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INNOCENT GIRLS OR JIHADI FIGHTERS?

A frame analysis of the representations of European women
of Daesh in Finnish and Swedish news media

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ABSTRACT

Emma Komulainen: Innocent girls or jihadi fighters? - A frame analysis of the representations of European women of Daesh in Finnish and Swedish news media

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In 2014 a jihadi militia organization called Daesh established a self-proclaimed caliphate in areas of Syria and Iraq which attracted foreign fighters and supporters from all over the world and from many European countries. What set Daesh apart from other Islamist terrorist organizations was its goal to build a state and the fact that many women participated in this project. The women supporters of Daesh can be seen to provide a current day example of politically violent women. Despite the increased number of studies and understanding of different roles that women have in terrorist organizations, it seems that the public continues to view women involved in terrorist organizations and women's political violence as exceptional phenomena.

This thesis studies the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh from the perspective of Finnish and Swedish news media. The topic has raised the attention of numerous scholars in recent years, and case studies have been conducted albeit none could be found in Finland nor in Sweden, thus there is limited knowledge of how the Nordic countries view the phenomenon. This is a research gap that this study aims to fill. The aim of this thesis is to provide a qualitative case study of the representations by Finnish and Swedish news media of European women supporters of Daesh and compare the representations that the news media of the two countries produce. This thesis assumes that news media is the primary source of information for the public regarding women supporters of Daesh, thus the subject of analysis of this study are the depictions of the chosen news media that are analyzed with frame analysis and discussed in the light of academic research of the topic of women and Daesh. Additionally, this thesis compares Finnish and Swedish news media and studies whether and how their depictions differ.

The data consists of news articles of *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Yle News* of Finland and *Dagens Nyheter* and *Sveriges Television* of Sweden that were published in 2014, 2015 and 2016 because during those years many people travelled from abroad to the areas controlled by Daesh. After collecting the news articles the data was limited to five articles of *Helsingin Sanomat* and nine articles of both *Yle News* and *Sveriges Television*, and to four articles of *Dagens Nyheter*. For this thesis I chose frame analysis as the method to analyze the data because it provides an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the content of the news articles and therefore helps to understand representations that the media produces. Frame analysis studies from which point of view a phenomenon is depicted, what aspects are emphasized and what are neglected. Frame analysis is a suited method for this thesis as it studies how the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh is depicted and presented to a broad audience.

The thesis supports the results of previous studies that argue that women's political violence is viewed through their gender and that women related to political violence are depicted as victims not to be blamed for. However, the news articles do not present a coherent representation of the women supporters and some of the articles do recognize that women have variant roles in Daesh and aim to debunk stereotypical assumptions of them. Finally, the data views women supporters of Daesh as a security threat even if they would not have committed acts of political violence.

Keywords: Daesh, women supporters, jihadi terrorism, political violence, gender, frame analysis

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin OriginalityCheck service.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Terrorism is a topic that has been extensively researched in various fields of study. Traditionally the studies have focused on men, however, as the understanding of female participation in terrorism has grown, studies have also increased, such as in the fields of politics, gender studies and psychology (Jacques & Taylor 2009, 499). Despite the increased number of studies and understanding of different roles that women have in terrorist organizations, it seems that the public continues to view women involved in terrorist organizations and women's political violence as exceptional phenomena. The assumption is that women are rarely involved in terrorism and when they are politically violent, they are not fully responsible for it and the violence does not arise from their own initiative (Sjoberg & Gentry 2016, 23).

In 2014 a jihadi militia organization called Daesh¹ established a self-proclaimed caliphate in areas of Syria and Iraq which attracted foreign fighters and supporters from all over the world and from many European countries. Daesh is exceptional compared to other Islamist groups due to the state building project of the organization and because women were involved in this project (Pearson 2018, 853), thus the women supporters of Daesh can be seen to provide a current day example of politically violent women. Eventually Daesh lost the territories that it had controlled, the physical self-proclaimed caliphate was defeated and the women and children who had lived in the caliphate were gathered in the Al-Hawl refugee camp. Now the countries whose citizens are in Al-Hawl have to decide how to deal with them. In the light of the current situation and events it is beneficial to shift attention back to the time of the caliphate when the women supporters of Daesh came to the attention of the public. How did European countries view the women who had decided to leave their home countries and join Daesh or who had expressed their support to the organization in their home countries?

This thesis studies the topic of women supporters of Daesh from the perspective of Finnish and Swedish news media. The topic has raised the attention of numerous scholars during the recent years, and case studies have been conducted albeit none could be found in Finland nor in Sweden, thus there is limited knowledge of how the Nordic countries view the topic. This is a research gap that this study aims to fill. The purpose of this thesis is to provide a qualitative case study of the representations by

¹ Full name of the organization is al-dawla al-islamiyya fi al-Iraq wa al-Shâm

Finnish and Swedish news media of European women supporters of Daesh and compare the news media representations of the two countries. Finnish and Swedish news media provide an interesting comparison because even though Finland and Sweden are neighboring countries, they have different immigration histories, and the phenomenon of jihadi terrorism has affected the countries in different scale.

A central aspect of representations are narratives that interpret and create social world. With narratives we attempt to understand and spread the understanding to others. They also create identities of individuals and groups and illustrate how past events are interpreted and how future events should be understood (Faizullah 2014, 79, 83). This thesis assumes that news media is the primary source of information for the public regarding women supporters of Daesh, thus the subject of analysis of this study are the depictions of the chosen news media that are analyzed with frame analysis and discussed in the light of academic research of the topic of women and Daesh. Additionally, this thesis compares Finnish and Swedish news media and studies whether and how their depictions differ. With these research objectives in mind the main research question is *How do Finnish and Swedish news media depict European women supporters of Daesh?* This question allows to study the phenomenon broadly, without limiting the analysis to certain aspects of the depictions of the women. The question also allows to study women who might not have been members of the organization but who have ties to it. The second research question is *How do the depictions of Finnish and Swedish news media differ from each other?*

The data consists of news articles of *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Yle News* of Finland and *Dagens Nyheter* and *Sveriges Television* of Sweden that were published in 2014, 2015 and 2016 because during those years many people travelled from abroad to the areas controlled by Daesh. After collecting the news articles the data was limited to five articles of *Helsingin Sanomat* and nine articles of both *Yle News* and *Sveriges Television*, and to four articles of *Dagens Nyheter*. For this thesis I chose frame analysis as the method to analyze the data because it provides an opportunity for an in-depth analysis of the content of the news articles and therefore helps to understand representations that the media produces. Frame analysis studies from which point of view a phenomenon is depicted, what aspects are emphasized and what are neglected. Frame analysis is a suited method for this thesis as it studies how the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh is depicted and presented to a broad audience.

The thesis proceeds to introduce the terminology used in this study followed by an introduction of the background and ideology of Daesh. Thereafter the immigration policies and trends in Finland and

Sweden are introduced in order to familiarize the reader with the differences and similarities of the two countries. It is important to understand this context as it assumably affects the media coverage of the women supporters of Daesh. These introductory sections are followed by a section where the theoretical framework of women's political violence is mapped out as the topic of women supporters of Daesh is related to peace and conflict studies through women's political violence. Political violence refers to a wide range of behavior and action that is conducted by an individual or a group and has a political goal of opposing a government or a political rival (Nossek 2004, 349). In this thesis political violence is understood as jihadi terrorism and jihad is understood as its violent form. The theoretical framework is followed by the literature review chapter where I introduce academic and empirical research of recent years on women supporters of Daesh. Additionally, the chapter familiarizes the reader with media representations of Muslim women in Europe. The methodology chapter introduces frame analysis and its usefulness for the purposes of this study. Finally, the thesis will conclude with the data analysis and an evaluation of its results.

1.1 Terminology

This thesis studies European women who 1) have expressed support to Daesh by travelling to the areas controlled by Daesh in 2014-2016 or 2) have expressed their support to the organization through their actions in Europe. Non-citizens who travel abroad to join an organization such as Daesh are often referred to as "foreign fighters". I will not use the term to describe the women because as Anita Perešin (2015, 23) argues, it implies that women and men have same role in the organization although there is not sufficient evidence to support the argument that women serve as combat roles. Additionally, the term limits both women's roles in Daesh and their motivations to travel to the areas controlled by Daesh to participate in combat. The usage of the term "supporter" allows to study European women who have expressed their support to the organization in any role and also in Europe, and does not limit the data to women who have succeeded in traveling to Syria or Iraq. In this context the term "supporter" also refers to women who at some point have expressed support to the ideas of Daesh although their views might have changed later on.

Daesh is also known as ISIS, ISIL, or the Islamic State, which is shortened to IS. I chose to refer to the organization as Daesh, a term that originates from the Arabic name. The term is the equivalent to the English term ISIS, an abbreviation of Islamic State of Iraq and Sham. The term ISIL is used in lesser extent (Koivusaari 2016, 229), thus, I am not inclined to utilize it myself. Finally, the term

“Islamic State” will not be used because the usage of this term could be interpreted as implied support for the self-proclaimed caliphate (Koivusaari 2016, 229).

Women supporters of Daesh is both a foreign and a domestic news topic for many countries, Finland and Sweden included, thus it is important to understand the term domestication. The term refers to a process where news events that are understood as foreign are told in a manner that makes them more familiar and more easily approachable for domestic audiences (Alasuutari, Pertti; Qadir, Ali & Creutz, Karin 2013, 693). Given that Finnish and Swedish citizens are among those who have joined Daesh, it can then be assumed that the respective countries’ media approach the topic with the focus on those citizens who have travelled to the areas controlled by the organization and with the focus on neighboring countries or nearby European countries. Alasuutari et al. (2013, 696) argue that regional politics and nation states construct the way that foreign news stories are told to a domestic audience and that foreign news stories are told in a way that makes them a part of domestic politics. When considering women supporters of Daesh it can be assumed that these politics include the aspect of security; although the women have left their countries of origin and the possible crimes they have committed have been committed inside the borders of other countries, their actions are still viewed from the perspective of their countries of origin and seen as a possible security risk.

1.2 Theoretical framework: Women’s political violence

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on academic research on women’s political violence which for its part is understood in this thesis as jihadi terrorism. Mia Bloom defines terrorism as “deliberate targeting of civilians by non-state agents intending to cause fear and panic and so bring about political change” (2011, 15). The actions and aims of Daesh are in line with this definition. Jihad for its part refers to spreading of the faith and conversion of non-believers which can include the use of force in order to convert people or to defend Islam (Lutz & Lutz 2019, 84).

Although women’s political violence is by no means a new phenomenon (see for example Bloom 2005, 146; Sjoberg & Gentry 2011, 59), an aspect that is always emphasized when speaking about violent women is their gender. The fact that the perpetrators or possible perpetrators of violence are women raises attention, instead of the violence itself. The shock that is followed by women’s political violence in the public is based on the association of political violence with masculinity and the assumption of women as nurturing and inherently peaceful (Melzer 2015, 2). According to Laila Bokhari (2007, 52) there is a belief that violent women destroy the view of the traditional, safe and

innocent portrayal of women. Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry for their part argue that if women are violent, they are not viewed as bad people, they are viewed as bad women who have failed in a two-fold manner: they have failed by breaking societal rules and they have failed as women. If we consider acts of political violence, such as suicide bombings, women do not belong to the category of suicide bomber, instead there is a separate category of women suicide bomber because of their femininity and because they have broken gender roles and thus have to be separated from the dominant gender discourse. (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 3, 8.)

Some scholars argue that the understanding of women as being innocent and unlike perpetrators of violence can give them leverage to conduct attacks and assist terrorist organizations. Karla J. Cunningham argues that women can utilize their gender for the benefit of a terrorist organization on multiple levels. First, because women are not viewed as a threat, they can avoid investigations and second, they can avoid thorough searches, especially of their bodies because of sensitivity reasons. Third, women's ability to bear children enables them to utilize their bodies by concealing bombs and other weapons under maternity clothing by giving the impression that they are pregnant. (Cunningham 2003, 171-172.) Bloom (2011, 22) argues that women are also inclined to be more successful, have higher kill rates and that they are able to penetrate the target more deeply than men, which increases the impact of the attack. Bokhari (2007, 55) supports this argument and adds that women can also gather intelligence from new and broader fields because of taboos identified with women's bodies, clothing and acts. These examples can be interpreted to illustrate how harmful it is to view women as unlike perpetrators of political violence.

Sjoberg and Gentry argue that politically violent women are described with three different narratives: the mother narrative, the whore narrative, and the monster narrative. Within the mother narrative women's actions are described as stemming either from support (the nurturing mother) or from revenge (the vengeful mother). The women who fit or who are placed into the nurturing mother narrative are not seen as extremely threatening, they are rather viewed as criminals. However, their motives for political violence are seen to arise from motherly instincts, thus these women do not challenge the existing gender roles. In contrast, the revengeful mother is more dangerous as women within this narrative act because they have experienced either maternal losses, maternal inadequacies or maternal disbelief and their decisions are based on emotion-driven revenge. (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 73-75.) This narrative emphasizes and strengthens the stereotypical gender role of women as emotional and family centric actors. It also creates a clear dichotomy between women's and men's

political violence and associates the “private life” with women’s “public life”; women cannot act in the public life without private reasons.

The whore narrative for its part views woman’s violence to stem from her sexuality, more specifically from her sexual deviancy. This narrative allows the creators and the receivers of the narrative to ignore the political motivations behind the violence. The usage of the whore narrative also illustrates attitudes towards women’s sexuality and that it is not something that is understood. (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 133.) The third narrative is the monster narrative which argues that women’s violence stems from “a biological flaw that disrupts their femininity” (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 93). The narrative demonizes and ridicules violent women and takes away both their humanity and rationality. According to this narrative the violent women are evil and psychologically damaged and thus not responsible for their actions. (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 94-95.)

In sum, the narratives presented by Sjoberg and Gentry are used both to explain, control and neutralize women’s political violence. The narratives help to understand the phenomenon that otherwise would be difficult to understand and help to cope with women’s violence that would otherwise be a disquieting phenomenon. The narratives also able the establishers and audience to keep relying on existing gender norms instead of challenging them and thus prevent us from challenging the status quo. The narratives also allow to look at violent women as individuals whose violence stems from individual reasons that fit into the narratives described above. These women can thus be viewed as “bad apples” without compromising the female gender as a whole which helps to understand why violent women are narrated in the ways described above, however the narratives are problematic because they give excuses for illegal actions.

1.3 Daesh

Daesh is a militia jihadist organization that started as a local branch of Al Qaeda (Lutz & Lutz 2019, 111) in Iraq. It became involved in the Syrian civil war as an organization that opposed the regime of Bashar al-Assad and managed to become one of the largest opposition organizations. After Daesh had gained power in Syria against the government forces, parts of the organization invaded Iraq and obtained parts of the country under its control. In 2013 the leaders of Daesh split from the parent organization and started to proclaim the establishment of a territorial caliphate that would be located in Raqqa. On June 10th, 2014 Daesh captured Mosul with approximately 1,300 fighters. At the end of the same month the self-proclaimed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi announced that territories of

Western Iraq and Eastern Syria under his control were now a part of the worldwide caliphate, the Islamic State. (Phillips 2016, 196.) Multiple structural shifts contributed to the rise of Daesh. These include the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that led to the weakening of the state and created political and physical space for the growth of the predecessors of Daesh. Other factors include the Syrian civil war itself, the Assad regime, and finally the fact that many actors did not view Daesh as a serious threat in the face of more immediate threats (Phillips, 2016, 205-206).

Daesh bases its ideology and propaganda on Salafism and Wahhabism, two conservative factions of Sunni Islam. Salafism interprets the instructions of the Quran in a literal manner and aims for a life that is as similar as possible with the life of people who lived in the time of the prophet Muhammad. According to Wahhabism, Muslims should trust only the instructions given by the prophet Muhammad and his contemporaries. Daesh has added thoughts of Ibn Taymiya, a medieval Syrian religious scholar, to its ideology. According to Taymiya, in addition to the Quran, religion should also rely on violence and cause terror. Daesh executes these ideas by conducting pretentious and obtrusive attacks that also serve to increase the influence of the organization. The attacks also serve to create the impression that Daesh has a larger militia power than it has in reality. (Koivusaari 2016, 100-104.)

