for the reception of unaccompanied children and the total salaries of state employees one of the states from where many of unaccompanied children originate. The connection between these rather different and abstract expenditures in two vastly different states is not clarified, and therefore neither the comparison's relevance. The only statement made in relation to the comparison is that is unreasonable. The numbers tell us that the group

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[132]*Svenska Dagbladet*. 3 November 2015. In Swedish: "Sedan kommer frågan om kostnaderna, som för denna grupp beräknas uppgå till nästan 28 miljarder kronor nästa år, vilket utgör 46 procent av den totala kostnaden för migrationen. Oavsett hur man ser på åtagandet, är det fullt legitimt att ställa frågor om offentliga pengar används som det var tänkt."

[133] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 23 October 2015. In Swedish: "Enbart kostnaden för ensamkommande unga asylsökande, varav majoriteten är från Afghanistan, väntas 2019 uppgå till 23 miljarder kronor. Det är mer än vad den afghanska staten lägger på löner till sina drygt 800 000 anställda. Det är inte rimligt."

unaccompanied children, in this case specifically from Afghanistan, cost the Swedish state more than what the Afghan state pays its state employees. It may be a way to imply that it is the Afghan state, rather than the Swedish, that should pay or care for Afghan children.

Unaccompanied children's presence in Sweden is depicted as something that is improper and unsustainable in itself. By connecting their presence so closely to arguments about what is wrong and unreasonable, unaccompanied children are Othered based in the discursive formation of subject positions, in line with the negative view of children's otherness.[134] The construction of the Other as unreasonable and/or criminal, which I will discuss further in the following, is an echo of the orientalistic Western view of the East, a view that Said argues has been quite stable since the 19th century. Said discusses how the view of the oriental Other builds on biologist arguments about the eternal differences between the races, which equated people from the orient with other elements of categories of people in its own society (like the poor, the criminal, the lunatics) which were rendered as indisputably but 'unfortunately different.'[135]

> Of the more than 35,000 unaccompanied refugee children, 90 percent were boys [...] Most of them come from patriarchal cultures, and in Sweden they end up in already male dominated environments – depopulated areas with a surplus of low-skilled men. It would be naive to believe that these newly arrived men by some magic should embrace the values that result from a long struggle for gender equality in Sweden.[136]

In the citation above, the assumed eternal and stable difference between cultures is reestablished. Moreover, unaccompanied children are first described as children - as boys, only to three sentences later having aged enough to be described as men. These men are further represented to be stable cultural subjects, like Teflon for "the values that result from a long struggle for gender equality in Sweden."

Within the unreasonable theme, the position of the truth that unaccompanied children are a problem is further strengthened, and the discourse's further ground assumptions become evident. These assumptions are the unreasonableness that is equated with unaccompanied

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[134] Nunn (2002)
[135] Said (1978: 445)
[136] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 9 February 2016. In Swedish: "Av de drygt 35 000 ensamkommande flyktingbarnen var 90 procent pojkar… Merparten kommer från patriarkala kulturer och väl I Sverige hamnar de i redan mansdominerade miljöer – avfolkningsbygd med ett överskott på lågutbildade män. Det vore naivt att tro att dessa nyanlända män som genom ett trollslag skulle ta till sig de värderingar som är resultatet av en lång kamp för jämställdhet i Sverige."

children stands in in stark contrast to the reason that ideally should structure the Swedish society. The truth is that unaccompanied children are a problem, they cost a lot of public money and they are unreasonable and thus impossible as subjects in a Swedish context. What make them unreasonable subjects are their Other cultures, but also their position as children, which we will see be questioned and/or neglected because their chronological age is unclear. The assumption is that the majority of the children who claim that they are children under 18 are in reality lying about their age, and that they in fact are older than 18. These supposed lies are understood to be intolerable and to require some kind of action, which is what constructs the third theme of control.

4.5 The control theme – combatting unreasonableness (and the subjects)

As mentioned above, the situation as a whole is addressed as being out of control and involving a lot of suppressed truths and real lies and constituting numerous problems. A specific problem within the overall situation is represented to be the unaccompanied children who apply for asylum. Within the control theme, there is a consensus around the need to reinstate and reclaim control of the situation, by the control of unaccompanied children.

The subject positions that the discourse form for unaccompanied children are very limited. The perspectives of unaccompanied children on the situation and how they might experience it are not lifted as relevant. This was also the case in Löwander's study about debates about racism and related violence, in which "immigrants" who were ultimately the most vulnerable group, were never heard.[137]

An issue that is given extreme importance within the discourse concerns the "real" age of unaccompanied children. Within the material, it has reached the status of the consensual that the issue of unproven or unclear age of unaccompanied children is something that needs to be addressed and dealt with. In this theme, it is the unaccompanied children themselves that are represented as hiding or masking the truth – the truth of their "real" age. In relation to age, the entire group is homogenized, suspected and represented as to have the same agenda for their actions – to lie about their age and claim that they are under 18, while in fact they are not. The general argument of the writers is that the unreasonableness and the ignorance of the truth must end – and with that the problem that is unaccompanied children can be solved. The appropriate method preferred to reach this objective is medical age assessments of

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[137] Löwander (2001), as was mentioned in the third track of previous research

unaccompanied children. It is important to note that this argument is also is the argument for an important change of the Swedish migration politics. Medical age assessments were not a common procedure during the time when the material was produced, and has never been a standard procedure in Swedish migration politics. This is however not because the practice was not recognize to be reliable, but because the different associations of health professionals upon request from the Migration Agency refused to conduct them, with reference to the great error margins and ethical problems of the practice.[138] The construction of unaccompanied children as a problem that is represented to be so serious that the writers are ready to advocate for the introduction of different methods for age assessment and a repositioning of most political actors on the issue at hand in order to define a way to handle and (as soon as possible) solve the problem. The new knowledge that first and second theme of the discourse on unaccompanied children produced is used as a basis for the arguments for this new practice.