For a period of time Daesh was considered to be the most active terrorist organization in the world. It conducted attacks against areas controlled by opposite groups and neighboring countries, and also against the populations under its control. Many of the victims belonged to religious minorities, such as Shia, Christians and Yazidis, however victims also included those Sunni Arabs who were considered to be disloyal to the organization. Daesh was also responsible for many attacks that were conducted in Europe in the 2010s and was also successful in inspiring and mobilizing lone wolf attacks. (Lutz & Lutz 2019, 112-113.) It was estimated that in 2015 approximately 31,000 people from over 86 countries had travelled to areas controlled by Daesh (Loken & Zelenz 2018, 46) and that over 5,000 of the foreign fighters were from Europe (Tarras-Wahlberg 2016). In 2015 it was estimated that over 600 women from Western states had travelled to the areas controlled by Daesh (Peresin & Cervone 2015, 501-502). According to Finnish Security and Intelligence Service dozens of people joined the caliphate between 2012-2016 from Finland, however they did not provide more accurate number nor estimate how many women were amongst them (Supo Yearbook 2019, 12). Swedish Security Service for its part has estimated that approximately 300 people have joined the caliphate, one third of them women (Swedish Security Service June 27, 2017).

1.4 Immigration policies and trends in Finland and Sweden

In order to better understand the current day public discussion around women supporters of Daesh and the possible differences that rise from the data between Finnish and Swedish news media representations it is beneficial to understand the differences between the immigration policies in Finland and Sweden, given that Daesh has attracted women who usually have an immigrant background (Perešin 2015, 22). This section discusses immigration from three aspects: the heritage of multiculturalism, party politics, and segregation of neighborhoods. The immigration politics of Finland and Sweden have two significant differences: the percentage of immigrants of the total population is much higher in Sweden and empirical research shows that ethnical segregation of neighborhoods has occurred in the country. However, in 2000s the political climate in these two countries has developed in a similar manner and illustrates a development towards hostile values against immigrants.

Amongst the Nordic countries Sweden has been a net receiver of immigrants for the longest time and the country's immigration has been largest in scale. In 2016 the percentage of foreign-born people of the total population was approximately 18 percent whereas in Finland the percentage was only 6.5. (Midtbøen et al. 2018, 15). This difference can be explained by the fact that till late 1970s the migration of Finland was emigration, and the country has generally attracted and accepted fewer immigrants compared to the other Nordic countries. Historically many Finnish immigrants came primarily from Sweden and the former Soviet Union, whereas Sweden received labor immigrants during the post-second World War period. As time went by the immigration population shifted in both countries towards asylum seekers and people that intended to reunite their families. (Bohman 2018, 288, 291.) Today most of the immigrant population of Sweden consist of asylum seekers from Middle Eastern countries, such as Syria (Malmberg et al. 2018, 172) whereas the immigrants of Finland are mostly from Estonia, Russia and Iraq (Statistics Finland 2019). It is notable that Sweden receives mostly asylum seekers from Middle Eastern countries whereas Finland receives immigrants mostly from its two neighboring countries.

For a long time, Sweden and Finland were exceptions among the Nordic countries what comes to immigration and politics because no party with a strong anti-immigration agenda was represented nationally, whereas in Norway and Denmark such parties have hold a place in the parliament from the late 1980s (Bohman 2018, 289). The situation changed during 2000s when the True Finn Party developed a strong anti-immigration agenda (Arter 2012, 815-816) and in the 2011 election the

party's support increased from 4.1 to 19.1 percent (Bohman 2018, 289). Similar development occurred in Sweden a year before when the Sweden Democrats gained seats in the parliament for the first time with the support of 5.7 per cent of the total votes (Hellström, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012, 186). Today the True Finn Party is one of the most popular parties; a survey published by *Yle News* (8.1.2021) estimated that the party's support was approximately 21.9 per cent which made it the most popular party of the measurement. The Sweden Democrats for their part won the 2018 election with the support of 17.5 per cent (Politico 2018). The increased support received by the parties illustrates that the countries have experienced a shift towards anti-immigration values. The political climate in Sweden and Finland matters because a hostile political atmosphere may cause feelings of threat which for its part can affect the way how the population feels about immigrants. Andrea Bohman defines the True Finn Party and the Sweden Democrats as radical right parties due to certain characteristics that these parties share. The characteristics include rhetoric that portrays immigrants as a threat to the native population and nativism which is an ideology that views immigrants as a threat to the homogeneity of a nation and views that inhabitants should include only members of the native group. The nation is thus defined from the perspective of ethnicity which means that citizenship or place of birth are not necessarily sufficient criteria's for belonging to a nation. (Bohman 2018, 289-290.) The Sweden Democrats illustrate this view by stating that to be a Swede requires historical attachment to Swedish culture and to a predefined Swedish identity (Hellström et al. 2012, 197-198). Additionally, these parties demand actions to decrease immigration in order to protect the native group and its cultural features from the influences of so-called outsiders, especially if the immigrants do not share ethnicity or religion with the native group (Bohman 2018, 289-290). Some scholars argue that these hostile attitudes towards immigrants and people who do not share the dominant ethnicity of a country are a factor that motivates people to join Daesh (see for example Loken & Zelenz 2018, 48-63) which is why it is important to understand the political climate in Finland and Sweden. Negative attitudes as a motivator is discussed further in the literature review chapter.

The political development of Sweden and Finland have similarities, however an aspect considering immigration separates the countries: segregation of neighborhoods based on the ethnicity of the population. Segregation of neighborhoods implies that different groups live apart from each other and have limited contacts with each other (Massey & Denton 1988, 283). Åsa Bråmås argues that in most cities of Sweden the segregation of residential areas has increased since 1990 despite efforts to decrease this phenomenon. A study of Bråmås conducted in the city of Gothenburg shows that the highest level of residential segregation was in the areas that were highly populated by immigrants from Africa and Western Asia, whereas the level was lower when the immigrants were for example

from Western Europe. (Bråmås 2008, 101-103.) This illustrates a hierarchy between different immigrant populations. A more recent study conducted in several areas of Sweden for its part found that although the increased percentage of immigrants in the total population has created neighborhoods that have a high portion of immigrants the trend of segregation is declining. The reason for this is that immigration has affected majority of neighborhoods, not merely those that are populated mostly by immigrants. (Malmberg et al. 2018, 189.) Another recent study supports these findings as it argues that a very small portion of the population lives in areas that have “low concentrations of non-European migrants” (Andersson et al. 2018, 271). The results indicate that the segregation of Sweden has taken a turn towards assimilation of neighborhoods (Andersson et al. 2018, 271). The results also illustrate that immigration has affected Sweden on a large scale. The smaller immigration population of Finland can be interpreted to explain why the segregation has not been as notable nor drastic as in Sweden.

This brief review of the immigration backgrounds of Finland and Sweden helps to understand the public discussion about women supporters of Daesh and the possible differences that rise from the data between the two countries. The review shows that Finland and Sweden have alternative heritages of multiculturalism as the countries have received immigrants from different countries and in different scale. It also indicates that the two countries have begun to increasingly support political parties with anti-immigration values which can reflect on how the populations of the countries view minorities. This shift in values for its part can affect how the news media discuss the topic of women supporters of Daesh. The purpose of this thesis is not to study the relationship between the immigration policies and the public discussion about women supporters of Daesh, however it is worthwhile to consider the connection between the two topics and study how immigration and ethnicity are represented in the data.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW - Women, terrorism and media representations

In this chapter I will explore how academic research of recent years understands the phenomenon of Western women and Daesh. This chapter explores mostly empirical research, however it also relies on other academic research. Additionally, I will describe how European media has depicted Muslim women and what critique research has presented towards these depictions.

2.1 Who join and why?

Empirical research of recent years has taken an interest on the reasons that Western women have for joining Daesh. In her study that relies on pre-existing knowledge Perešin (2015, 21) explains this interest by arguing that understanding the motives of the women is important because it helps to evaluate the capacity of these women to conduct violent actions either in the areas controlled by Daesh or in their countries of origin. This explanation illustrates that these women are viewed as a possible security threat to the Western countries. Research shows that women join Daesh for a variety of reasons similar to those of men. In their empirical study conducted within Muslim communities of five different countries Elizabeth Pearson and Emily Winterbotham (2017, 61) argue that the reasons can be divided to push and pull factors of which push factors include discrimination and poverty, whereas pull factors include ideological reasons. In their study on social media activity of 17 women recruits Meredith Loken and Anna Zelenz (2018, 48-63) argue for their part that many of the Western recruits belong to the middle class, are radicalized individually online and do not have pre-existing connections to Daesh. They also argue that most of the women do not come from religious families and that they seek traditional gender roles that to others would seem to be against their wellbeing. Additionally, Erin Maria Saltman and Melanie Smith (2015, 16) suggests in their policy report for the Institute of Strategic Dialogue that the females who join are young, majority of them in their late teenage years to early twenties. As the study of Loken and Zelenz (2018) the report of Saltman and Smith is also based on social media material.

Loke and Zelenz (2018, 53) argue that *hijra*, the journey to the caliphate of Daesh, is also a factor that draws women to the organization. Additionally, in their report for the Institute of Strategic Dialogue based on women's social media accounts Carolyn Hoyle, Alexandra Bradford and Ross Frenett (2015, 13) argue that the women have a strong belief in the afterlife and the fulfilment of the religious duty of *hijra* is seen as a path to heaven. The women also feel that *hijra* enables them to

participate in the creation and maintenance of the caliphate. Hoyle et al. emphasize the importance of the participation to the building of the caliphate for the women as follows:

“They hope to contribute to this society, governed by a strict interpretation of shari’ah law. In this way, ISIS’s territorial gains and state-building project are crucial in attracting the women, who can see they have an important role to play in the new society.” (Hoyle et al. 2015, 12)

In their study based on research, media reports and propaganda material Ruth Gan, Loo Seng Neo, Jeffery Chin and Majeed Khader support the argument that women join because of ideological reasons and argue that women who seek to live according to religious rules and find meaning to their lives through religion find it online and that the material empowers them. (Gan et al. 2019, 212.) Perešin (2015, 25) for her part argues that ideological reasons alone do not motivate women for *hijra* and that financial benefits offered by Daesh and the sense of security that they create can motivate them to join the caliphate, although this reason is not often brought forward.

Loken and Zelenz (2018, 48-63) further argue that women feel politically and religiously isolated and targeted in their home countries which draws them to Daesh. In her study based on the manifest published by the Al-Khansaa brigade, an all-female police or combat unit of Daesh, Zehra Yilmaz (2017, 35-36) supports these findings and argues that the women who join have felt that they do not belong and are at a lower hierarchical level because of their religion. For them Daesh offers a place to belong equally under shared religion and escape the established cultural hierarchy of the West. Gan et al. (2019, 212-214) also argue that alienation and inequality, such as discrimination for religious reasons are push factors that motivate women to join.

Gan et al. (2019, 212-214) further argue that although women initially become aware of the ideology of Daesh individually, peer support networks formed online might motivate some women to join along with strong friendships outside the Internet. The importance of peer influence manifests itself through the habit of young women and girls to travel to the caliphate in groups. The support that the girls receive from their peers can also function as a compensation for the lack of support they receive from their families. As argued by Perešin (2015, 22), there is no evidence that the individual female migrants would receive support for the journey from their families, on the contrary, Hoyle et al. (2015, 17) suggest that families can persuade the women to postpone or even reject the migration. Finally, women can be motivated to join because of humanitarian reasons and in order to aid the people of

Syria after viewing visual imagery of the conflict. The women identify themselves with the Muslims who are suffering and when this identification is combined with disapproval and anger for their countries' foreign policy decisions they can function as push factors to extremism (Perešin 2015, 24). Thus, the reasons women might have to join Daesh are complex, both personal and public, and also related to larger socio-political issues in their countries of origin. In her book based on previous academic work and ethnography Kristiina Koivusaari (2016, 9) emphasizes the importance of understanding the public motives because reasons for violent jihadism cannot be reduced to problems of individuals. Based on the empirical research it can be argued that the phenomenon of women joining Daesh should be viewed as a socio-political phenomenon that is however affected by personal reasons of individuals.

The literature also notes that women's involvement in Daesh is a phenomenon that puzzles policy makers and the public. Loken and Zelenz (2018, 46) argue that to the policy makers and the public the successful recruitment of foreigners is difficult to understand given the harsh and conservative attitudes of Daesh. Because the recruited foreign women come from relatively gender equal societies, they challenge the interpretations of Western states regarding intervention and international security. In her study on depictions in three British broadsheets of women who have joined Daesh Alice Martini (2018, 461) argues that the women also challenge the assumptions about Muslim women as victims who have to be saved and moreover, they turn against their saviors which is inexplicable and considered as a betrayal. The inability to understand the motives of the women also indicates that the so called "Western values" are viewed in a hierarchical manner where the "Western values" are on top and others are viewed as extraordinary and inferior. It also shows inability to understand the shortcomings of the Western states. Sjoberg and Gentry for their part criticize media for portraying women as vulnerable targets of manipulation of Daesh. This approach relies on the assumption that women are more peaceful than men by nature and that women's vulnerability allures them to terrorism. This portray misleads people to think that women are not capable for making decisions on their own and illustrates that a violent woman is an absurd idea for media and that they aspire to explain it away instead of seeking to understand the phenomenon. (Sjoberg & Gentry 2016, 25.)

Two common aspects addressed by academic research are the roles of marital hopes and romance as reasons for women to join Daesh. In the public the women who have joined because of marital hopes or in the pursue of a romance are depicted as jihadi brides. According to Sjoberg and Gentry (2015, 133) the jihadi bride depiction can be viewed as a narrative that explains women's involvement in terrorism stemming from their sexuality that motivates them to commit violence. This narrative

allows the audience to ignore the possible political motivations that the women might have. Martini (2018, 467) for her part argues that portraying the women as jihadi brides can also make them seem incoherent and non-credible because they were willing to join a terrorist organization because of marital hopes.

Some researchers argue that marriage is a major factor that motivates especially young females to join (see for example Saltman & Smith 2015, 16; Perešin 2015, 25). Martini argues that marital ties are often used as an explanation of why women have become involved in Daesh and sometimes this explanation portrays the women as passive actors. Martini suggests that even if marriage is the reason why women wish to join Daesh, the goal does not make them weak or passive; on the contrary, studies suggest that women who seek after a marriage with a Daesh fighter are willing to risk their life to pursue that goal. Martini also argues that women who join are usually married soon due to the nation-building goal and Islamic background of Daesh; however, this is often viewed in the media as the reason why women joined even though their main intention might have been something else. A factor that supports the argument that women have other than marital reasons to join Daesh is that women who lose their husbands do not wish to return but intend to stay in the area controlled by the terrorist organization. This illustrates that they are themselves motivated and committed to Daesh. (Martini 2018, 466-467.) However, despite these arguments it should not necessarily be assumed that because women tend to stay in the caliphate there are no women amongst them who would wish to leave the area and are not able to fulfill that goal for example due to strict border control. Loken and Zelenz (2018, 58) for their part suggest that marriage is a factor that motivates women to join the caliphate, however it is not viewed from the perspective of romance, instead women see marriage as a part of their jihad, as a religious duty along with the duty of bearing children for the caliphate. Women's roles as wives and mothers in Daesh cannot thus be simplified to the narrative of "jihadi brides". Shakira Hussein (2019, 199-200) for her part suggests that because women do not have the possibility to live independently in the caliphate, they might marry in order to be able to live in the caliphate, not live in the caliphate in order to get married. These studies conclude that the women's role in Daesh is a complex issue that contains marital ties, politics and ideology.

Bloom whose work is based on ethnographic field research argues that often women have multilayered reasons for joining a terrorist organization and becoming politically violent. Sometimes it is difficult to identify whether a woman has joined voluntarily or because of coercion. Bloom identifies four reasons that women tend to have when they have become involved in terrorism: revenge, redemption, relationship and respect. One or several of these aspects motivate women.

Revenge for a close family member is a widely recognized motivator. Redemption for past sins such as a relationship that is seen as inappropriate, can motivate women to conduct an attack in order to be released from the sins. Relationship with an insurgent or a jihadist is also an important factor and provides a way for a woman to enter a terrorist group and ensures that she will be loyal to the organization. Finally, women can seek to gain respect in their community and become involved in a terrorist organization in order to illustrate their commitment to the cause. Bloom adds rape as the fifth factor that motivates women to join. Women who are motivated by rape act for similar reasons as those motivated by redemption, although Bloom argues that women who have been raped are involuntary recruits who commit acts against targets that are not to blame and work for the benefit of their wrongdoers. (Bloom 2011, 234-237.) The arguments of Bloom are in conflict with researchers who argue that women do not become involved for personal reasons and see this as a way to undermine the women's role and reasons for joining. In her study based on previous academic research Cunningham (2003, 171, 186) argues that the assumption that most women become involved in terrorist violence because of personal relationships or because of a personal tragedy suggests that women do not become involved in a terrorist organization because of their own will and ideology, rather they are drawn in. This depicts them at least as reluctant if not even victimized participants and also curtails women's credibility and impact within and outside terrorist organizations. For her part Laila Bokhari (2007, 54) states that the assumptions presented above suggest that women are victims of the environments they live in and are compelled into an atmosphere that inspires them to dedicate their life to radicalism. This assumption also emphasizes the power relationships between the sexes and illustrate that women are easily viewed as actors in the private sector, not in the public. The drastic difference between the views of these scholars illustrates that there is not a unanimous understanding of the phenomenon in the academia.

Yet not all researchers ask the question as to why Western women join Daesh, on the contrary some denounce the question. According to Yılmaz the question is problematic and expresses discriminatory language. Additionally, it illustrates confusion towards the migration to the East instead of the West and represents orientalism. The usage of the term "Western" women also advances dichotomist language and expresses the underlying question of why these women wish to join an organization that acts against Western values. Finally, the question does not ponder why Eastern women join Daesh and emphasizes Muslim women in the West which builds hierarchical language between Western Muslim women and Eastern Muslim women. (Yılmaz 2017, 33.) The critique presented by Yılmaz illustrates that the style in which the phenomenon of women and Daesh has been studied is problematic and should be evaluated critically. However, it can be assumed that the common goal of

the researchers to answer why women join expresses that the phenomenon is yet to be understood, possibly due to its novelty.

2.2 Women's roles in Daesh

Daesh has successfully used propaganda to gain support and encourage people to join the caliphate. According to Perešin (2015, 25-26) the propaganda is used to motivate women to join in three ways: by providing them solutions to the frustrations and discontentment they experience in their lives, by offering help for their journey and by illustrating that their material and immaterial living conditions will improve once they join Daesh.

In her policy report *Promises of Paradise: IS Propaganda towards Women* (International Centre for Counter-Terrorism 2016), Louisa Tarras-Wahlberg introduces seven promises that Daesh makes specifically for women in their official propaganda. These promises help to understand the organization and its values, as well as how the organization understands gender roles and women's place in the caliphate. The promises have been adapted from the report of Tarras-Wahlberg (2016) and are as follows:

- 1) Promise to offer the opportunity to fulfill religious duty and live better lives which will reward women in this life and in the afterlife.
- 2) Promise to offer the women a central role in the state building process of the Caliphate that manifests itself in three ways. First, women will be esteemed wives of the fighters and offer them support. Second, they will be mothers who will raise the next generation of fighters and thus ensure the constancy of the Caliphate. Third, they can become state officials through studies in medicine or pedagogy.
- 3) Promise to offer the women a sense of belonging and equal treatment regardless of nationality, ethnicity or skin color.
- 4) Promise of sisterhood, which in the propaganda is introduced for example as polygyny which offers security, honor and dignity to all women, including the widows of fighters.
- 5) Promise of an adventure; only the most courageous women travel to the Caliphate. The propaganda tells that cowards should stay in the West.
- 6) Promise of a romance with an attractive and strong man. Women who live with men who are un-faithful to God are encouraged to abandon them. Marriage with a man of Daesh is promised to re-ward the women both in this life and in the afterlife.

- 7) Promise of increased influence both in Daesh and in international politics, which is achieved with the domination over women of different religions, such as Yazidis.

Though the promises are propaganda they reveal many aspects of the values and norms of Daesh. The first promise states that it is not merely a good decision to join Daesh, it is a religious obligation that will be worthwhile both for this life and for the afterlife also. The second promise depicts which roles women have in the Islamic State; however, these roles also illustrate what is expected of the women who join. The second promise also shows the importance of women: they are essential for the continuity of the caliphate. The third and fourth promises illustrate that in Daesh women will find a place where they truly belong and where they will be treated in a fair and equal way. One can assume that these promises appeal to women who would not necessarily gain these possibilities without Daesh. The fourth promise depicts what sisterhood means in practise; in the spirit of sisterhood women share even their husbands which offers them protection in the case their husbands should die. This also shows that despite the protective sisterhood women also need men in the caliphate. The fifth promise illustrates that Daesh does not need the weak ones to join the caliphate and that the journey is made only by the courageous ones. This indicates that supporters have the opportunity to prove their bravery by making the journey to the caliphate and also challenges them: the organization dares people to make the journey. The sixth promise states that a relationship with a man of Daesh rewards women both romantically and from the aspect of their religion. It is thus a double win for the women: as they gain romantically, they gain religiously and vice versa. Finally, the seventh promise describes how Daesh threatens women of different faiths and shows that the organization believes that power is achieved with oppression, which the women who join the caliphate will participate in. Overall, the propaganda aims to appeal to women on many levels, most importantly to their religiosity. The propaganda reminds women of their religious duties and offers a channel to fulfil them. Women are promised seemingly multiple roles in the caliphate; however, they are restrictive, and women have specific places “assigned” to them. The propaganda also depicts the values and norms of Daesh and illustrates how people who are considered to be enemies are viewed and threatened.

The promises presented above are interesting because they depict both stereotypical assumptions of why women become involved in a terrorist organization and also present active roles that deviate from the traditional ones. It is notable that the propaganda does not state that women can participate to battle, however it promises women other important roles. Tarras-Wahlberg does not identify if the propaganda promises presented in her study are in a particular order or not. If the promises do appear

in order of importance, it can be concluded that religious duty is the most important reason to join the caliphate and after that come the traditional responsibilities of a mother and a wife. After comes sisterhood. This illustrates that the roles offered to women are traditional and also reflects the order of loyalty: first God, then husband and family and afterwards belonging with other women.

The propaganda indicates the different roles that women have in Daesh. The roles have interested scholars who have looked at them in detail and argue that women have multiple roles in Daesh. They have supportive roles, such as mothers and wives, and roles that are viewed as more active such as recruiters and fighters. Gan et al. (2019, 209-210) argue that after the formation of Daesh women have had the following roles along with the roles of a mother, wife and sister: policing official, recruiter and propaganda spokesperson. The role of policing official is fulfilled by the women of Al-Khansaa. The Al-Khansaa brigade oversees that women follow the morality code of Daesh, which includes modest dress code and segregation of sexes. Al-Khansaa members also operate at checkpoints, take part in home raids “in addition to being recruiters, trainers of women suicide bombers, wives and homemakers, fundraisers, and propagandists” (Ispahani 2016, 102). The Al-Khansaa brigade illustrates that women can operate in similar roles as men; however, their power is limited to control over other women and is tied to the strict, gender-based rules.

Daesh has been successful in recruiting people to its ranks from all over the world and an important factor in the successful recruitment is the Internet and social media where Daesh supporters can spread their message and find new recruits. The social media platforms used by Daesh include Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube (Perešin 2015, 26). In her article based on Twitter activity of Daesh supporters Elizabeth Pearson argues that women’s role in the recruitment process has interest scholars due to the fact that women play an important role in the caliphate building process of Daesh which differentiates the organization from previous Islamists groups. This state centric goal also explains why Daesh has been keen on recruiting women. Pearson concludes that women who support Daesh are highly active online, which has for a long period of time been a trend in women’s Islamist activity. This can be explained by the different gender norms that women have to follow offline versus online. Some authors suggest that women extremists view online spaces as free of gender restrictions and boundaries that women face offline, and thus online spaces are liberating. This concerns especially female aggression which women are free to express online. Gender norms and behavioral expectations can explain why women are more easily recruited online than in offline spaces. Moreover, women are active recruiters themselves. (Pearson 2018, 853-854.) They share official propaganda of Daesh about alleged success in battles, promote the ideology and

post slogans, and additionally share their own experiences in the organization, which has proven to be an effective strategy to motivate women to join. The goal is to create a positive image of the life under the rule of Daesh to possible followers (Perešin 2015, 26).

Gan et al. (2019, 209-211, 215) suggest that women can and have performed the role of a fighter or a suicide bomber. The shift in women's roles from traditional ones to similar roles as men can be explained with the increased involvement of women in the organization, decrease in the number of male foreign fighters and the deaths of male fighters in battles which has caused Daesh to engage women in violent jihad. However, not all studies support the claims that suggest that women act as fighters. Hoyle et al. (2015, 22-23) suggest that women who have travelled to the caliphate from abroad live predominantly domestic life and their action outside home is restricted especially if a woman is unmarried. They also argue that women are not fighters and that the security threat they pose differs from the one posed by men:

“- - the muhajirat are not fighters and should not be referred to as such. The threat they currently pose is a different one than that posed by their male counterparts. Females recruit and assist others to join ISIS. They support male fighters in a non-military capacity and encourage attacks on the West by those who cannot travel. They demonstrate support for brutal violence equal in its strength to the men of ISIS. They also demonstrate a capacity and willingness to engage in violence and even suicide attacks should circumstances change.” (Hoyle et al. 2015, 38)

The study thus takes a clear stance on the role women have in Daesh and participation to battles is not part of their lives even if the women were eager to participate. Anita Perešin and Alberto Cervone however argue the contrary. In their article titled *The Western Muhajirat of ISIS* they study the manifest released by the Al-Khanssaa brigade that depicts the rules that women in Daesh have to follow. Perešin and Cervone (2015, 501-502) argue that according to this document combatant role is not excluded for women, however it is restricted to exceptional situations. Hussein (2019, 200) for her part argues that once Daesh started to lose control over the territory that it had seized the organization posted articles that stated that armed jihad was obligatory for women as well and additionally published material that seemed to depict women participating in battles. This contradiction in academic literature illustrates that the research relies on secondary sources which leaves more room for different interpretations.

2.3 Studies on representations of Muslim women in the European media

As this thesis studies representations of women supporters of Daesh it is necessary to look how Muslim women have previously been depicted in the European media as this background can indicate what to look from the data of this thesis. Public discussion about European Muslims is framed around the assumed notion that Islam and the “Western values” are incompatible (see for example Korteweg & Yurdakul 2009, 218). Although there is plenty of literature on the topic of media representations of Muslim women and of Muslims in general from different parts of Europe, the research conducted for this thesis provided no studies from Finland and one from Sweden, the countries that are the focus of this thesis.

In her study based on reflections of six Muslim women Fauzia Ahmad studies descriptions of British Muslim women after the London bombings of July 7, 2005 and after the attempted bombing in London and Glasgow in June 2007. The bombings raised a discussion around Muslim women’s clothing, integration and security. Some universities banded wearing of the niqab on their campuses because it was viewed as a security risk, while Jack Straw, then leader of the House of Commons, questioned the integration of those women who were wearing the niqab. According to Ahmad this discussion in the media renews dichotomic frameworks between modern West versus traditional Muslim. Ahmad also found that the media narratives are alienating and othering towards Muslims despite efforts made by sectors of the British media and by some journalists. Alienation and othering occur with overlapping themes that are presented in the media, such as an inclination to attach negativity into stories that are related to Muslims, lack of distinction between terms Islam and Muslim and attachment of labels such as “extremist” to Muslims. Muslims are also blamed for failed integration which is presented in contexts that criticize multiculturalism and see it as a failed project. This perception is strengthened with the usage of problems such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation and honor killings. According to Ahmad all these increase the us versus them thinking. Ahmad also associates the British discussion around Muslim women to the broader discussion about Muslim women after 9/11 that caused Muslim women to experience feelings of loss of control related to their right to self-define their images as many articles were written about them instead of by them despite the availability of numerous Muslim women writers. (Ahmad 2010, 245, 251, 254.)

A more recent study has been conducted in Sweden by Nina Jakku who has studied publications of three authors and found common Islamophobic features between their texts about Muslim women. Jakku argues that the writers make interpretations from their own standpoint and do not consider

alternative approaches to the topic. She also argues with examples from Swedish media that discussion revolves around Muslim women's clothing, the headscarf and also burqa. Some writers have even associated these items to honor related violence and genital mutilation which according to Jakku is a common rhetoric tool. (Jakku 2018, 8.) In her study based on media sources and existing academic work Laura Navarro (2010, 100) has found similar results and argues that most news stories about Muslim women bring forward violence against women, especially stoning, genital mutilation and polygamy, which connects Islam with discrimination and physical violence against women. A term that describes the association between words is metonymy, which means that a concept is referred to by using a word that is closely related to the concept (Ahmed 2004, 131-132). In practice this means that repeated association between terms can cause the audience to understand the terms as naturally belonging together. Therefore, the association made by media between Muslim women, their clothing and specific forms of violence against women is dangerous as it can cause the readers to further view Muslim women as oppressed and their religion as a cause for this oppression.

Jakku further argues that the writers focus on gender and sexuality of Muslim women and thus present them in a stereotypical manner as passive actors who are controlled by the desire of men. She also argues that with the negative depictions of niqab and burqa the authors communicate that successful integration demands the Muslim women to essentially undress themselves. The writers studied by Jakku conclude that the niqab should be banned in the name of gender equality, secularity and freedom of choice. (Jakku 2018, 9-10.) This conclusion is reached without consulting women who have experience of wearing the niqab. Jakku argues as follows:

“The writers impose their own interpretations of what religiosity means on these women when stating that the niqab does not qualify as a religious symbol, completely disregarding and silencing the possible objections of niqab-wearers themselves. Nor do they take into consideration their own participation in meaning-making connected to the niqab.” (2018, 9)

Jakku also points out that the discussion around Muslim women's clothing differs from the discussion around Muslim political subject, although both are stereotypical and rely on Islamophobic ideas. Jakku argues that “The oppressed hijab-wearing woman must be saved by us, while the Muslim political subject is a person from whom we (or the democracy) needs to be saved” (2018, 10). Two conclusions can be made regards to the argument. First, the understanding of Muslim women as oppressed is inherently orientalist and views “Western values” as a safe haven from oppression.

However, the oppressed women are safe under Western conditions, which means submission to other set of rules. Second, the views of Muslim political subject as a threat reveals that the subject has been securitized. Securitization can widely be defined as categorization of a phenomenon as a security threat and involves the attempt to control it (Martikainen & Tiilikainen 2014, 15). The securitizing actors (those who claim that an object is a security threat) present the object of securitization as a threat for the survival of an important object, such as a state. This threat to the very existence of an object allows the securitising actor to use exceptional measures and possible overstepping of rules to protect the object. (Buzan & Wæver 2003, 71.)