As we have seen, unaccompanied children are constructed to be Other beings in relation to the nation state and additionally as Other children, from Other cultures who cost loads of money that could have benefitted the Swedish population, commit crimes, despise Swedish values and lie about their age. Since meaning is produced in discourse, these assumptions and the power they impose is what rendered the speech about and the following possibility of to establish the practice of medical age assessment, as an instrument of control. I assume that the knowledge produced in discourse enabled the understandings of the practice to move from the position of controversial into consensual. In the specific case of medical age assessments in relation to unaccompanied children, discourse analysis can in a quite practical way show what text (or the meanings of text) can do, rather than just say.[139]

> No, age assessments are not easy. But it is reasonable to like our neighboring countries try to find ways to conduct them, since our asylum system takes into account and treats different on the basis of age estimation.[140]

In the citation above, the writer advocates for the introduction of medical age assessments with outspoken reference to the "reasonableness" of the practice, which connects the control

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[138] See e.g. Swedish Pediatric Society. *Angående medicinska åldersbedömningar hos asylsökande ungdomar.* 2015, available at: http://www.barnlakarforeningen.se/2015/07/17/angaende-medicinska-aldersbedomningar-av-asylsokande-ungdomar/

[139] Czarniawska (2004: 88)

[140] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 3 November 2015. In Swedish: "Nej, åldersbestämningar är ingen enkel sak. Men det är rimligt att som i grannländerna försöka finna sätt att göra dem eftersom vårt asylsystem tar hänsyn till och behandlar olika utifrån just bedömning av ålder."

theme to the earlier theme on unreasonableness and unsustainability, and constructs medical age assessments as a counter force to the unreasonable development.

> Age assessments have been necessary in Sweden for a long time, but they have not been carried out, except in a few cases, because of the doctors' refusals (to implement them). The problems and costs – both financial and human – that this omission cause are great. Pretending that the problem of incorrect age statements among asylum applicants does not exist is therefore irresponsible.[141]

In this citation, it is argued that the practice of medical age assessments have been necessary in Sweden for a long time, but that the doctor's refusal to conduct them has hindered this practice to become a standard procedure, which in turn create even more problems. The assumption that many unaccompanied children conceal or lie about their "real" age, is in itself based on preconceptions about Other children, and the problematic subject positions they are ascribed. The assumption of the lie has within the discourse reached the status of knowledge – it is taken for granted that unaccompanied children are lying about their age. This understanding enables the suggestions of political changes, which in turn will have great consequences. Furthermore, it also tells something about the kind of subject position that is opened to the unaccompanied children in the discourse. They are constructed as a homogenous group, who have planned their actions strategically and will lie as long as the lie enables them to snatch benefits and commit crimes unpunished. This subject position resembles what Stretmo's study find[142] on the topic of discursive understandings of unaccompanied children. Stretmo defines the dichotomous positions of "strategic migrant" and "victim" as the only ones possible for unaccompanied children. In the specific context of this thesis, the potential position as victim is locked out, and the consequences of the assumedly strategic actions of unaccompanied children are represented to be of the caliber that they will bring on the collapse of the Swedish state, if the situation is not put under control again. This clearly positions unaccompanied children as perpetrators, and the Swedish state as the victim.

> So far, this year, 32,180 asylum applications from unaccompanied children have been received. But there are also strong indications that some of them are not as young as they claim. The incentives to state that you are under 18 are strong. You

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[141] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 7 January 2016. In Swedish: "Åldersbedömningar har behövt göras under lång tid i Sverige men de har inte kunnat utföras annat än i ett fåtal fall på grund av läkares vägran. Problemen och kostnaderna – både ekonomiska och mänskliga – som den underlåtenheten medför är stora. Att låtsas som om problemet med oriktiga åldersangivelser bland asylsökande inte existerar är därför oansvarigt."
[142] Stretmo (2014)

get permanent accommodation and are not sent back to the first arrival country, which otherwise is the case under the Dublin Regulation. In addition, you get a more lavish accommodation than an adult. […] The incentive is there. Perhaps that is why twice as many asylum applicants state that they are 16 – 17 years than those who state that they are 18 – 19 years.[143]

In the citation above, the writer points out that there are incentives for unaccompanied children to lie about their age. Furthermore, a number of positive effects that such a lie could indicate is presented. Those positive effects that the writer describe are then suggested to be the explanation to why there are more asylum applicants who are 16 – 17 than 18 – 19. The possibility that more asylum applicants have reported that they are 16 – 17 simply because there may be more 16 – 17-year-old persons who applied for asylum is excluded from the table of explanations. It is not even represented as a possibility and thus closed out of the discourse entirely. The writer suggests that it needless to say are lies that is the reason behind the differences of age groups among unaccompanied children.

> Many have been told that in Sweden, you can get what you point at, and one can assert one's "rights" to this and the other. "Elin" tells about how she had expected to be asked about how safe and accessible to the host family would be, "but what came up could be stuff about money. It could be anything from if you would get a special gym card; a more expensive gym membership that is, if you would get a driving license and the iPhone, the final model of course." So, smugglers promise you the moon, and Sweden is expected to then meet the expectations.[144]

In the citation above, the writer uses quotation marks for the word "rights", and refers to a radio program in which the person "Elin" was interviewed. According to the writer,"Elin" stated that when opening up her home as a host family for unaccompanied children, what "came up" were issues about money and things. Not only do the writer clearly position unaccompanied children to be questionable as right-bearers, but also as greedy and demanding, unreasonable subjects with unreasonable expectations that Sweden is "expected

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[143] *Svenska Dagbladet.* 6 December 2015. In Swedish: "Hittills i år har 32180 asylansökningar från ensamkommande barn inkommit. Men det finns också starka indikationer på att en del inte är så unga som de säger. Incitamenten för att ange att man är under 18 år är starka. Man får permanent uppehållstillstånd och skickas inte tillbaka till första ankomstland, vilket annars ska ske enligt Dublin-förordningen. Dessutom får man ett mer påkostat boende än som vuxen. […] Incitament finns alltså. Kanske är det därför som dubbelt så många asylsökande anger att de är 16 - 17 år än de som uppger att de är 18 - 19 år."

[144] *Svenska Dagbladet.* 28 December 2015..In Swedish: "Många har fått veta att i Sverige kan man få det man pekar på, och man kan hävda sina "rättigheter" till det ena och det andra. "Elin" berättar hur hon hade förväntat sig att få frågor om hur trygg och tillgänglig de som värdfamilj skulle vara, "men det som kom upp kunde vara grejer om pengar. Det kunde handla om allt från om man fick specialgymkort, alltså ett dyrare gymkort, om man fick körkort och iPhone, alltså sista modellen då förstås. Så smugglarna utlovar guld och gröna skogar, och Sverige förväntas sedan infria förväntningarna."

to meet". In this sense, it is Sweden and "Elin" that are depicted as the victims in the context, never even potentially the unaccompanied children. They must not be claiming rights and entitlements, but should be thankful for what they get.

The issue of age assessments is also related to the costs of migration; the Swedish state reportedly needs to know an asylum applicants' chronological age, because that will define the legal and practical treatment of the person in question. It is an argument for control that tends to the societal order of age and the binary relationship between children and adults, which results in the conclusion that children are different from adults and thus should be treated differently.

> The debate could give the impression that if age assessments were reintroduced, 12-year-olds would be deported to countries in the height of the war. But the results would rather be this: A 16- or 17-year old, who appears to be an adult may be treated as an adult and may therefore be sent back to an area that is considered sufficiently safe [...] Sure, the level of legal security could be reduced, and arbitrariness increase slightly, but from a humanitarian perspective it would be no disaster. The fact that the 18th birthday is a legal limit in Sweden does not mean that a 17-year old is completely helpless. [145]

The citation above shows how childhood is understood as a phase characterized by dependence and helplessness, which gradually will become less and less, the closer the child get to their 18th birthday. The position of a 12-year old is compared to the one of a 16- or 17-year old, as if showing that a 17-year old per definition never is helpless, while a 12-year old always is. The line of argument also tends to the dichotomous construction of victim - perpetrator which Eriksson and Näsman[146] address, in which the conclusion is the more "childlike" the child, the more likely is it to be understood and treated as a victim. A 17-year old is assumedly less "childlike" than a 12-year old, and can thus according to the dichotomy not be understood as a victim to the extent that would a 12-year old, this independent of the

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[145] *Göteborgs-Posten*. 1 November 2015. In Swedish: "Av debatten kan man få intrycket att om vi återinför ålderstester så skulle 12-åringar utvisas till länder i brinnande krig. Men följden vore snarare denna: En 16- eller 17-åring som framstår som vuxen kan komma att behandlas som en vuxen och därför skickas tillbaka till ett område som anses tillräckligt tryggt […]Visst, rättssäkerheten skulle kunna minska och godtyckligheten öka något, men humanitärt sett vore det ingen katastrof. Att 18-årsdagen utgör en juridisk gräns i Sverige betyder inte att en 17-åring är fullständigt hjälplös".
[146] Eriksson & Näsman (2015)

actual situation of the individual 17-year or 12-year old. The consequence is that persons that are younger than 18 may be considered as adults (of age) if they are unaccompanied children.

> […] without medical age assessment, the risk increases for someone who actually is underage to be erroneously judged to be adult.[147]

> Stefan Löfven demands more age assessments to determine if unaccompanied refugee children are really children.[148]

> It is important to remember that this issue is the Swedish legal certainty – even for the genuine children who come to Sweden. [149]

The three citations above all advocate for control, and produces an imaginary line between "alleged children" on the one hand, and "real" or "genuine" children on the other. This can be linked to Nunn's[150] conceptualization of the negative aspect of children's otherness, in which the child's otherness is understood as a threat and therefore needs to be controlled. In the negative view of children's otherness, the child is defined as uncontrollable. It is important to note the similarities between the negative otherness of the children and the othering which is reproduced in the fourth of Said's orientalistic dogmas – the child is something that needs to be controlled, as is the orient in essence a place that needs to be controlled and feared.[151]

The citations above all tend to the negative otherness of the child as an uncontrolled collective in that it constructs unaccompanied children as legitimate subjects for control. A key factor in reclaiming control of the unaccompanied children is understood and represented to be the determination of the "real" or rather unreal position as children among unaccompanied children, by somehow defining their chronological age. The negative otherness of the child can thus be perceived as particularly relevant for children who somehow challenge the binary of child - adult by existing somewhere in between the two positions and/or the racial connotations of childhood in a given context. Nunn[152] connects the negative view of children's otherness to the issue of race. He argues that children who are subjected to racialization simultaneously become understood as "other people's children". The same

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[147] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 4 February 2016. In Swedish: "[…] utan medicinska bedömningar ökar risken för att den som faktiskt är minderårig felaktigt bedöms vara vuxen."
[148] *Aftonbladet*. 24 February 2016. In Swedish: "Stefan Löfven kräver fler ålderskontroller för att avgöra om ensamkommande flyktingbarn verkligen är barn."
[149] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 6 December 2015. In Swedish: "Det är viktigt att komma ihåg att den här frågan handlar om svensk rättssäkerhet – även för de faktiska barn som kommer till Sverige."
[150] Nunn (2002)
[151] Said (1978:444)
[152] Nunn (2002)

characteristics and behavior that would be rendered sweet (or at least age-relevant behavior) had it been ones (racially) own children become threatening in relation to an Other child. This is what unaccompanied children are subjected to within the material; they become doubly othered: on the basis of their assumed unclear position as children and by the racializing processes they are defined by.

> On paper, those who are from North Africa or Afghanistan are minors, but in reality this is obviously not correct. Adult men are committing crimes but are judged as if they were children. [153]

In the citation above it is argued that "those" that come from entire regions or countries are "obviously" not children, but adult, crime-committing men. The statement is by all means a generalizing and overly simplifying one to make. It rules out and others entire ethnic groups and represents them to be lying criminals, as if every unaccompanied child in fact are adult criminals.

The racialization of unaccompanied children is evident and outspokenly linked to the concept of culture, rather than to the one of race. Assumingly, this have to do with the highly debated concept of race in Sweden, which was mentioned by Hübinette et.al[154], and the euphemistic code that equals "Swede" with white and "Non-Swede" with non-white. It also draws on Bhabha's critique of the concept of cultural diversity[155], in which the dominant culture (the Western) in the postcolonial setting continues to have a superior position in relation to other cultures, who gets to being in the locus of their constructed otherness.