The examples presented above share certain characteristics. Although the authors argue that progress has been made in the media representations of Muslim women the representations emphasize certain problematic aspects. First, they focus on wardrobe of Muslim women (the headscarf and burqa) and attach these clothing items into broader discussion around Muslim women's rights and oppression. The clothes are not only clothes, they represent lack of rights and failed integration, and possibly also pose a security risk for the West. Second, the discussions portray Muslim women as victims through issues such as genital mutilation and honor-related violence. These issues and the question about wardrobe are closely related to their bodies and gender. Third, the examples illustrate that the media presents Muslim women as "others". They represent something uncommon and exceptional, and their outer appearance begs the question of how successful their integration process has been and what threat they possibly pose, however at the same time they are seen as a dominated group that needs to be saved by the West. Finally, the research illustrates that the Muslim women themselves are not heard; they are described by others. The media representations thus include multiple themes that are related to each other and present orientalism, racism, sexism and differentiating. They also illustrate that Muslim women are viewed and depicted as a homogenous group that consist of women with immigration background.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has depicted the current empirical work on politically violent women and women in Daesh, as well as the media representations of Muslim women in European countries. These topics have interested many scholars as there is plenty of literature on these topics from recent years. However, there is no literature that would study the topic of women in Daesh in the context of Finland or Sweden which leads to think that the focus of the research is not currently on the Nordic countries. This is a research gap that this thesis aims to fulfil.

The European media representations of Muslim women illustrate many problematic and Islamophobic features: Muslim women are depicted as outsiders whose integration is questioned. They are also portrayed as victims who have to be saved, however they are simultaneously viewed as a possible security threat for the Western countries due to their outer appearance. It should be noted that the media representations of Muslim women presented above cover Muslim women in general, not Muslim women who have committed acts of political violence which indicates that hostile attitudes are not reserved only for politically violent women. This background knowledge on media representations of Muslim women is beneficial as it might indicate what is the direction taken by the news media data of this thesis that studies women supporters of a terrorist organization.

Empirical research approaches the topic of women in Daesh in a diverse manner and aims to understand what causes women to join the organization and what their role in the militia jihadist group is. However, it seems that the research fails to recognize that in Daesh the reality does not always match the expectations of women who do not have the possibility to change their minds once they have joined. Although empirical research recognizes that in Daesh women have to follow strict gender-based rules it tends to emphasize the active roles that women have in the organization and thus expands the narrative of the women. This has its merits as it breaks the stereotypical understanding of the women; however, we should be aware that it is difficult to receive accurate information on the women who lived in the areas controlled by Daesh. Perešin and Cervone argue that the amount of information on women in Daesh is limited for two reasons. First, the media coverage is not neutral due to merciless treatment and executions of foreign humanitarian workers and reporters which has led to biased reports. Second, the online posts of women in Daesh cannot be viewed as reliable sources of information because of weak privacy and possible censorship and manipulation. (Perešin & Cervone 2015, 501.) This illustrates that the information should be approached in a critical manner. It is evident that more first-hand knowledge is required, though this information is difficult to access.

3 METHODOLOGY

As stated in the introduction chapter the research questions of this study are *How do Finnish and Swedish news media depict European women supporters of Daesh?* The second research question is *How do the depictions of Finnish and Swedish news media differ from each other?* The thesis aims to answer these questions with frame analysis that has been utilized to conduct the study from data collection to analysis. This chapter introduces the method and argues why it is beneficial for the purposes of this study, after which the chapter continues to describe how the chosen method was utilized to collect and analyze the data. The chapter ends with a discussion on the limitation of the chosen data and methodology and describes how this study takes into account the ethical considerations.

3.1 Frame analysis

Researchers agree that mass media have influence and that it is worthwhile to study. Bernard Cecil Cohen (1963, 13) argues that the press does not necessarily succeed to tell the media consumers what to think, however it is successful in telling them what to think about. William A. Gamson and Andre Modigliani (1989, 3) argue that the usefulness of studying media is based on its dominance on the issue culture, on the creation of which media contributes in and reflects; thus, media studies is useful when the topic of interest is public opinion. Denis McQuail for his part suggest that “the entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects” (1994, 327) and that the best opportunity that mass media has on societal effects are in the following areas:

- attracting and directing public attention
- persuading in matters of opinion and belief
- influencing behavior
- structuring definitions of reality
- conferring status and legitimacy
- informing speedily and broadly (McQuail 1994, 69).

Mass media thus has the possibility to influence multiple societal areas which makes it worthwhile to study.

Two prominent research concepts that study the media effects are the agenda setting theory and the framing theory (Linström & Marais 2012, 22). Amy E. Jasperson, Dhavan V. Shah, Mark Watts, Ronald J. Faber and David P. Fan argue that the former “attempts to explain only why one issue becomes more important than another issue in the public’s mind; it does not explicitly focus on the nuances of coverage within an issue” (1998, 206), whereas framing theory “provides a means of describing the power of communication to direct individual cognitions towards a prescribed interpretation of a situation or object” (1998, 206). For this thesis I chose frame analysis as a method because of the two options, it provides opportunity for a more in-depth analysis of the content of the news articles.

There are multiple definitions of the terms frame and framing and they resemble one another. Erving Goffman defines frames in his work *Frame analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1986) as “the principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” (1986, 10-11). Goffman emphasizes the role of a context in the frame selection and argues that when people enter into a situation they first aim to answers to the question of “what is it that’s going on here” (1986, 8). This is also a question that a writer of a news story must ask before writing the story in order to understand a phenomenon or a situation and make it understandable to the reader (Karvonen 2002, 80). Stephen D. Reese provides a similar definition for the term frame and argues that they “are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (2001, 11).

Framing has also been defined by Robert M. Entman as follows:

“To frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.” (1993, 52)

Some definitions acknowledge the inseparable relationship between framing and media. Reese (2001, 7) defines framing as “the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audience”. This definition makes frame analysis essentially adaptable for the research purposes of this thesis as the data consists of news articles. The term is understood similarly by Tankard, Hendrickson, Silberman, Bliss, and Ghanem (1991, in Reese et al. 2001, 10) who argue that “a frame is a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context

and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration”. Erkki Karvonen (2002, 78) for his part argues that framing is related to media through the frames that journalists utilize to organize information and that a suitable frame can be chosen consciously or unconsciously to make a topic appear in a certain way.

These definitions illustrate the key features of frames: they are tools that organize information from a certain aspect and make it comprehensive to a broad audience. Frames are connected to the social world and shared understandings of people. Framing selects and portrays a specific aspect of an issue or an event while undermining others which affects the way a said issue or an event is understood. As argued by Entman (1993, 55) frames shed light on certain aspects of reality and disregard others which can affect the reactions of the audience. Karina Horsti supports this argument and states that the power of media frames is based foremost on the selection of certain aspects and the withdrawal of others. The selection is targeted at perspectives, sources, vocabulary, linguistic methods, visual images and so forth. (Horsti 2005, 71.)

These characteristics make frame analysis a suited method for the purpose of this thesis as the aim is to understand how news media depict politically violent women and what is the story that is being told to a wide audience. With this goal in mind frame analysis in this context is a method that aims to understand “how certain idea elements are linked together into packages of meaning, potentially encoded into soundbite-like signifiers that stand for those packages of meaning, and deployed in situated discursive activity” (Creed et al. 2002, 37). In other words, I study which elements and frames are used together to create representations of women supporters of Daesh.

The meaning making that frames participate in does not occur in a vacuum, it is affected by the readers. According to Gamson and Modigliani meaning is constructed by life histories, social interaction and psychological dispositions of individuals that cause them to approach a topic with some anticipatory schema, however sometimes these schemas are tentative. They also note that the audience is not a passive object, instead it actively uses media discourse to construct meaning. (Gamson & Modigliani 1989, 2, 10.) This means that individuals understand the content of the news articles individually despite the frames utilized and produced by the news media, therefore this thesis concentrates to study the representations of women supporters of Daesh and does not argue that the news articles produce public opinion. The media content analyzed in this study is viewed as a primary source of information for the public which makes it worth studying.

3.2 Data and data collection

Based on literature analysis, their personal experience and a comparison between news frames analysis, Margaret Linström and Willemien Marais (2012, 29-31) have identified seven steps on how to conduct a qualitative news frame analysis which has been utilized for this thesis. The steps are as follows:

- 1) Choose a medium/topic
- 2) Determine a timeframe
- 3) Draw a sample
- 4) Identify a unit of analysis
- 5) Selection of a frame typology
- 6) Operational definitions and
- 7) Identifying news frames.

The usage of these steps in the context of this thesis is described in the “Data and data collection” section.

Steps 1-4

The data consists of articles of *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Yle News* of Finland and *Dagens Nyheter* and *Sveriges Television* of Sweden. *Helsingin Sanomat* was chosen because it has the widest distribution of Finnish newspapers while *Yle News* is a media provider that reaches the majority of Finns by providing news both on TV and on the Internet. The content of *Yle News* is free of charge which means that it can reach audience that does not read news from a paid news media. *Dagens Nyheter* is one of the largest newspapers in Sweden while *Sveriges Television* is comparable to *Yle News* of Finland. With these choices I have the possibility to study similar news media. The data consist of news articles that were published in 2014, 2015 and 2016 because during those years many people travelled from abroad to areas that were under the control of Daesh. The data has been collected from the webpages of the news media; however, it was not possible to collect the articles of *Sveriges Television* from their website because it lacked search tools. Instead, I collected the articles using Google and utilized the following search term: “*Isis and women*” before:2016-12-31 after:2014-1-1 site:<https://www.svt.se>. It is possible that this search failed to find all relevant news articles, however this was the only available option to retrieve the articles. I could have used an alternative news

medium to avoid this issue, however I saw it as more important to choose a media outlet that was as comparable to *Yle News* as possible.

The data from the other sources was collected from the websites with the search term “*Women and Isis*” because it should retrieve all relevant news articles. The reason for the usage of the term ‘Isis’ instead of ‘Daesh’ is because the organization is most commonly known as ISIS (Koivusaari 2016, 229), thus the assumption was that news media would generally refer to the organization with that term. The spelling “Isis” was chosen because that term is utilized by the Finnish news media and the assumption was that this is the case in Sweden too. The search provided several articles, however not all of them concentrated on the topic or approached it from a different perspective than this thesis does, for example from the perspective of Yazidi women whom Daesh has used as slaves. I excluded these articles from the data. However, I did not exclude articles that spoke generally about women and did not specify the origin of those women. I also did not exclude news articles that described women who travelled to Syria and later changed their minds about Daesh and wished to return to their home countries. The reason for this is that the women depicted in these articles voluntarily made the journey and thus fit into the category of women supporters of Daesh. After collecting the relevant news articles the data was limited to five articles of *Helsingin Sanomat* and nine articles of both *Yle News* and *Sveriges Television*, and to four articles of *Dagens Nyheter*, thus the scope of the data is very limited, however this itself is an interesting research result. The data was stored in four separate computer files that were backed up regularly. Before I carried out the analysis, I first translated the news articles to English, thus the direct quotations that appear in the analysis are my renditions of the original texts.

Table 1. Distribution of the sources

News media	<i>Helsingin Sanomat</i>	<i>Yle News</i>	<i>Sveriges Television</i>	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i>	Total
Number of articles per source	5	9	9	4	27

Steps 5-7

The fifth step that the researcher must take is to choose the news frames that are analyzed which can be conducted either in an inductive manner where the frames rise from the data as the research proceeds or in a deductive manner where the news frames are selected amongst standard news frames

(Linström & Marais 2012, 29-30). The selection of the frames for this study was conducted in a deductive manner in order to utilize them in a similar manner than previous researchers have. Additionally, when media reports and produces news stories, they utilize existing frameworks that people use to understand the world and because of this the media contents can be analyzed as reflecting these frameworks (Alasuutari et al. 2013, 695) which is why it is reasonable to utilize pre-existing and pre-defined news frames.

Claes H. De Vreese argues that news frames can be categorized into issue-specific news frames that concentrate on certain topics or events. Because issue-specific news frames focus on certain issues it is difficult to generalize, compare and use the frames as base for theory building. The second category, generic news frames, can be further divided into two categories, one that focuses on how politics, especially election campaigns, are covered by the news media, whereas the other connects news frames with more frequent characteristics of news coverage. (De Vreese 2005, 55-56.) Because of these reasons the news frames I chose to utilize in this thesis belong to the second category of generic news frames.

A set of five generic frames have been developed by Neuman, Just and Crigler by conducting in depth interviews of individuals in two waves in order to “explore how individuals and journalists understand and communicate about political issues” (1992, 126). The frames have been identified as:

- 1) The economic frame which reflects “the preoccupation with - - profit and loss” (1992, 62).
- 2) The conflict frame which deals with the news media’s “game interpretation of the political world as an on-going series of contests, each with a new set of winners and losers” (1992, 64).
- 3) The powerlessness frame refers to “the dominance of forces - - over weak individuals or groups” (1992, 67).
- 4) The human impact frame focuses on “describing individuals and groups who are likely to be affected by an issue” (1992, 69).
- 5) Finally, the morality frame refers to moral judgement expressed in the news media (1992, 71-74).

H.A. Semetko and P.M. Valkenburg developed these frames further and identified them as 1) conflict frame 2) human interest frame 3) attribution of responsibility frame 4) morality frame and 5) economic consequences frame. The conflict frame is defined as a frame that “emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, institutions or countries” whereas the human interest frame “brings a human face, an individual’s story, or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or

problem”. The attribution of responsibility frame seeks to give the responsibility of a cause or a solution to a problem either to a government, individual or a group. (Semetko and Valkenburg 2000, 95-96.) The morality and economic frames are similar to the definition of Neuman et al. In this thesis I use the frames of Semetko and Valkenburg as the standard news frames.

Together with the five news frames of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, 95-96) this thesis utilizes the four questions suggested by Entman for a researcher to ask the data. The questions are:

- 1) What is the problem/what are the problems?
- 2) What causes the problem?
- 3) What moral judgements are made?
- 4) What are the suggested remedies? (Entman 1993, 52.)

Based on Entman’s work and careful reading of the data I have developed four questions to be asked to the data of this study. They are as follows:

- 1) How are the women depicted to behave?
- 2) What has caused the women to behave in a certain way?
- 3) What moral deductions are made?
- 4) What should be done in order to prevent the women from behaving in a certain way?

Entman’s four questions offer the possibility to study how the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh is interpreted, judged and what policy recommendations are offered. The questions thus complement the five news frames of Semetko and Valkenburg, moreover they are in line with the human interest frame and the attribution of responsibility frame. After choosing the frames, the researcher then decides whether to identify only a dominant frame from each news article or additionally a secondary frame. The dominant frame presents the main theme while the secondary frame is complementary to the main theme. (Linström & Marais 2012, 30.) For this study I chose to determine only a dominant frame in order to concentrate on the main story of the news articles.

According to Linström and Marais (2012, 30-31) in order for a researcher to be able to identify the news frames used by the data the researcher has to understand both “how” to identify the frames and know “what” to search for. In order to know “how” to identify news frames the researcher can conduct the following steps: 1) Categorization of incidents into categories or frames, 2) Polishing and

development of the frames, 3) Searching connections and themes among the frames and 4) Simplification and integration of data into a “coherent theoretical structure” (Linström & Marais 2012, 31).

De Vreese argues that although a news article might include multiple frames, the tools of the storytelling can be classified into certain characteristics (2005, 54). In other words, in order to know “what” to search for Linström and Marais provide a comprehensive list of symbolic devices for the researcher to look for in the news articles. These devices have been divided into rhetorical and other written devices and to technical devices (Linström & Marais 2012, 31-33). Of these devices I have analysed all except layout and page placement, due to the fact that I retrieved the data online and thus could not analyze the layout of a printed newspaper.