In the control theme, the workings of power/knowledge, discourse and practice are extremely interesting to observe. The normative perception of the child in the Swedish society is obviously quite strictly defined, both what it is understood to be and what it is not understood to be. While seldom stated flat out in the material, the unaccompanied children are suspected of not being "real" or "actual" children because they do not look like or act like "Swedish" children in the normative sense.

While children are being subjected to constant Othering (albeit sometimes positive Othering) due to the societal order of age, the subject position "child" is related to notions of innocence

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[153] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 26 January 2016. In Swedish: "På papperet är de som kommer från Nordafrika eller Afghanistan minderåriga, men I realiteten är det uppenbart att det inte stämmer. Vuxna män begår brott men bedöms som barn."
[154] Hübinette et.al (2012)
[155] Bhabha (1994)

and dependence, as is discussed by Eriksson & Näsman.[156] However, to be understood as a child and thus also a potential victim, is not granted unaccompanied children within this discourse. For an unaccompanied child who have migrated to Sweden and does not possess the 'right kind' of identity documents that can prove their chronological age, the obstacles to being included in the category of "children" are many. When the right kind of documents are lacking, a correlation with certain normative parameters that define the conception of children and childhood is required to prove their position as children – the physical as well and/or mental attributes of the normative child. Unaccompanied children are reconstructed as unreasonable subjects when they and their bodies do not conform to these ideals. The ideals and norms of childhood are never openly defined nor mentioned within the material. They appear to have a matter of fact-like status, which enables the exclusion of them from the conversation. Yet the norms are still obviously relevant. This is remarkable, and show how the naturalization of age as something "biologic", and "natural" overshadows its effect as power-structure.

The resistance towards recognizing unaccompanied children as children has strong racial dimensions to it, as do the unproblematized readiness to assume that they are lying. Miles defined racialization as "a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings".[157] The process of racialization entails the racialization of also the processes in which the racialized are included, and the structures and institutions that result from this racialization. With this in the back of the head, it is evident that unaccompanied children in various ways do not conform to the frames through which "Swedish" children are defined and recognized as children. The position as non-white which implies non-swede is just one. In the process of racialization, the "particular biological features" of unaccompanied children are ascribed with meaning that do not conform to the frames that define childhood in Sweden. Instead, these children are subjected to the exercise of power that is orientalism, as it was described by Ahmed.[158] They get to represent "remoteness" in every way possible. The remoteness becomes part of their assumed characteristics – they are understood and represented to be remote from what a child is and similarly remote from what the West is.

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[156] Eriksson & Näsman (2015)
[157] Miles (1985)
[158] Ahmed (2011: 158)

This thesis is written from somewhere in particular[159], with focus on a specific timeframe and context of the discourse. Therefore, I can zoom in and out of the discourse of unaccompanied children and see how it has changed from the time of the material up until today (May of 2017). What was during the time period studied understood to be controversial suggestions, have today transformed to be a standard procedure and thus normalized.[160] This argues for that the speech within the control theme was somewhat caught in the midst of the discursive production of new bodies of knowledge and practices. With the view of power as not just dominating but also productive come the conclusion that power is what enables the production of discourse, knowledge and subjectivities.[161] The practice of medical age assessments is debated within the material as something that is needed, for reaching the objective of reclaimed control over the situation. In the Foucauldian sense, the practice can be seen as a method that sanctions the institutionalized production of truth effects. The material suggests that by the introduction of medical age assessments, "society", or the imagined community[162], will be able reach its objective, which is to identify the true age of unaccompanied children, and on the basis of this be able to deal with them and solve the problem they are understood to be. The assumption is that the "real" age of the unaccompanied children will not correlate with the age that they have reported. The practice of medical age assessments is presented as the counter-force needed to combat the truth, the hiding of truths, and the unreasonableness once and for all. The practice of medical age assessments, however unsure and problematic it may have been rendered previously, is at the specific time and place in discourse presented as the only reasonable choice – a necessary step on the road towards regaining control. When I go back and study the material today, about three months after I finished my recollection of material, I know with the benefit of hindsight that medical age assessments turned out to become established as a standard procedure. This additionally reveals a notable discursive change within Swedish migration politics. The

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[159] Haraway (1988)

[160] Justitieombudsmannen, Inspektion av Migrationsverket, region Syd, asylprövningen, den 29 november – 1 december 2016, protokoll, Dnr 5625-2016 (Parliamentary Ombudsman, Inspection of the Migration Agency, Region South, asylum investigation) available at:
www.jo.se/Global/Inspektionsprotokoll/Inspektionsprotokoll%205625-2016.pdf
Larsson (2017) In Swedish: "Nu inleds medicinsk åldersbedömning i asylärenden." Dagens Nyheter. 6 March 2017, available at: http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/nu-inleds-medicinsk-aldersbedomning-i-asylarenden/
[161] Foucault (1980: 119)
[162] Anderson (1983)

ground for that change was established during the time frames of the study and was possible due to the production of knowledge that was taking place within and around the material. Discourse define the ways in which we understand the world, and as a result of this it define also our practices.

4.6 The nation state theme: Sweden – freedom, gender equality and democracy under threat

The theme of the nation state is indisputably strong and salient within the material, and is connected to three previous themes. The identity and characteristics of the Other – in this case asylum applicants, and unaccompanied children in particular, are depicted as inherently different from and Other to the identity of the 'we'- the imagined Swedish community. Arguments about what Sweden is and what it stands for are recurrent. Further, it is debated how those standpoints cannot be compromised with, and how the nation state Sweden is under threat. Several positive values including democracy, freedom and gender equality are represented as and understood to be especially Swedish. These values (and therefore Sweden itself) are understood to be threatened due to the arrival of asylum applicants.