Category	Examples
Rhetorical and other written /grammatical devices	Word choice; Metaphors; Exemplars Key words (presence and/or absence) Stock phrases (presence and/or absence) Sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgement Concluding statements and paragraphs
Technical devices (elements of news writing, layout, visuals)	Headlines; Subheadings; Photo captions; Leads; Photographs; Layout (prominence of the article) Page placement (front page, etc.)
	All sources of information in article Who is quoted How are they identified Where is the quote placed in the story
	Quoting experts to claim empirical validity or facticity Quoting official sources to link certain points of view to authority Quoting a social deviant to marginalize certain points of view

(Linström & Marais 2012, 33)

3.3 Limitations of data and methodology

The study is based on Finnish and Swedish news media and the results might be different if the research had been conducted with alternative data or in different countries. This is a qualitative study which means that it produces results from a specific case, thus the results cannot be adapted to another context nor does it offer the possibility to universalize the results. Two major shortcomings of qualitative frame analysis are reliability and validity, of which the latter has been criticized for the operational definitions of frames (Linström & Marais 2012, 27). Qualitative frame analysis can also be difficult to conduct when the news articles do not present definite frame categories and when it is not apparent to which coding categories the units of analyzes belong to (D'Angelo and Kuypers 2010, 37). Finally, the identification of frames can be a subjective process as an individual researcher defines the frames (Tankard in Reese et al. 2001, 97), however the impacts of this limitation can be reduced by explicitly arguing the reasons for the frame identification. Frame analysis has also been criticized for whether a phenomenon that has been defined as a frame is frame or a theme (Horsti 2005, 51). In this thesis the problem is solved by defining the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh as a theme that is framed in certain ways by the news media. These frames then create understanding of the phenomenon.

3.4 Ethical considerations

I have attempted to take my own position as a European woman into account in this thesis by choosing to limit my focus on European women in order to avoid an “orientalist” approach, which might have occurred had I studied news media representations of women from outside the continent of Europe. This could have created a juxtaposition of “us versus them”. However, it should be noted that some of the academic studies used in this thesis speak generally about women, and not about European women, thus I apply general studies to a specific context. It should also be noted that the data includes articles that speak of Western women instead of European women, however they are referring to women originated from European countries.

The data consists of news media content that is public. The people who are named in the data have allowed their names to be published, thus I do not have to use the principle of anonymity. However, I will explain what the context of the news articles is because the comments of the named individuals have been made in a specific time to a specific person and could have been different under different circumstances. I have also paid attention to who are interviewed and whose voice is heard in the

articles. It should also be taken into account that the media content is written for a certain audience and that the content is produced in Finland and Sweden which means that the same events could be described and framed differently in another context.

4 DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I will analyze the data with the model of Linström and Marais (2012) and with the four questions of Entman (1993, 52) presented in the previous chapter. This chapter has been divided into subsections based on the identified dominant frames of the news articles. The identified frames are the human interest frame, the attribution of responsibility frame and the conflict frame. The results of the data have been further divided into sub chapters under these three dominant frames. As the data shows that there are no major differences between the representations of the Finnish and Swedish news media the analysis has not been written in a comparative format. Instead, the differences are described within the analysis as they appear. The chapter begins with a look at the vocabular choices of the news articles and the sources and their frequency in the data which is followed by the analysis of the contents of the news articles. As mentioned in the method chapter, the direct quotations that appear in the analysis are my renditions of the original texts.

4.1 Terms and their frequency in the data

To be able to identify the dominant frames used by the news articles I started to analyze the data by first identifying word choices of the news articles. I identified the listed key words based on vocabulary that has been used in the empirical research about women and Daesh and by carefully reading the articles. By identifying these key words and their presence or absence in the data I was able to track patterns and focuses of the news articles. In this section I will not go through the appearance and/or absence of every term of the tables 2 a) and 2 b) as the vocabular choices are analyzed further in the sub chapters. Instead, I will present how key terms have been used in the data to, in my view, construct a depiction of the women supporters of Daesh.

Table 2 a)

	<i>Sveriges Television</i>		<i>Dagens Nyheter</i>	
	Number of articles	Total number of references	Number of articles	Total number of references
Brainwashed	1	3	1	3
Extreme Islam/extremism/extremists	0	0	2	34
Extremist organization	0	0	1	1
Europe/European (without referring to specific gender)	0	0	3	8
Girl (“tjej” and “flicka”)	5	40	3	58
Immigrant/immigration background (referring to women)	0	0	0	0
Islam/islamist	1	3	4	39
Islamic State	6	19	4	15
Jihad/Jihadism	0	0	1	6
Jihadist(s)	1	3	3	18
Jihadist organization	0	0	1	2
Jihadi bride	0	0	1	3
Jihadi woman/ Women as jihadists	0	0	1	1
Join (when speaking about women and Daesh)	1	3	4	15
Lure (when speaking about women)	0	0	2	8
Muslim (when referring to women)	1	1	1	1
Radicalism/Radicalization	0	0	1	7
Radical (when referring to women)	0	0	0	0
Radicalize women	0	0	0	0
Terror attack	0	0	1	3
Terrorism	0	0	1	3
Terrorist (not female)	0	0	1	9
Terrorist women/women as terrorists	0	0	1	2
Terrorist organization	5	13	1	2
Travel (when speaking about women who joined Daesh)	3	6	4	23
Western (when referring to women)	0	0	1	2
Western world/West/Western (not referring to people) ²	1	2	3	4
Woman (without additional descriptive words such as jihadi woman)	3	8	4	52
Young (when referring to women)	2	2	4	13
Young (when referring to people in general)	1	1	3	32

² To these figures were not counted references to specific areas of Sweden, such as the Western province.

Table 2 b)

	<i>Helsingin Sanomat</i>		<i>Yle News</i>	
	Number of articles	Total number of references	Number of articles	Total number of references
Brainwashed	1	2	2	2
Extreme Islam/extremism/extremists	2	4	5	8
Extremist organization	0	0	1	3
Europe/European (without referring to specific gender)	1	6	1	1
Girl	3	16	1	1
Immigrant/immigration background (referring to women)	1	1	0	0
Islam/islamist	2	20	4	9
Islamic State	2	14	3	7
Jihad/Jihadism	1	11	4	14
Jihadist people	4	6	2	7
Jihadist organization	1	2	1	1
Jihadi bride	0	0	2	5
Jihadi woman/ Women as jihadists	0	0	3	9
Join (when speaking about women and Daesh)	4	12	2	8
Lure (when speaking about women)	3	8	1	1
Muslim (when referring to women)	4	4	1	1
Radicalism/Radicalization	1	1	1	2
(Be) Radical (when referring to women)	0	0	2	2
Radicalize women	0	0	0	0
Terror attack	1	2	4	12
Terrorism	2	2	3	4
Terrorist (not female)	2	2	0	0
Terrorist women/women as terrorists	2	4	1	2
Terrorist organization	4	12	1	1
Travel (when speaking about women who joined Daesh)	2	4	5	11
Western (when referring to women)	3	6	2	9
Western world/West/Western (not referring to people)	2	4	2	4
Woman (without additional descriptive words such as jihadi woman)	5	65	9	115
Young (when referring to women)	5	6	7	16
Young (when referring to people in general)	2	12	0	0

The word “woman” appeared the most in the articles of *Helsingin Sanomat*, *Yle News* and *Dagens Nyheter*. *Sveriges Television* is an exception; the word appeared in three articles in total eight times. This can be explained by the figure that shows that the word “girl” appeared 40 times in five different articles, thus this term has been used instead of the term “woman”. The reason for the diligent usage

of the word can be explained with the approach taken by the articles of *Sveriges Television*. All the *Sveriges Television* articles collected for this thesis approach the topic from an individual's perspective and tell the stories of three females, two of whom were teenagers at the time of writing. Only one of the nine articles tells the story of a woman who was an adult at the time of writing, whereas the other eight articles concentrate on either one of the two teenagers. These articles either refer to them by name or as a girl. The word "girl" is commonly used also by *Dagens Nyheter* where the word is the second most common from the terms listed on table 2 a). The Finnish news articles do not use it as regularly; in *Helsingin Sanomat* the word appears overall 16 times and in *Yle News* only once.

The data shows that the news articles often empathize the women's age by referring to them as young women. The word "young" when referring to women is used in total 22 times in the Finnish news media and 15 times in the Swedish news media which is a large portion when considering the total number of the articles. While the people who join do tend to be young (Lutz & Lutz 2019, 18), the repeating usage is notable and affects the image of the women who have joined Daesh. An interesting result is that *Helsingin Sanomat* uses the word "girl" multiple times more than *Yle News* that uses the term only once. Notable is also that the word appears 12 times in one *Helsingin Sanomat* article with different prefixes such as "teenager" and "Muslim". However, the data shows that the word "Muslim" is rarely used when speaking about the women who have joined Daesh. *Helsingin Sanomat* utilizes the term in total four times, whereas *Yle News*, *Sveriges Television* and *Dagens Nyheter* use it once. A reading of the data shows that this is because alternative vocabulary is used and that the women supporters of Daesh are not often described as Muslims, however this does not mean that religion is an aspect that is absent from the data.

Terms "Western women/woman" or "Women from Western countries" appeared in three *Helsingin Sanomat* articles six times and in two *Yle News* articles in total nine times, whereas in *Sveriges Television* articles the term did not appear once. In *Dagens Nyheter* the term appeared twice in one article. The term "Western" when it was not utilized to describe women appeared four times in two articles both in *Helsingin Sanomat* and in *Yle News*, whereas *Sveriges Television* used the term twice in one article and *Dagens Nyheter* four times in three different news articles. The words "European" or "Europe" without referring to a specific sex or gender for their part were used in *Yle News* once and in *Helsingin Sanomat* six times. *Sveriges Television* did not use these terms once and *Dagens Nyheter* used the terms eight times in three different articles. Thus, the term "European" appears few times

altogether and rarely refers to a specific gender. The results indicate that women described in the data are viewed either as citizens of a specific country or as Western women, not as European women.

The terms “join”, “travel” and “lure” were searched in order to examine how these different terms are used when they refer to women who travelled to the areas controlled by Daesh. The data shows that the word “join” appears most often in the Finnish news media whereas it is the second most used term of the three in the Swedish news media. The word “lure” appears eight times in *Helsingin Sanomat* and only once in *Yle News*. The word “lure” appears in total eight times in *Dagens Nyheter* and not once in *Sveriges Television*. The Swedish news media uses the term “travel” the most, in total 29 times, whereas in the Finnish news media it appears in total 15 times. It is beneficial to analyze the usage of these words because they refer to different levels of activity. “Lure” is a word that indicates passivity of the actor. She has not herself made the decision to join Daesh or to travel to the area controlled by the organization. Someone else than the woman herself is responsible for her actions. “Travel” and “join” refer to (more) active actors, however, these two words have different nuances. When the news articles state that women have travelled to Syria it does not give a clear impression of what is the role of the women there. Have they joined Daesh, or have they made the journey in order to live in the area controlled by Daesh without becoming a member of the terrorist organization? When the news articles state that the women have “joined” the message is that the women have become members of Daesh.

Words “Islam” and “jihad” in many forms appear several times. When the articles speak of jihad, they refer to jihad that aims for spreading of the faith and conversion of non-believers that can include the use of force in order to convert people or to defend Islam. However, to most Muslims jihad refers to personal strive to live according to the ideals of Islam. (Lutz & Lutz 2019, 84.) Jihad can also be divided into two categories, the Greater Jihad and Lesser Jihad. The Greater Jihad refers to the personal struggle to live a good life in the way that God has ordered. The Lesser Jihad on the other hand means violent struggle. The term jihad originates from Arabic and means struggle; hence jihadists are “those who struggle” and refer to people who fight for the Lesser Jihad. (Silke 2008, 100.) However, the news articles do not differentiate the different forms of jihad nor express which form they speak about. Many times, the words “Islam” and “Muslim” are used in articles that speak about violent jihad and this creates association between the terms. Because the news articles do not define which form of jihad they speak about, it is possible that the audience will understand jihad as only its violence conducting form.

The women are rarely referred to as “terrorists” as the term appears twice in *Dagens Nyheter* and not once in *Sveriges Television*. The term appears in total six times in the Finnish news media. This illustrates that though the women are depicted through their relation to Daesh they are not primarily viewed as actors of political violence.

In sum, the vocabular choices of the different news media are relatively similar and appear relatively evenly. The vocabular choices illustrate that the women are depicted through their gender as the terms “women” and “girl” appear repeatedly. Additionally, their age is brought forward regularly. The women supporters of Daesh are not often depicted as “terrorist” although the term is not absent in the data, which indicates that the women are not primarily viewed as actors of political violence. However, this does not mean that the women are viewed as a non-threat which will be discussed further in the analysis. Notable is also that they are not often referred to as “Muslims” even though a closer look at the data shows that the aspect of religion is recognized. Next, I will identify the different sources used by the news media and what deductions can be made based on the sources.

4.2 Sources used by the news media

The news articles that make up the data use different sources in a variety of ways. In some articles the sources are used in order to gather additional information of the topic and in others the sources form the whole text of the article. Table 3. identifies the sources used by the different news media and which articles use the listed sources. The articles have been given a reference number (from 1-27) and listed to the sources accordingly. It should be noted that some of the sources were originally used by other news media.

Table 3.

Used source	<i>Helsingin Sanomat</i> (1–5)	<i>Yle News</i> (6–14)	<i>Sveriges Television</i> (15–23)	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i> (24–27)
	Articles that use the source			
Experts on the field of terrorism and/or their work	1, 4	6, 7, 9, 14		24, 25
Family member(s)	5	8	17, 18, 21–23	24–26
Friends and/or acquaintances				25, 27
Government officials or politicians	2	8, 10, 11	16, 17, 26	26
Interviews of women who have joined	4		20, 22	
Legal representatives		10		26
Other news media	2, 3, 5	7–12, 14	16, 17	25, 26
Police	2	8, 10, 12	15, 17	25, 27
Productions and news of the same news media		13	18, 20, 21, 23	
Religious commentators	5			
Social media posts of women who have joined/support Daesh	3, 4	6, 7, 9, 13		

Table 3. illustrates that the articles use several sources, mostly other news media and experts. The articles that concentrate on the women’s social media posts do not make an exception because the posts are often analyzed by experts. The active usage of experts indicates the aim to provide factual information or give the impression that the articles are a reliable source of information about the topic of women supporters of Daesh. As Zhongdang Pan and Gerald M. Kosicki (1993, 60) argue, a writer of a news story can increase the empirical validity or factuality of the story by quoting experts. *Sveriges Television* is the only news media that does not refer to experts in any of the articles, however the medium uses family members as a regular source of information. The usage of family members serves two purposes: the families offer information about their sisters, daughters and spouses who have joined Daesh. Additionally, the usage of family members brings an emotional angle to the story by describing what emotions women’s journey has caused for their families.

Government official or politicians, police and legal representatives are used as sources of information, however their role differs from the experts: while the experts are used to explain the topic of women supporters of Daesh the latter are used to provide information about a specific case, such as of a specific journey of a woman to Syria. According to Pan and Kosicki (1993, 60) the quoting of official sources serves to link together authority and a certain point of view.

Three articles are based on interviews of women who have joined Daesh and lived in the caliphate. Two of the women were returnees and one was still living in the caliphate at the time that the article was published. This limited number of interviews indicates that it is difficult to reach the women which explains why the articles utilize other sources, such as the social media posts of the women supporters. The articles refer to the social media posts either directly or indirectly by describing what the women have said online, however the women are directly quoted in few cases. The Swedish news media do not quote the social media posts, *Helsingin Sanomat* quotes the posts twice and *Yle News* three times. Additionally, a fourth *Yle News* article presents a screenshot of a social media post, however the post is not directly quoted in the text. All the articles that describe the social media posts also use experts to analyze them. The usage of social media posts has four purposes: 1) they are used to strengthen the main frame that the article is utilizing 2) they are used to illustrate the security threat that the women pose to their countries of origin either as conductors of political violence or as recruiters of other women 3) they are used as data for the experts to analyze and comment on and 4) they are used to give a voice to the women themselves.

Finally, religious commentators were referred to in one article of *Helsingin Sanomat* (17.6.2015). The article speaks about three British women who are believed to have joined Daesh and describes how their journey sparked a debate in the Muslim community of Britain and refers to comments made by the president of Bradford Muslim society and of Muslim forum. This is the only article that refers to stands taken by Muslim communities.