> In Sweden, women and men are equal, everyone is allowed to choose their own life. Period.[163]

The assumption that certain values can be equated with a specific nation reproduces the nationalist ideal of the imagined community – in which its members share all the basic values. However, to suggest that values are under threat due to increased migration, as do several of the writers of the material, reveals a seriously xenophobic, binary and static view of gender relations, society and history. Moreover, a quick historical survey shows that the values that are considered to be inherently Swedish have only developed during the last 50 years.[164]

The nation state theme is othering in its nature, in that it presupposes that the nation state – the imagined community, and its population share an identity. In its spirit, some writers state in matter of fact manners that the unaccompanied children "come from" Other cultures or

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[163] *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. 9 February 2016. In Swedish: " I Sverige är kvinnor och män jämställda, här får alla välja sitt liv. Punkt."

[164] Discrimination against women in the workplace was not legislated against until 1979, and rape within the marriage was legally sanctioned until 1965. See. Lag (1979:1118) om jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män i arbetslivet, (*Act on equality between women and men in the workplace*) 1979, available at: https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/lag-19791118om-jamstalldhet-mellan-kvinnor_sfs-1979-1118 and RFSU, available at: Viktiga årtal och reformer. 2010. http://www.rfsu.se/sv/Om-RFSU/RFSUs-historia/Viktiga-artal-och-reformer/

"patriarchal cultures" with "traditional" values. This is understood to be dangerous and "not needed", like in the citation below.

> There is no need for more patriarchal culture.[165]

The term traditional can in this sense represent the unreasonableness and the orientalistic view of the non-westerner as undeveloped, unreasonable and static. The recognition of multiplicity of the other cultures as well as within these cultures is completely locked out of the nation state theme. The failure to understand other cultures as more than simply other was also what Bhabha[166] stated to be the case within the concept of cultural diversity. In the nation state theme, Other cultures than the own are constructed as unitary and "traditional", comparable to the Swedish culture, which one have to assume is understood to be non-traditional (modern) and hence reasonable.

> These are boys and men that exclusively come from "traditional" cultures. The cultural clash that arises with regard to the view of gender relations should not be underestimated.[167]

In the citation above, the description is that the arrival of boys and men from "traditional" cultures expose Sweden to inescapable cultural clashes. Moreover, Sweden is represented to be a non-traditional place as far as gender relations goes.

To state that people "come from" cultures reveal a very static and essentializing view of culture. It reproduces cultures as unchangeable entities that have predefined values and sets of practices that are inherently different from other cultures, and hence shape its "belongers" in ways that are impossible to change. Noteworthy is also that within the nation state theme, Sweden is not equated with culture, but instead with "values". It positions Sweden and its population as bearers of noble and freely chosen values, and the Other - the unaccompanied children, as bearers of "traditional" or "patriarchal" culture (and nothing else).

These assumptions other unaccompanied children further by describing them as so Other that they are doomed to experience shocking "cultural clashes" when faced the reality that is Sweden. Some writers suggest that unaccompanied children's reaction towards this shock is

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[165] *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. 13 February 2016. In Swedish: "Det är inte mer patriarkal kultur som behövs."
[166] Bhabha (1994)
[167] *Göteborgs-Posten*. 12 January 2016. In Swedish: "Det är pojkar och män som uteslutande kommer från "traditionella" kulturer. Den kulturkrock som uppstår i fråga om synen på relationer mellan könen ska inte underskattas."

to commit crimes. This is ultimately suggested to be a way to get back at the nation state that have presented them with these cultural clashes. Within the nation state theme, Othering processes on based on assumptions of gender and race are reproduced. The assumption is that it is the masculinity of unaccompanied children that is threatening Swedish values. This further constructs the Other boys that are unaccompanied children as threatening and aggressive sexual predators, who simply cannot stand the freedom that Swedish women are supposed to enjoy. They are like Fanon describes the black man to be defined, constructed as solely sexual beings[168]. In this Othering process, Swedish men and boys are at the same time cleared from being part of and upholding patriarchal systems.

The repeated mentioning of crimes committed by unaccompanied children (and asylum applicants in general) is once again positioning them as the unreasonable subjects, while at the same time reproducing the image of the nation state Sweden as a very innocent and moral place. It suggests that virtually no crimes were committed in Sweden prior to the increased arrival of asylum applicants in 2015. Sweden, its peace and innocence is thus now under threat due to the influx of Others. As a consequence, Sweden must be protected from them, they who come from other cultures and thence commit crimes.

> In Sweden, everyone shall follow the law. Here everyone shall show respect for democracy, equality and gender equality, for everyone's right to choose their life.[169]

In the citation above, Sweden is represented as a place with very specific characteristics, and demands of their citizens. The narrative of Sweden as a particular place where democracy, obedience of law and gender equality are the natural and eternal values is evident more than once.

> Yes, gender equality is typically Swedish. Dare saying it. […] Liberal democracy is based on values which there is no room to compromise on: respect for the law, for human rights, for equality, for everyone's right to choose their lives. To this is included gender equality between women and men. This applies to everyone living in the country. It is not something to select or deselect. This is quite obvious – but also a challenge: Around 70 percent of the asylum applicants last

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[168] Fanon (1995)
[169] *Sydsvenska Dagbladet*. 3 February 2016. In Swedish: "I Sverige ska alla följa lagen. Här ska alla visa respekt för demokratin, för jämlikhet och jämställdhet, för allas rätt att välja sitt liv."

year were men. Of the more than 35 000 unaccompanied refugee children, 90 percent were boys […] most come from patriarchal cultures. [170]

As we can see in the citation above, the rather wide notion of 'gender equality' is equated to Sweden and "Swedishness", to the extent that writer defines it as "typically" Swedish. In bombastic wordings, the writer describes the grounds on which liberal democracies (like Sweden) are built. The effect is that those grounds are represented to be values that the entire population of Sweden agrees to and identifies with. These values are constructed as something that was recently consensual, but that now are at risk due to the fact that a majority of the unaccompanied children are boys – Other boys "from patriarchal cultures". One can but assume that the culture of Sweden (if Sweden is even associated with the notion of culture and not just "plain values") is not understood to be patriarchal. The fact that there are already millions of men living in Sweden is not raised. The existence of "Swedish" men in Sweden is obviously not thought of as jeopardizing the stability of the Swedish values of for example gender equality and freedom of choice. Clearly, it is not the presence of men and boys per se that entails risks for the gender equal, democratic heaven that is Sweden. It is the influx of the *specific* gender construction that are ascribed the boys that come from Other cultures that make Sweden a place at risk. Unaccompanied children are both racialized and sexualized within the nation state theme and thus doubly othered.

> That the systematic abuses in Köln and Stockholm were committed by men from cultures that have a more traditional view of women should not be surprising. Their encounters with the Western women, who are out enjoying themselves without any veil or in the company of men sends signals that can be perceived as both confusing and provoking. [171]

Do note that the citation above includes a dangling modifier, in that it is unclear whether it is the encounter with the Western women that sends signals or whether it is the "different" manners of Western women that sends signals that can be perceived as confusing and provoking. The citation above comes from an editorial with the title "Culture explain sexual

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[170] *Sydsvenska Dagbladet.* 9 February 2016. In Swedish: "Ja, jämställdhet är typiskt svenskt. Våga säga det. […] Den liberala demokratin bygger på värderingar som det inte finns utrymme att kompromissa kring: respekt för lagar, för mänskliga rättigheter, för jämlikhet, för allas rätt att välja sitt liv. Här ingår också jämställdhet mellan kvinnor och män. Det här gäller alla som bor i landet. Det går inte att välja eller välja bort. Detta är alldeles självklart – men samtidigt en utmaning: Omkring 70 % av de som sökte asyl i fjol var män. Av de drygt 35 000 ensamkommande flyktingbarnen var 90 procent pojkar […] Merparten kommer från patriarkala kulturer."
[171] *Göteborgs-Posten.* 12 January 2016. In Swedish: "Att de systematiska övergreppen i Köln och Stockholm har begåtts av män från kulturer som har en mer traditionell kvinnosyn bör inte förvåna. Deras möten med västvärldens kvinnor, som är ute och roar sig utan vare sig slöja eller i sällskap av män, skickar signaler som kan uppfattas som både förvirrande och provocerande."

abuse", and refers to events where several women and girls were sexually abused in public, in Stockholm as well as in the German city Köln. The culprits are stated to be unaccompanied children. Regardless of which was the case, the specific assumptions made about gender and Other cultures is very present here, as is the denial to recognize unaccompanied children as children. Men originating from so called traditional cultures are portrayed as aggressive and uncontrollable, provoked by the freedom of Western women. It is worth noting that the unaccompanied children are no longer understood to be boys. With the position as a culprit of sexual abuse follows the loss of the position as child and also the position as a potential victim. The Other men (boys) are tied to notions of uncontrolled sexualities, in the sense that Fanon[172] described, which reduces them to sexual beings rather than gendered beings. If the culprits were unaccompanied children, the writer do not understand them as children, but uncivilized beasts who unlike Swedish men can handle themselves and their drives.

Besides than once again revealing a very static view of culture, as something one "comes from", the citation above is highly informed by orientalistic preconceptions. It posits the East and the West as two distinct parts of the world, where one of them is modern and women have the ability to enjoy themselves on the town, unveiled and without any male company. Thereby an alternative reality for women is also produced – the one the Other men are suggested to be used to. There, in the orientalistic preconception, women are banned from the streets unless accompanied by males; veiled and not subjects of enjoyment. That picture is a reality in many places of the world and the point is not to deny it, but rather show how it is constructed as something that every unaccompanied child agrees to and is used to, regardless of what the reality looks like, and regardless of who the culprits were. Thereby, each and every of the four dogmas of orientalism as they were defined by Said are reproduced; the total and systematic difference between the West the Orient, the preference of abstract and essential images of the Orient, the image of the Orient as eternal, coherent, and without the ability to define itself, the view of the Orient as in essence something that should be feared or controlled.[173]

The men or boys who have come from the East, are constructed as deeply troubled by the "Western reality" – to the extent that they have to commit sexual abuse of the women whose freedom they are so provoked by. The writer implies that this entire chain of logic is understandable, since as the title expresses – culture explains sexual abuse. Perhaps a humble

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[172] Fanon (1995:145)
[173] Said (1978: 445)

addition of the word "their" should have been added to the title, to more upfront express what the writer in essence says – their (unaccompanied children, that is) culture explains sexual abuse.

> In Gothenburg, the situation of the shopping mall Nordstan has changed drastically in recent days, this also because of unaccompanied adolescents. [174]

In the editorial from which the citation above is taken, the entire security of the population of Sweden is represented to be at stake. The police is depicted as powerless vis-a-vis the hordes of unaccompanied children that has come to Sweden to commit crimes. Individual crime cases including both rape and knife gashing are discussed with immediate reference to unaccompanied children, which point them out as perpetrators. The "situation" of the mall Nordstan in Gothenburg, has according to the writer changed drastically lately - because of the unaccompanied children who occupy the space. What aspects about the situation of this specific mall that has changed, and in what ways it has to do with unaccompanied children is however not specified, but left for the reader to understand between the lines. The line of argument is that the presence of unaccompanied children in public (Swedish) places changes the entire situations of those places. This can be interpreted to be a metaphor; the presence of unaccompanied children will in the long run change the "situation" for the entire nation state of Sweden. What this change entails can thus be thought of as consensual enough to not require any further comments, but is ultimately the upheaval of the nation state.

> In short, one can say that the police's resources are not enough for protecting the public. This is due to the increased terror threat, but also to the ongoing refugee crisis. [175]

The editorial from which the citations above are taken in an unusually upfront way claims the population's need for protection from "the refugee crisis", but also suggests that the police has become short on resources *because of* the "refugee crisis". The word "refugee crisis" works as a linguistic tool of dehumanization and distance in that it covers the human aspects of the crisis, and depicts it as a phenomenon rather than as human beings. To use the term "refugee

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[174] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 26 January 2016. In Swedish: "I Göteborg är det köpcentret Nordstan där situationen drastiskt ändrat sig på senare tid, även det på grund av ensamkommande ungdomar."