The social media posts are the only source that is used solely by the Finnish news media. Table 3. illustrates that some of the sources are used only by one news medium either in Finland or Sweden, and that some sources are used by one Finnish and one Swedish news medium, such as the legal representatives. Thus, there is no drastic difference between the usage of sources between the Finnish and Swedish news media.

4.3 The human interest frame

I have identified 13 news articles that use the human interest frame as the dominant frame. The news articles with the human interest frame have been further divided into categories that describe more precisely the content of the articles and the way the women are depicted. These categories are as follows: “innocent girls”, “motivated by faith” and “abandoned family members”.

4.3.1 Innocent girls

Unlike the news articles of *Dagens Nyheter* and the Finnish news media, all of the news articles of *Sveriges Television* utilize the human interest frame by depicting stories of three individual women and their families. The frame is also used by the other media; however, *Sveriges Television* is the only one that uses it throughout the whole data as the dominant frame. The frame is visible already in the headlines of the articles that establish whom they are speaking about. Two of the three women are called by her first name while the third one is referred to either as “a 15-years old girl”, “a 15-years old Swedish girl” or “a pregnant 15-year-old”. The other two females are named; however, they are referred only by their first names, which can be interpreted to refer to young age and innocence (Åhäll 2015, 52).

The articles connect the females to their country of origin, Sweden, with verbal choices, depictions of the females and interviews with family members. Headlines that describe the females are such as “Sara from Sweden joined IS” (*Sveriges Television* 15.4.2016) and “a 15-years-old Swedish girl firmly in Syria” (*Sveriges Television* 6.8.2015). The headlines also frame the females as innocent victims, with descriptions such as “So was Marilyn freed from IS” (*Sveriges Television* 21.12.2016) and “a 15-years old girl freed from IS” (*Sveriges Television* 29.10.2015). Already these headlines illustrate that the girls are depicted as the innocent persons of the stories, regardless how and why they travelled to Syria and to the areas controlled by Daesh.

Four of the nine news articles of *Sveriges Television* describe a girl called Marilyn, the operation conducted by her parents to free her from Daesh and her life once she returned to Sweden. The first article is titled “Against all odds they got back their daughter from IS” (*Sveriges Television* 14.12.2016) and describes the hardships Marilyn’s parents faced as they attempted to smuggle their daughter out of the caliphate of Daesh. This frame appears in the lead paragraph that states:

“A fifteen-year-old girl is tightly in the grip of IS. Nobody in Sweden seems to know how to get her back. It will take almost a year, quantities of money and three searches of her parents to achieve the impossible: to save her from the most dangerous terrorist organization of the world.”

The lead paragraph frames the parents of Marilyn as heroes which is established with the descriptions of the hardships they went through and with word choices of “achieve the impossible”, “save” and “most dangerous terrorist organization of the world”.

The article intends to put the reader into the shoes of the parents of Marilyn by stating as follows:

“Imagine that one day you get a call from your daughter. Imagine that she has escaped with her boyfriend. Imagine now that she says that she is on her way to the Islamic State in Syria and that she has no opportunity to get out of there. That was precisely what happened to Marilyn’s parents Anki and Pasi.”

This rhetoric device serves the human interest frame and moreover aims to make the reader relate to the experience of the parents. Relatability is sought also by describing the family as follows:

“Most of those who have travelled to the terrorist group from Sweden have roots in the Middle East. But here sits a family with roots in Finland without roots or connections to Middle East or Islam. Big interests of the family are rock music and American movies. The family lives on the countryside and consists of mother Anki who is a cleaner and father Pasi who works in a painting company and of their four daughters.”

Here the article builds an image of a Swedish family that is just like any other with ordinary interest. The quote also brings forward immigration and associates it with Islam and terrorism. The article seems to say that interests towards Daesh are foreign and not ones shared by native Swedes. This builds a dichotomy and a hierarchy between immigrants or “foreigners” and Swedes with roots in Sweden. This is reinforced by describing how Marilyn became connected to Daesh via her boyfriend Moqtar who “had lived in Sweden for two years and was from Algeria”. Marilyn’s connection to Daesh thus came from “an outsider”, not from a native Swedish person. The article describes how Moqtar was influenced by online propaganda, wanted to travel to Syria and asked Marilyn to follow him. Marilyn is thus not viewed as an active participant in the decision making, rather the story that

is depicted of her is of a girl who was not responsible for her fate (“She ended up early in the wrong company”) and did not know what was going on around her (“She does not even know where in the country she is”).

Another article titled “So was Marilyn, 15, freed from IS” (*Sveriges Television* 21.12.2016) describes how Marilyn’s parents were able to free her from Daesh with the help of a local high officer. The article does not describe Marilyn herself as the article is framed around the escape process from her parent’s perspective. The human interest frame of the article concentrates on Marilyn’s parents and this frame is used throughout the article which is evident from the first sentence of the lead paragraph to the final sentence of the news article. The lead paragraph states, “After a long struggle to free their daughter from the Islamic State the parents Anki and Pasi succeeded”, whereas the final sentence of the article states: “After a nine-month struggle they finally get to travel home with their daughter and their grandchild Emilio.” Above the final paragraph is an image taken from an airplane. In the image are Marilyn, her son and parents, the reporter of the story and the local man who gave them help. This frame choice portrays Marilyn’s parents as the active participants of the story whereas Marilyn herself is the object who waited for the other actors to free her, strengthening the image of her as an innocent child who waits for her parents to rescue her.

The other two articles describe Marilyn’s life after she returned to Sweden. The first news article of the two is titled “How 15-year-old Marilyn feels today” (*Sveriges Television* 14.12.2016) and gives little space to Marilyn herself as the article is based on a *Sveriges Television* program that interviewed her parents. The image provided with the news article is of Marilyn’s parents which indicates the focus of the article to the reader. The news article describes how Marilyn lives after the experiences she had after she “ended up in the claws of the terrorist organization IS”. The choice of words is in line with the previous articles written about Marilyn that describe her as a victim. Usage of the term “claws” strengthens the dangerous nature of Daesh, it is like a beast.

The other article is titled “How Marilyn lives after escape from IS” (*Sveriges Television* 21.12.2016) and describes the challenges she faced when she returned to Sweden. The article raises up aspects and challenges that the returnees might face and also what society has to do for them. This is the only article that quotes Marilyn herself. A sentence of the lead paragraph illustrates the usage of the human interest frame as the dominant news frame:

“She saw people die, was brought before an IS court, gave birth to a child under difficult circumstances and lost her man in war. Home in Sweden she now fights to get the right help.”

By listing the hardships and loss that Marilyn went through she is portrayed as a victim as in the previous articles written about her. The quote also shows that the hardships did not end after she returned to Sweden as it tells that Marilyn “fights” to receive help. The struggles are depicted also by the following sentence:

“Nine months they (Marilyn’s parents) spent fighting to free their daughter from a terrorist organization. But now another fight has taken over to get help and support for Marilyn to process and move on from what she has been through.”

The challenges faced by Marilyn and the way she is depicted in the article is captured by the following sentence: “But not even friends could understand what she went through in IS and how it feels to leave a religious sect that almost a year attempted to brainwash and control her.” The sentence illustrates that Marilyn is framed as a victim of Daesh who is alone with her experiences as others are unable to understand her. The words “brainwashed” and “control” illustrate her subordinate position in Daesh. Additionally, the sentence depicts Daesh as a religious organization.

Four of the nine *Sveriges Television* articles concentrate on a Swedish girl whose identity is not revealed, instead she is referred to as “a 15-year-old (Swedish) girl” or “a 15-year-old pregnant girl” with little additional information given. The articles refer to her pregnancy in total six times. Similar to Marilyn, the latter girl is described as having travelled to Syria because of her boyfriend. One of the articles (*Sveriges Television* 10.8.2015) says that she travelled to Syria “together with her boyfriend”, while another says that “it was the boyfriend of the girl who took her with him to Syria” (*Sveriges Television* 29.10.2015). These descriptions together with the repetition of the words “young” or “a 15-years-old”, “girl” and “pregnant” frame a young mother-to-be who has been put into danger not by her own choices but by her boyfriend and by Daesh. Additionally, the female is described as being placed in a family home, however this is the only information given about her, otherwise the articles concentrate on how she and her boyfriend were captured, where she was placed and how she was eventually freed from Daesh.

The stories of Marilyn and the unidentified girl coincide with studies that suggest that women become involved with a terrorist organization because of a relationship with a man (see for example Bloom 2011, 235). The stories of the female returnees do not appear in the other news media of the data.

4.3.2 Motivated by faith

Two articles of the data raise specifically the aspect of religion in the descriptions of the women. A *Sveriges Television* article titled “Sara from Sweden joined IS” (17.4.2016) depicts the experiences of a Swedish woman called Sara based on a documentary about her. The lead paragraph brings forward the aspect of religion by stating that “as a young Muslim in Sweden she no longer wanted to live in a non-Muslim country”, which illustrates Sara’s motivation to join Daesh. This is brought forward also by a direct quote of Sara that states that she “always wished to travel to an area where Islam has taken over.” Her religious commitment is also depicted by the following sentence:

“According to Sara, she did not think about the consequences of her trip to Syria. She did not believe in the worldly life.”

The sentence illustrates that Sara’s thoughts were in the religious realm, possibly also in the afterlife. The article describes how after the attack on the World Trade Center Sara wished to join Al-Qaida, which connects her story to the wider context of jihadi terrorism.

The core message presented by Sara in the article is that Daesh is not a religious organization, which is emphasized by stating in the third sub headline and in two sentences that “it is not actually religious”. Additionally, Sara describes how life in the caliphate was not what she expected and that it was “a society build on horror and oppression”. Thus, the article separates Daesh from Islam through Sara who is framed as a woman who wished to live in a religious society and witnessed that Daesh is not a religious organization. However, the article indicates that even though Sara was disappointed with Daesh she still supports the values of the organization. The first sub headline of the article titled “Sympathized with jihadists” illustrates Sara’s compassion towards jihadists and relies on the readers preexisting, assumably negative knowledge about them. In a quote Sara says that she still watches propaganda films of Daesh which illustrates her continued interest towards the organization. Finally, the article ends with the following sentence:

“In the P1 documentary of the Swedish IS fighter it appears that Sara is for physical punishment such as whipping in cases such as sexual intercourse outside marriage, however she says that she herself could never fulfill such punishments.”

By ending the article this way, the reader is left with the thought that even though Sara left Daesh because she did not support the crimes and horrors that the organization conducted, she still shares some of the harsh values. This separates Sara from the Swedish community and strengthens her association with Daesh. This separation is also strengthened by referring to Sara as a “fighter”, a term that does not otherwise appear in the article. It is also notable that although the article quotes Sara seven times, the final sentence presents strong value-related statements without quoting the woman herself.

The article presents an image above the headline that is taken from an unidentified area in Syria. The image shows destroyed buildings and a woman in black clothes standing on the right side of the picture with her back against the photographer, facing the ruins. The caption states that life in Daesh in Syria was not what Sara had expected it to be and that she witnessed sex slavery, physical punishment, injustices and drone attacks, thus repeating the information of the body text. The photograph builds a connection between Daesh and destruction and encompasses the described relationship between Sara and the organization: she was a witness who watched how the organization created destruction, leaving nothing but ruins.

Another article that describes the role of religion is from *Helsingin Sanomat* (20.10.2014) and titled “From Espoo to holy war – Islamists youth declare”, which indicates what the motivations of the youth to join Daesh were. The article describes the experiences of two Finnish males and one female; however, only the parts that focus on the female called Aisha have been analyzed. The news article tells that she immigrated to Finland from Ethiopia when she was eight years old and adapted well, spoke excellent Finnish and was pleased with school. By stating that Aisha has immigration roots serves two purposes, first of which is to provide background information and to build her profile as a well-adjusted girl. Second, her ethnicity illustrates that the woman who has joined Daesh, a terrorist organization that operates against Europe and European values, is not originally from Europe or Finland and can be thus viewed as an outsider. This view can provide comfort in the face of terrorism: it is not conducted or supported by “us”; thus, we do not have to address terrorism as a problem that arises from European society.

Aisha's religious commitment is described through a change of wardrobe:

“Then, as a surprise for everyone, she started to wear a long black cloak and even covered her face with black fabric apart from the eyes. That is rare among Muslims even in the Arabic countries. In Finland one would say that Aisha became religious.”

The sentence illustrates that the change that happened in Aisha was not expected and was a sign of newfound religious commitment, however the article does not clarify nor argue what this claim is based on. Her attire is brought forward a second time by saying that later an old friend of Aisha saw her in a long cloak and her husband with a long beard. This description tells the reader that religiosity was still present in Aisha's life. The attention given to the change in Aisha's clothing is used to depict the change that has taken place in her which is additionally described through her actions on social media where according to the article she used to write “cute posts” and fill quizzes. After “becoming religious” she linked and commented on a video of a Muslim preacher. By first describing posts and actions of an average teenager and then describing a religious post the article creates dichotomy to depict former and current Aisha and, in that way, illustrates the change that happened in her.

The article quotes Aisha herself who stated to the reporter via text messages from Syria that she had an identity crisis and wanted to know more about her roots and religion. Aisha states that she “raised herself from the beginning”. She felt that she could not practise her religion correctly in a non-Muslim country and decided to leave Finland. Aisha states that she “did it for her God” and hopes that her decision will grant her an award in this life or afterlife.

These news articles of *Sveriges Television* and *Helsingin Sanomat* are similar: they both base their information on an interview with a woman who has joined Daesh because of religious motivations, utilize the human interest frame and portray the women as themselves responsible for their journey.

4.3.3 Abandoned family members

Two articles utilize the human interest frame to describe the impact of women's decision to join Daesh to their family members. An article of *Helsingin Sanomat* (17.6.2015) titled “British sisters took their children, left their husbands and went to Syria – are suspected to have joined Isis” describes how the women's decision has affected their husbands. The women are described as “Muslims” which

gives the impression that they have travelled for religious purposes and the article states that their brother is believed to fight in Syria, which connects the women further to jihad. The statement that the women followed their brother also associates the British sisters to women who have travelled because of a male family member or a relative, however in their case romantic relationship was not the reason to travel. It is also stated that the women travelled to Saudi Arabia for a pilgrimage, a third clue that they have travelled for religious purposes.

The husbands are portrayed as the victims of the story and the storytelling has an emotional angle when describing their wives' journey. The article frames the women as guilty of separating the children from their fathers and causing them suffering. The article says that two of the husbands "plead" their wives to return and illustrates their desperation with quotes such as "please return so we can live normal life" and "the children cannot live without me". The article also contains an image of two of the husbands with their lawyer and an acquaintance from a press conference. Two of the men are looking down while the third is holding his hands in front of his face and hanging his head down, possibly because of strong emotions, while the lawyer looks up as he is speaking to the press. The image strengthens the core message of the article which is the suffering of the family members of the British women.

The second news article is from *Dagens Nyheter* and is titled "The girls IS trip stirs up strong emotions" (26.2.2015). The article utilizes both the human interest frame and the attribution of responsibility frame to the same extent which is why the analysis of the article has been divided into two sections, second of which discusses the usage of the attribution of responsibility frame.

The human interest frame of the article appears in a similar manner than in the article of *Helsingin Sanomat* (17.6.2015) as the *Dagens Nyheter* article quotes family members of the teenagers which brings an emotional angle to the story. The article describes how a father of one of the missing girls says: "We miss you; we cannot stop crying" while holding a teddy bear that is wearing the football team Chelsea's shirt. An image of the father holding the shirt is attached to the text below the headline. The father also states that her daughter "is a girl who loves Chelsea", which connects the girl to Britain. A sister of another missing girl is described to hug a pink pajama that belonged to her sister. She says in the article: "Come home, we love you more than anything in the world. If someone says something else do not trust that." This plea is also emphasized with an image of the sister sitting with the pajama. The final sentence of the article is: "In London sit family members and wait for answers" which refers to answers to why and how the girls could have travelled to Syria. The sentence brings

the reader's attention back to the family members of the missing girls and reminds the reader of their suffering.