[175] *Svenska Dagbladet*. 26 January 2016. In Swedish: "Helt kort kan man säga att polisens resurser inte räcker till för att skydda allmänheten. Det beror på det höjda terrorhotet men också på den pågående flyktingkrisen".

crisis" rather than just "refugees" enables the writer to put the blame for a number of wrongs on a specific group in society, while still not outspokenly doing so.

The nation state theme is what ultimately yet temporarily ties together the themes that is the editorial discourse on unaccompanied children. Unaccompanied children are othered by the repeated narratives about what Sweden is, and how it is now under attack due to the problem that the group are said to represent. The Othering processes they are subjected to are multiple and based on the intersection of gender, race and age. The othering is thus stronger and more complex, with stronger and more complex consequences as a result. Unaccompanied children are described and understood as the reason to why Sweden and its values are under attack, and the explanation of this threat may be found in "their" culture. The heterogeneity and individuality within the group is completely ignored, and unaccompanied children are constructed as only males, coming from "patriarchal" or "traditional" cultures. The nation state theme reproduces and strengthens the imagined community that is Sweden, and that others (non-members of this community) are to be understood as threats. Within the nation state theme, the status of unaccompanied children as children is also completely ignored, and instead they are constructed as adult criminals with an uncontrolled libidos and anger towards Swedish women – and hence Sweden.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this master's thesis has been to explore and analyze how the media as a body of power produces and reflects knowledge and/as social understandings of the group unaccompanied children, and how these children are constructed and represented as a specific group in relation to the wider discourse on the nation state and its legitimate subjects. The aim has also been to address how this is done through othering processes that operate on the basis of certain assumptions about the nation state, race, gender and age.

To attain this three-fold aim four research questions have been answered in the analysis. Let me conclude by repeating the research questions set forth in the thesis, followed by a summary of the answers to these questions.

- o What assumptions and knowledges construct the general discourse on unaccompanied children as represented in newspaper editorials?

- How is this knowledge and assumptions related to other assumptions about the nation state, race, gender and age?

- How and in what way(s) do the discourse Other unaccompanied children?

- Which subject positions are made available to unaccompanied children within the discourse?

5.1 What assumptions and knowledges construct the general discourse on unaccompanied children as represented in newspaper editorials?

There are several assumptions and knowledges that together construct the general discourse on what unaccompanied children are understood to be. These are largely based on orientalistic preconceptions about the Other, as well as further othering and intersecting preconceptions. The point of departure for and ground assumption of the discourse as well as the knowledge production it entails, presents unaccompanied children as a symptom of a great problem that is the "uncontrolled" migration to Sweden. Unaccompanied children are also represented and understood to be problem in themselves; a problem that requires specific control measures. The situation of unaccompanied children is depicted as in desperate need of reclaimed control. However, neither in relation to the well-being of the unaccompanied children, nor the fulfillment of their specific human rights. The control that is represented to be needed is of such a kind that will cater to the nation state Sweden and the Swedish population. The discourse suggests that the appropriate way to reclaim control over the situation is to control the flesh and blood representatives of the problem; the unaccompanied children. The practice of medical age assessments is understood to be the only possible way to do so. Other possibilities, for instance to believe that unaccompanied children speak the truth about their age, are entirely locked out of the discourse, to the extent that it is never even mentioned. The situation of the "uncontrolled" migration is represented to be a threat towards the entire nation state of Sweden, and so are the unaccompanied children themselves. This in turn opens up for narratives about what Sweden is, and how this essence is under attack. Sweden is understood and represented to be a nation state that is synonymous with certain values, as opposed to culture, which allows the culture that Sweden do have to remain unproblematized and even unnoticed.

5.2 How is this knowledge and assumptions related to assumptions about the nation state, race, gender and age?

The knowledge produced on unaccompanied children assumes that the position of the unaccompanied child is in every way possible Other. Unaccompanied children are constructed and understood to be the Other in relation to the nation state, in that they are represented to be unchangeable cultural beings and bearers of cultures that do not conform with the "Swedish" values that are understood to characterize the nation state of Sweden in its entirety. This knowledge also depicts Sweden as a place beyond culture, but instead with well-reasoned and commonly decided values on democracy, gender equality and freedom.

Unaccompanied children are also at the same time constructed as the racially Other, since they by the representation of them as cultural beings simultaneously are subjected to racialization, and inevitably reduced to stereotypical preconceptions based on their biological features. The racialization is also a factor that enables to rule out unaccompanied children from the position of the child; they do not look like the normative child in the Swedish context and will thus not be recognized to be children.

The construction of unaccompanied children as an all-male group also draws from the Othering processes that racially Other men are subjected to, and this also closes out the possibility to be constructed and understood as "victims". The gender identities of unaccompanied children are ascribed with stereotypical preconceptions, and mentioned with immediate reference to "patriarchal" and "traditional" values. This represents unaccompanied children to be aggressive and sexual beings – uncontrolled in the same way as the Orient is constructed to be.

The issue of age is constantly present within the discourse, and the analysis show that the position of the child (and the extended human rights it is supposed to entail) is unattainable for unaccompanied children. Further, the analysis show that there is a remarkable readiness to deny unaccompanied children the position of the child. There are many reasons as to how the knowledge produced on unaccompanied children is based on these assumptions. What the analysis has shown is that the assumptions and their workings operate at the same time, which opens very narrow frames for wider understandings of unaccompanied children.