4.4 The attribution of responsibility frame

I have identified 17 news articles that utilize the attribution of responsibility frame as the dominant frame. Similar to the news articles that utilize the human interest frame discussed in the previous section, these articles have also been divided into categories based on the way the women are framed. The categories are: "lured into Daesh", "who is to be blamed?", "women as a threat", "threatening activity on social media" and "recruitment on social media".

4.4.1 Lured into Daesh

Two Finnish news articles describe how women are lured into Daesh. A news article of *Helsingin Sanomat* has the following headline: "Isis lures women among its ranks" (20.2.2015) which turns the focus of the attribution of responsibility frame towards the people responsible of the luring. The lead paragraph states that Daesh has not wanted women among its ranks from the beginning, however over time the terrorist organization has noticed that it benefits from them and has started to "lure" them in many ways. Additionally, the lead paragraph tells that according to CNN women are "lured" in with Nutella. An image below the lead paragraph is a screenshot of a YouTube video that presents three women who are wearing burqa and holding what appears to be handguns. A text within the screenshot states that "Isis lures women with kittens, Nutella" and illustrates a CNN logo next to it. By using the word "lure" multiple times the article takes a clear stance that women do not join Daesh because of their own will, instead they are lured in which depicts them as passive actors. By stating that the women would be lured into the organization with Nutella creates an image of naïve and childlike women who can be lured in simply by offering them sweets. Additionally, the article tells that the messages Daesh has sent to young women contain cat pictures and emojis. This deepens the description of naïve women, even though the article claims that the attempt of Daesh is to create an image of a new life that would not differ much from the past. According to Martini (2018, 465-466) the depictions of naïve women erase the possible political commitment that may have driven them to join. The article repeatedly states that the women are lured into the organization, thus undermining the active roles as doctors, nurses, technicians and security guards that they are described to be needed for. Women are also said to be important for families to ensure that the state of Daesh will continue, and many have arrived to join their husbands or "in the hope of new love". The article ends with a

statement that claims that some women who live in Western countries seem to be quite “exposed to influences”. This claim is defended by concluding the article with a Twitter post of a women that has assumably joined Daesh, however the article does not otherwise explain how women are vulnerable to the influences of Daesh.

The second news article is from *Yle News* and titled “Finnish Isis fighters spread propaganda online - “I did not expect this kind of jihad” (16.9.2014). It describes Finnish women’s and men’s experiences of life in the caliphate based on their social media posts. The posts are depicted to be propaganda used to attract more people to join Daesh, thus the attribution of responsibility frame is directed at the people who post luring posts online. The analysis has been conducted only on the sections of the article that speak of women. The article depicts what sort of life women live in the caliphate. It is said that the women veiled in black “full robes” live lives that consist of cooking, spending time with children if the women have any, supporting their husbands with their jihad and spending time online, thus the article presents the women’s lives to consist of traditional and supportive roles. By raising the aspect of the women’s wardrobe the article strengthens the imagery of traditional, possibly oppressed women who spend their time veiled and tied to domestic life. The article quotes one woman who has written on social media that she “did not expect this kind of jihad”, a quote that appears also in the headline of the article. The article also quotes a post that the same woman wrote two years earlier in which she speaks about her cooking. In this way the article depicts the change that has happened to the woman. She lived a normal and presumably happy life in Finland until she left for Syria where she has experienced unsatisfying jihad. However, as the headline states that the members of Daesh “spread propaganda online” the post can be viewed as expressing that jihad is similar to her previous life, thus women should not fear immigration to the caliphate.

4.4.2 Who is to be blamed?

An *Yle News* article titled “Norway’s TV2: At least five Norwegian women held captive in Syria” (29.8.2014) is based on information that Norway’s TV Channel 2 has received about five women from Norway who “are being kept against their will in Syria”. Some of the women are said to be pregnant which strengthens the image of them as in need of help. The channel interviewed a father of one of the captured women who said that her daughter is a prisoner of Daesh and that she left to help orphans and now regrets her choice. The father says that his daughter would not have left had she known what the reality in Syria was. This statement indicates that the daughter did not think through her decision. The image of oppression is strengthened by describing that the daughter is not

let outside at all. The news article utilizes as an expert the communications director of Norway's Foreign Secretary, Frode O. Andersen, who states that many women have left with false expectations and that the reality turned out to be different than expected. Andersen also says that when the women have left there is little opportunities to help them, thus the article can be viewed as a warning for other women. They should think carefully before leaving their homes because once they leave, they might regret the decision and will be beyond the reach of help. Thus, the women are themselves viewed as responsible for their decision to leave and once they have made the decision to travel, they have to bear the consequences.

Two *Dagens Nyheter* news articles describe a case from Britain where three teenage girls travelled to Syria to join Daesh. The other one of the two articles is titled "The girls IS trip stirs up strong emotions" (*Dagens Nyheter* 26.2.2015). The article states that the journey has raised the question of what lures young women to Daesh and that this is not a question merely for Sweden but for whole Europe. Additionally, the article associates the British case with the pan-European context of jihadi terrorism by describing that in France there has been heated debate about Daesh after the Charlie Hebdo attack. This illustrates that the phenomenon is understood globally, and Europe is viewed as one entity. The attribution of responsibility frame appears both through rhetorical means and through the content of the article. An example of the rhetorical means are the following questions presented by the text: "Why do young women join? How are they radicalized? What should be done in order to prevent young girls from joining?" The questions illustrate that the phenomenon of female supporters of Daesh is confusing and even scary and indicates that a remedy is being sought: how can this phenomenon be stopped?

The article also aims to find a culprit by asking how the British girls were radicalized and where. Here their school is brought forward, and it is said that the girls were described by their school as "top students". This gives an impression of a smart and well-adjusted group which makes it more difficult to understand that they decided to join Daesh. The possible responsibility of the school in the girls' radicalization process is described by the article with a metaphor stating that the school "has washed its hands" (from blame). The impression is strengthened by two statements of the principal of the school who stated that "police says that there is no evidence for radicalization at school" and "they (the police) said that they did not find any signs that the girls were being radicalized". These statements express that the police are seen as the highest authority and that its viewpoint releases the school from liability. The term "radicalization" is used seven times when referring to the girls who travelled to Syria, however they are not portrayed as a possible threat due to this radicalization

process. Rather they are viewed as victims of their surroundings, given that the article continues to look for an outside blame and explain the phenomenon instead of describing the possible threat that the girls or their counterparts may pose.

After the article has released the girls' school from blame it continues to search a culprit for the radicalization elsewhere by describing a Scottish girl who travelled to Syria a year before and is described as an online contact of the British girls. However, she is not viewed as the culpable, as the article states that the girls were in contact with multiple other "extremists". Here the attribution of responsibility frame is utilized again in the following sentence:

"That the girls could send Twitter messages without anyone reacting has stirred up emotions and gotten politicians to require IT companies to take a large responsibility."

By describing the role of the school, then a female who has previously joined Daesh and finally the role of social media the article creates an image of an unclear situation that has evoked emotions and left many questions unanswered. This is evident also in the last sentence of the article:

"How could three young teenage girls be radicalized? What contacts they had with IS before? How could they pass the checks at the airport without any suspicions being raised? When will they be in touch? In London sit their families and wait."

This sentence summarizes the core message of the article: how and why the journey of the three girls could have happened without anyone intervening? It also illustrates the responsibility of the authorities for the families.

The approach taken by the second news article is expressed in the headline "Police is being criticized after girls travel to Syria" (*Dagens Nyheter* 23.2.2015). The article describes the three girls briefly as "students with top grades". Otherwise, the article focuses on the police of Britain that is claimed to have failed at its work. This is expressed with sentences such as "At the same time, more and more people are questioning why the police were not able to stop the girls" and "Now criticism grows towards the police - -". The article illustrates that also politicians are disappointed with the police which gives weight to the criticism. An unnamed source from the Department for Education states as follows:

“All of us are very frustrated with the police. They were aware of these people and it was their job to monitor them. That three girls have been able to go this week is very frustrating.”

Additionally, the article states that the police have failed before by quoting the parents of a girl who joined Daesh a year before and attended the same school as the missing girls and possibly affected their decision to leave. The parents criticize Security Service for not being able to stop their child from travelling even though they monitored her activity on social media. This strengthens the core message of the article that the police have failed these females.

All in all, these two articles do not concentrate on describing the three girls who joined Daesh whereas seek to understand how the journey was possible and who is to be blamed for it. This type of framing places the females aside of the story and concentrates more on the phenomenon of females who join the caliphate of Daesh. The depictions of the two articles coincide with the arguments of Sjoberg and Gentry (2016, 25) who argue that violent women is an absurd idea for the media, and they aspire to explain it away. Additionally, the stories illustrate the novelty of the phenomenon as it is seen as abnormal and nearly impossible to understand.

4.4.3 Women as a threat

Three news articles portray women as perpetrators of political violence through an attempted terror attack. One of the articles (*HS-AFP* 9.9.2016) titled “Three women arrested in France are suspected of planning a terror attack to the railway station of Paris” describes women, aged 19, 23 and 39, who planned to conduct a terror attack with a car that was equipped with a gas tank. Members of Daesh in Syria led the planning of the attack, which puts the attack in the category of organized terrorism, where a terrorist organization participates in incitement, planning or conduction of an attack (Ganor 2015, 137). The article tells that youngest of the women had written a letter where she pledged loyalty to Daesh and that she was already on the surveillance of the police because she wanted to join Daesh as a fighter in Syria. Additionally, the article tells that the woman stabbed a police officer during the arrest and the police shot and wounded her. These depictions illustrate that the woman was committed to political violence and was viewed as a possible threat before the attempted attack. The threat posed by the actions of the women is described by stating that the “terrorist arrests” have increased fears on a new attack towards crowds of people in France. The final sentence of the article brings forward the gender of the women:

“According to the prosecutor of Paris the newest plan for attack shows that now the terrorist organization wishes to recruit women to conduct attacks.”

The usage of a statement of a prosecutor gives validity to the message which is that women should be viewed as possible perpetrators of political violence. The statement also illustrates that the gender of the women is recognized; however, they are foremost seen as perpetrators of political violence, not as *women* perpetrators of political violence.

Yle News reported about the failed attack in two articles, first of which (*Yle News* 9.9.2016) provides same information as the article described above, however it gives additional information by presenting a quote of Bernard Cazeneuve, the interior minister of France who describes the three women as follows:

“There radicalized, fanatic women likely made preparations for new violent attacks, immediately. Unprecedented threat of terrorism is being directed against France which requires alertness of all our compatriots.”

This statement illustrates securitization of the women who attempted to conduct the terror attack. The usage of the words “radicalized” and “fanatic” to describe the women increases the connection between the women and terrorism and implies that they were not in their right minds and acted irrationally. According to Andrew Silke it can be challenging to view perpetrators as rational people and instead it is easier to view them as “highly deviant personalities who are very likely to suffer from mental illness and psychopathological disorders” (Silke 2008, 103). Additionally, by stating that the attack planners are radicalized and fanatic women they are placed to the separate category of *women* terrorists. However, the article ends to a comment given by Cazeneuve which is against this framing as he stated that 260 people in France were arrested in 2016 for connections to terrorism or terror attacks. This statement places the women among other terrorist suspects, thus the women are viewed in a dichotomous manner.

An *Yle News* article (9.9.2016) differs from the other two articles that describe the attempted attack of Paris as it concentrates on the gender of the attack planners. Already the headline “The women terrorists of Paris received instructions from Isis” describes them as *women* terrorists. Additionally, they are described as commanders of a “women terrorist cell” that according to the prosecutor of

Paris, François Molins, is now dismantled. Both the author of the article and Molins state that the women are young, even though one of the women was aged 39 at the time of writing and thus twenty years older than the youngest of the women. Daesh is mentioned two times whereas the word “young” is mentioned three times. The word “women terrorist” is mentioned in the article two times and word “women” nine times; thus, the article describes the attackers strongly from the perspective of their gender and age instead of depicting them as fighters of Daesh. The article coincides with Sjoberg and Gentry’s argument that writings about women’s violence are not sex neutral and focus on violent women’s identities as women. They are not viewed as bad people; they are viewed as bad women and “women terrorists” (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 3, 8).

The article continues to empathize gender and additionally sexuality under a sub headline “One woman – engaged with two”. In this section the article states that one of the women is associated to a previous terror attack and was engaged with the attacker who killed two police officers. It is stated that the woman was also engaged to another attacker called Adel Kermiche who killed a catholic priest. Based on the headline these engagements were overlapping, a description which serves three purposes. First, it strengthens the woman’s relation to terrorism – she is involved in total three terror attacks via her spouses. Second, it presents a moral judgement by saying that the woman was engaged with two people at the same time. Third, it associates the woman’s sexuality and her political violence, which places the woman within the whole narrative and is done so that the author and the audience do not have to consider her political motivations (Sjoberg & Gentry 2015, 133). Reporting about the engagements under a separate section illustrates that this aspect was wished to be emphasized and is presented as a relevant part of the news article.

A news article of *Helsingin Sanomat* (31.3.2015) titled “From ordinary girl to a terrorist – why teenage girls from Western countries join Isis” establishes that women have for a long time posed a threat as members of terrorist organizations and seeks to understand why females from Western countries would wish to join Daesh. Daesh is portrayed to be against women’s wellbeing as illustrated by the lead paragraph:

“Brutal murders, women and children as sex slaves, human auctions – news about the actions of jihadist organization Isis gives anyone goosebumps. This is why it feels inexplicable that women and teenagers join also from Western countries”.

The lead paragraph coincides with the arguments of Loken and Zelenz (2018, 46) who state that to the public the successful recruitment of foreigners who come from relatively gender equal societies is difficult to understand because of the harsh attitudes of Daesh. The lead paragraph also illustrates that Western women's joining is especially puzzling compared to women from outside Western countries. The article continues to ask why women want to join an organization that takes away their basic rights and to answer this question the article quotes two experts. An expert called Joana Cook illustrates the threat posed by the women as she says that women have joined terrorist organizations previously as well and that there is no difference between women and men's "brutality and ideology". Additionally, researcher Rachel Briggs says that women are violent and gives the example of female kidnappers who survivors have often said to be crueler than men both physically and psychologically. The article ends by stating that the best way to prevent young people from joining Daesh are authentic stories of others who have left and can prove that "the story of Isis is a lie". Here the article utilizes the attribution of responsibility frame by asking how the phenomenon can be stopped and how this goal can be achieved.

The article presents four images that depict women who are related to a terrorist organization. The first photograph is taken of three British females who joined Daesh and in the caption they are described as "schoolgirls" which emphasizes their young age. Another image portrays a sister of one of the previously mentioned British females, holding a picture of her sister who in the capture is again described as a "schoolgirl". The third image is of Ulrike Meinhof who was a member of the German left-wing terrorist organization called the Red Army Faction. The caption states that Meinhof was accused of several murders and attempted murders, which is used to support the statements of the two experts who claim that also women are violent. The last image illustrates two women who seem to be dancing in a forest. In the background of the picture are both men and women. The caption tells that the people in the image are members of FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army) and that women have been told to have experienced plenty of sexual harassment in the organization. These images associate the women supporters of Daesh to a wider context of terrorism and illustrate that women and terrorism is not a new phenomenon, thus verifying the experts' statement. Additionally, the final image attaches gender to the story of political violence and illustrates that although women are active supporters of terrorist organizations, they can simultaneously be victims because of their gender.