5.3 How and in what way(s) do the discourse other unaccompanied children?

The Othering processes that unaccompanied children are subjected to are manifold and based on a intersecting assumptions about gender, race and age. The assumptions based on the mentioned power structures operate in complex and intersecting ways, with complex and intersecting consequences as a result. The structural consequences of binary gender systems have to be understood in relation to other structures. Combined with the racialization that unaccompanied children are subjected to, my analysis shows that unaccompanied children are constructed and understood as Other men, rather than boys (or girls, or other genders for that matter). Albeit sometimes understood as boys, these men are represented to inhibit a masculinity that is somehow "more" patriarchal than the masculinity of Swedish men. Per definition it despises the values of gender equality and freedom of choice that the nation state Sweden is understood to represent. The masculinity of unaccompanied children is underlined, and combined with orientalistic deceptions of Other cultures. The discourse is thus Othering unaccompanied children in every possible way. This is manifested in unchallenged suspicions against unaccompanied children as a collective. Unaccompanied children are othered on the basis of assumptions about race and also in relation to assumptions about the nation state as they are subjectified only in relation to their cultural and racial Otherness. This in turn is related to othering based on assumptions of age, and the otherness of the child, which becomes extra negative when the child is a racially Other child. While never outspoken, the discourse asserts that unaccompanied children do not look like children, and hence are not legitimate or possible victims, objects of care and/or bearers of special rights. Instead, they are represented to be a problem. The problem they are represented to constitute is multifaceted, a problem of sheer numbers and costs, a problem since they are assumed to commit crimes, and a problem because of preconceptions about their cultural belonging. Unaccompanied children are thus constructed as the flesh and blood representation of unreasonable cultures, now present in Sweden due to an unreasonable development, and hence unreasonable subjects. The unreasonableness of the Other cultures that the unaccompanied children are welded to, is understood to threat the nation state of Sweden; its Swedish population and its Swedish values.

5.4 Which subject positions are made available to unaccompanied children within the discourse?

The discourse ascribes unaccompanied children with subject positions that are very limited in complexity and individuality. The speech about the group is exclusively in general terms and represents unaccompanied children as a homogenous group with the same experiences, identity and/or agenda, which closes out any recognition and understanding of unaccompanied children as individual subjects. The heterogeneity among the identities of unaccompanied children is completely ignored, and they are constructed as representatives of "patriarchal" or "traditional" cultures. Already in the first research question, the answer is that unaccompanied children are constructed as a problem. This is the main subject position that the discourse has made available; the one as representative of a problem, and/or as a problem in itself. Moreover, unaccompanied children are neither depicted as a group whose voices should be heard, nor as a group in need (let alone in specific need) of care and/or asylum. The subject positions of unaccompanied children are addressed with agency only when positioning them as adult strategic liars and/or criminals. These positions can further be linked to the orientalistic dichotomy between the West and the East, in which the East is equated with unreason and Otherness. The assumption that unaccompanied children in fact are adults, strengthens the construction of them as unreasonable subjects – adults who claim to be children. This is understood to be unreasonable to the very degree that the mere existence of these subjects is understood and represented to require particular practices. The discursive practices this understanding generated were the establishment of "oral and ocular age assessments" conducted by the asylum case officers at the Migration Agency, who had no competence in neither kind of assessments.[176]This practice was followed by the (re)introduction of medical age assessments.[177]

To neglect the unreasonable subjects that unaccompanied children are formed as the position of the child, is to control the problem that they are additionally represented and understood to be. The main subject position of unaccompanied children as a problem reproduces the standpoint of unaccompanied children as unreasonable subjects by continuous connection to

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[176] Justitieombudsmannen, *Inspektion av Migrationsverket, region Syd, asylprövningen, den 29 november – 1 december* 2016, protokoll, Dnr 5625-2016 (Parliamentary Ombudsman, Inspection of the Migration Agency, Region South, asylum investigation) available at:
www.jo.se/Global/Inspektionsprotokoll/Inspektionsprotokoll%205625-2016.pdf
[177] Larsson(2017) In Swedish: "Nu inleds medicinsk åldersbedömning i asylärenden." *Dagens Nyheter*. 6 March 2017, available at: http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/nu-inleds-medicinsk-aldersbedomning-i-asylarenden/

other discourses in society associated with problems like criminality, segregation and dangerous Other cultures. Thus, the thesis has shown how the discursively ascribed subject positions and understandings of unaccompanied children as represented in newspaper editorials relate to and draw from already established orientalistic notions of the Other. This leaves little or no space for renegotiating the position of the Other. Unaccompanied children are positioned as subjects solely in the locus of their otherness, and inevitably tied to the position of the Other by the intersection of power structures that form the specific othering of this specific group.

6. Final remarks

We have to talk about and critically analyze the ways in which we consume and understand the media. In fact, we have to talk about and critically analyze the ways in which we consume and understand all kinds of knowledges that are available to us. In recent day, the debate about "alternative facts" and a general skepticism against the media has arisen. A possible consequence of this development is that the traditional media, such as the one I have studied in this thesis, will not be recognized as more legitimate than any other media.

Even though this is a tendency to monitor closely, to resist and problematize, I think that we are not quite there yet, and that the material that I have chosen still are considered to be more reliable than many others. As a student of gender studies, a feminist and anti-racist, I believe it to be of utter importance that we (I am referring to the collectives of gender students, feminists and antiracists) show our presence in the debates. We are here and we observe and talk about the discursive changes that enable new kind of knowledges, new assumptions and new practices.

In this thesis, I have tried to be present and contribute with alternative perspectives on an important debate by critically analyzing the representation of the general discourse on unaccompanied children within newspaper editorials. The results of this study shows that the knowledges and assumptions that are constructing the general discourse on unaccompanied children are othering unaccompanied children in several ways, and that this enables discursive practices that are problematic, to say the least.

Allow me to repeat how important it is that we from the discipline of gender studies are there to highlight these othering processes and the intersecting power structures that form them. This is what I find to be most important for the future – increased visibility of and noise from researchers from the field of gender studies. Based on the findings of this thesis, future research may take many potential directions. It would be really interesting to study the wider discourse on unaccompanied children in the Swedish context during an extended period of time in order to be able to identify its potential turning points and changes. This could be done by adding other representations of discourses to the material, like interviews or policy documents, while extending the time period from the one that was studied in this thesis up until today. Based on my findings in this thesis, I think it would be very interesting to further analyze how assumptions about race and more specifically whiteness is related to or synonymous with notions of children and childhood within the Swedish context, and how this

in turn is related to gender. How children that are racialized are understood and represented, and even more interesting; how does it affect the subject's view of oneself and the surrounding society when constantly being ascribed the position of the other in white rooms? To answer these questions I would like to analyze representations of racialized children within the media, and also interview children to get a chance to grasp first hand experiences, and include children in the process of knowledge production.

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