The threat posed by the women supporters of Daesh does not always manifest itself as political violence. An *Yle News* article (17.7.2015) frames the women who merely travel to the areas controlled

by Daesh as a possible security risk. The article is based on information received by *Sveriges Television* from Sweden's Security Police Säpo and tells that approximately 30 to 40 women from Sweden have travelled to "the ranks of extreme Islamist Isis". Sweden's Security Police views the percentage of women as growing and "alarming". The article ends with a sentence that states that women travel to the areas controlled by Daesh in order to participate in the supportive actions and that Sweden's Security Police does not have confirmed information about the Swedish women's participation in combat training or battles. Despite this the core message of the article is that the phenomenon of women travelling to the ranks of Daesh is worrying which is evident by the statements given by the Sweden's Security Police. The usage of the Police as a source of information gives reliability to this conclusion. Additionally, the article illustrates that the Finnish news media utilizes domestication to Swedish news. The usage of domestication in the article indicates that if the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh is viewed worrisome in Sweden, it should be viewed in a similar manner in Finland. Finally, it illustrates that the threat posed by Daesh is not merely related to combat activity, the threat rises from the support given for the ideology of the organization. This is an aspect that is also related to the social media activity of the women supporters of Daesh.

4.4.4 Threatening activity on social media

A portion of the news articles of the data approach the topic from the aspect of women's behavior on social media and frame them as a potential security threat through their social media posts. The second part of the article of *Helsingin Sanomat* (20.10. 2014) that described the religiosity of a woman called Aisha depicts her actions on social media where she expressed her support towards violent jihad. According to the article she shared an image of a woman in a niqab holding an assault rifle and wrote "sisters doing jihad". Later she posted "a picture of a boy that was sawed in half". These examples illustrate her commitment to (political) violence. A picture of a woman with a gun breaks the traditional masculine image of violence and the picture of a murdered child expresses her lack of nurture that is traditionally viewed as an inherent quality of women. Aisha is also said to have participated into a Facebook discussion where she wrote that "dirty Shias shall taste death", that she hates Shia and that she is a Salafi jihadist. The article states that in response "young women with an immigrant background" wrote that Aisha is a "whore of Isis, brainwashed terrorist and a psychopath". The depiction of "young women with an immigrant background" who are fighting on social media with a woman who has joined Daesh can be interpreted in many ways. The immigration background is possibly used to illustrate that not all Muslim immigrants support the ideology of Daesh and that they are willing to confront people who support it; thus, the Shia women support the so-called

Western values. On the other hand, the article creates an image of aggressive Sunni and Shia who insult each other and feel deep hatred towards each other. Further, they are aggressive *women*.

The article tells that days after these events Aisha posted a photo of a person whose identity was not clear in a niqab holding a gun. With the picture she posted the following:

“Suicide bomb and ak47 in my hands. U just keep calling supo. I have your last names ya shi3at bidnillaah their destruction is near.”

The word “supo” refers to Finnish Security and Intelligence Service. The post caused a police report to be made against Aisha and later she became a wanted person. Aisha defended the post and said that she was upset and angry by the name-calling, yet she states that Shia are her friends. Aisha stated that she has nothing to hide and that she is not a criminal. Despite Aisha’s personal comments the image of a threatening and possibly violent woman was created. In addition, many aspects of how Aisha is described creates an “us versus them” setting between her and other women, her and other Muslims and more broadly between her and other Finns. This means that Finns do not have to view the threat as internal, instead it is external.

A *Dagens Nyheter* article titled “Jihadi brides can become new terrorists” (2.2.2015) presents the women supporters of Daesh as a possible security threat to their countries of origin. The article is based on a report of the Institute of Strategic Dialogue. The lead paragraph tells that approximately 30 Swedish women have travelled to Syria and that the women, as the Black widows of Chechnya, can become future suicide bombers. This places the women supporters of Daesh into a broader context of politically violent women and illustrates their dangerous nature. Another verbal means that is used to describe the women is the term “jihadi bride” that appears in total three times. The article states that the women who live in the caliphate of Daesh are not the ones that pose a security threat as “their most important task in Daesh is to marry a fighter, bare children and participate in the building of the Islamic State”. However, the women praise violence in social media which can inspire other women to conduct attacks. Thus, the women who live in the caliphate pose an indirect security threat. The attribution of responsibility frame appears through the core message which is to indicate the steps that policy makers should take in order to prevent women from travelling to areas controlled by Daesh. This is evident in sentences such as “Policy makers must support parents who do not wish their daughters to migrate“, and “Policy makers must also be prepared to intervene”.

An *Yle News* article (16.9.2014) describes shortly two Finnish women who have demonstrated threatening activity on social media. The article quotes a Twitter post of a woman who wrote “I rejoiced about the beheading”, referring to the decapitation of the journalist James Foley. The usage of this post frames the woman as a supporter of the brutal actions of Daesh and additionally against the “Western” values, such as the freedom of speech, as she expresses joy over the killing of a journalist. The other woman is described to be a wife of a Finnish-Somali man who has appeared in a video of Daesh. The article describes the wife as follows:

“Also, her wife appears to be aggressive. She is a woman jihadist on whom the police have started a pretrial investigation because of Internet threats.”

By describing the woman as aggressive and married to a man who is evidently connected to Daesh strengthens her connection to the terrorist organization. Additionally, she is referred to as a “woman jihadist” which illustrates that her political violence is understood through her gender. She is not just a jihadist; she belongs to a separate category of the *women* jihadists. Finally, by expressing that the police have started to investigate her actions on social media her threatening image is reinforced as the police, a figure of authority, views her as a possible security threat.

4.4.5 Recruitment on social media

All the activity on social media does not pose a direct threat, however it is viewed to serve the purpose of recruitment. An *Yle News* article (4.11.2015) titled “Young Norwegian woman talks about her life in Syria – a five-star jihad” describes a Norwegian woman called Aisha Shezadi who has joined the caliphate of Daesh in Syria and describes her life on Facebook. The article is the only one amongst the data to reveal the full name of the woman it describes which is explained by the lead paragraph that states that Shezadi was already known in Norway before her move to Syria because she participated into public discussion about religion and conviction. This reveals that Shezadi’s interest towards religion and conviction are not new.

Shezadi is characterized as a young woman (her age is mentioned in total three times) who has been born and raised in Norway, which emphasizes her connection to the country; she cannot be viewed as an outsider. She is also depicted as a true supporter of Daesh as she describes her experiences as “a five-star jihad”. The article describes how Shezadi rationalizes her Facebook posts by quoting her post:

“I see that many people want to know what it is really like in the Islamic State and that is why I have started to write about it. Here you get a more truthful point of view, inshaAlla.”

Directly after the quote is a sub headline that states: “Recruitment as a motive”, which undermines the quote of Shezadi and indicates that despite her claim of giving a “truthful point of view” her posts are actually written for recruitment purposes. Under the sub headline the article quotes a researcher who reinforces this view by arguing that the posts are in fact written for recruitment purposes. Another direct quote of Shezadi takes a stance against the propaganda claims as she writes:

“I did not know that people have been brainwashed and that they have been fed so much lies and propaganda.”

With this post Shezadi reveals the view of Daesh as a brainwasher and claims that people outside the organization are the ones who have received inaccurate information. She also tells that the bombings conducted by external actors cause negative impacts, such as shortages on resources and threat for security. Thus, from her perspective Daesh is not the source of insecurity, threat and brainwashing.

A photograph contained in the article depicts the aftermath of a Syrian government air strike in a city called Duma. The image illustrates a young boy and a man amongst the ruins. The image reminds the reader of the Syrian civil war and indicates that although Shezadi enjoys her life in the caliphate she still lives in the middle of an armed conflict. The article ends with remarks of another expert who argues that Shezadi has achieved a high position in Daesh, however most women are “completely defenseless” and “women’s life is very restricted”. With the comments of two experts the article argues that the posts of Shezadi are propaganda and thus inaccurate which frames her as a propagandist and a recruiter, as her posts may encourage other women to travel to the caliphate.

An *Yle News* article (17.2.2015) titled “Jihadi brides are intense propagandists – urge Western women to conduct terror attacks” focuses both on women as propagandists and recruiters and on the security threat they pose in those roles. This frame is strengthened with two screenshots taken of the women’s social media accounts. The first image illustrates four separate pictures of niqab wearing women with guns, an image of a woman with a child and an image of several women praying. The caption says that on their online posts women who live in the area controlled by Daesh “admire violence and acts of blood”. The second screenshot is of a man and a woman who sit on a couch with a Daesh flag

behind them, looking at each other while holding guns along with a post that says, “me and my hubby someday lool”. Here the caption states as follows:

“While the purpose of women’s life is to give birth and take care of the housekeeping, their Twitter posts that admire battles spread the ideology of Isis effectively”.

The caption states that although women live restricted domestic lives in the caliphate, they pose an indirect threat as propagandists.

The headline of the article combines the description of “intense propagandist” with the term “jihadi bride” which refers to women who join because of a relationship with a male member of a terrorist organization. However, as the article presents the women as a potential threat it is possible that the term is used in the headline in order to show that the traditional understanding of women in a terrorist organization (wife and mother) is one-sided and is not adequate to describe the women. An expert statement coincides with this standpoint. Ross Frenett from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue states that too one-sided depiction as victims has been given of the women who have joined Daesh. He claims that they have been described as “gullible jihadi brides who search for adventures and end up tightly veiled in the command of Daesh”. This is the only time when the word “jihadi bride” is used in the article after the headline. The comments of Frenett can be read as criticism of the discussion about oppressed Muslim women and Islam as a religion against women’s interests. While the reason for the usage of the term “jihadi bride” in the headline may be to illustrate the one-sidedness of the term, it should be noted that it anyhow attaches gender and women’s sexuality to their political violence.

The core message of the article is that female supporters are as devoted to Daesh as men despite the stereotypical images of them. The following sentence illustrates this message:

“They are imagined to be either under the influence of men or being tricked to the ranks of the organization. These women are however as dedicated to the extreme ideology as men and admire the violent action of the organization.”

The sentence claims that the public incorrectly views women’s connection to terrorism to originate either from a relationship with a male or from manipulation, not from the women’s own motivation, an assumption that the article aims to correct. The argument of women’s admiration towards violence

and the threat they pose to their countries of origin is reinforced with sentences such as “these women admire the blood actions and executions of Isis”, “the women’s hatred and bitterness may unravel violently in their home countries” and “the online writings of these women are a threat to the Western countries”. The last sentence particularly securitizes the women who have joined Daesh and additionally domesticates the phenomenon by stating that although they are currently abroad, they continue to pose a threat to their countries of origin. The detachment of these women and their countries of origin is enforced by stating that the women “mock Western countries”, thus indicating that there is no more a connection between these women and Western countries.

The article frames the women who publish posts on social media as the responsible party for inspiring other women to admire and support Daesh. These women are referred to as “women jihadists”, a term that is mentioned six times, thus the article emphasizes the gender of these jihadists. They are described to encourage women to conduct terror attacks in their home countries and thus to unravel the “anger” and “resentfulness” that they feel. At the end of the article the attribution of responsibility frame is used by stating that states are unable to stop the women from leaving and that the most effective way to influence the women is through their families. The frame also appears in the final sub headline of the article that is “How could the attacks be prevented?”. Frenett offers as a solution the families of the women and girls, thus they are framed as the ones who are responsible to prevent women from joining Daesh.

Another *Yle News* article (28.5.2015) that is entirely based on a research conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue and King College London offers similar information as the news article discussed above. The article is titled “Researchers warn against thinking women who join the ranks of Isis as merely jihadi brides – the threat posed by the women is left unseen”. The headline tells that to view women merely as jihadi brides is not only as on-sided, it is also dangerous, thus the women are viewed as a possible security threat. The text gives an explanation for the claim presented in the headline by arguing that it complicates the aim to prevent other women from becoming radicalized. This is the only time that the term “radicalization” is used. Additionally, the article states that “viewing women as brainwashed and innocent girls prevents from seeing the threat they pose”. The researchers state that the women view themselves as “pilgrims who leave to accelerate the area to an islamist utopia”. Many women wish to fight alongside men, however the strict law of Daesh prevents them. Additionally, the researchers argue that vulnerable to the rhetoric of Daesh are young women who question their identity as they are growing up. The attribution of responsibility frame of the article is directed towards the societies where the women and girls live, as the article states as follows:

“Many of the women monitored by the researchers have said that they feel socially and culturally isolated in a Western society and that they view the area controlled by Isis as a refuge for those who wish to protect Islam.”

This sentence can be read both as a critique towards Western societies that have failed their Muslim citizens who do not feel that they truly belong nor are able to practice their religion, and as a statement illustrating that “Western” values are in conflict with the values of Islam. With the article is an image of a Daesh flag with a notion that states that Assad’s regime still has to sort out its terms with Daesh. The comment reminds the reader of the Syrian civil war and of the larger conflict behind the topic of the article.

An *Yle News* article (16.9.2014) quotes two social media posts of women where they directly encourage other women to travel to the caliphate. The first one says, “What is your excuse (to not come)?” while the other states “Hurry before the doors are closed!” The first quote aims to persuade women to travel by blaming them. The quote also tells that the writer of the post views the journey to the caliphate as women’s obligation that they cannot neglect. The second quote conveys a sense of urgency: time is running up and the women have to hasten.

Finally, an article of *Dagens Nyheter* (28.5.2016) reports about the role of social media as a recruitment tool and claims that it is effective especially when recruiting women. The article differs from the other articles of the data as it concentrates on a specific area of Sweden from where numerous people are claimed to have travelled to Syria. It is argued that “the first women who went to Syria from Europe were skilled recruiters of other girls and women” and “attracted with exciting life”. This claim verifies the results of the study of Pearson (2018, 853) who argues that women are active recruiters themselves. The article states that effectiveness of the promises of exciting life can be explained by the restricted lives that the females live. The restrictions are described with sentences such as “there are not many girls outside” and “as a girl you are often much more restricted than boys”. This is said to be the reason why “many of the girls live their lives online and perhaps have their largest freedom there”. The study of Pearson (2018, 853) coincides with these claims as she argues that gender norms and behavioral expectations can explain why women are more easily recruited online than in offline spaces.

The information presented by the article is based on an interview of a local police officer who is said to know five girls who wish to travel to Syria and describes them as “heavily restricted young women

who are searching to find their identity and wish to stand on their own feet”. The recruiters speak to these girls online and “groom them susceptible to the extreme message of the terrorist group” for example by discussing about correct faith. Thus, the attribution of responsibility frame is utilized towards the community and families of the girls who drive them to the arms of the recruiters of Daesh by restricting their lives. Additionally, it is indicated that would the girls live freer and gender equal lives this would not occur. This view coincides with the arguments of Bokhari (2007, 54) who states that the assumptions that women are drawn into a terrorist organization portrays them as victims of their surroundings. The description of the women’s lives restricted by religious values also creates a value hierarchy between “Western” values and “conservative Islamic” values. These strict values are presented to be utilized by the whole community of the specific area of Sweden which reduces it to a homogenic Muslim community. The indication that the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh originates from strict rules forced upon young Muslim women dismisses other background factors such as individualistic reasons and larger societal issues and allows Sweden to view the phenomenon as one that does not originate from the country.

4.5 The conflict frame

4.5.1 A conflict between denominations

I was able to identify one news article that utilizes the conflict frame as the dominant news frame. The article is titled “Experts: A Finnish Facebook jihadist appears to be a supporter of the organization Isis – “Extremely exceptional” (*Yle News* 19.6.2014) and analyzes social media posts of a woman who has threatened Shia women on Facebook. The dominant frame utilized by the article is the conflict frame as it describes a conflict between Sunni and Shia denominations. The analysis is conducted by two experts which indicates that the reader should consider the analysis as trustworthy. The lead paragraph indicates how the woman is framed:

“Influences of violent Salafi jihadism are illustrated in the Facebook posts by a jihadist who threatens to kill Syrian Shia”

The woman is framed as intimidating, as expressed by the vocabulary that is used to describe her actions. It is notable that the woman is referred to as a jihadist, not as a *woman* jihadist. Neither the headline refers to her gender. The intimidating representation is strengthened visually by presenting

an image of the woman in a niqab with an assault rifle and an object she claimed to be a suicide vest. The picture is also described in the body text.

The conflict between Sunni and Shia is described with sentences such as “the threatener - - prides herself to be on the wanted list of Shia” and “the posts of the woman illustrate a historically deep gap between the two main denominations of Islam”. The article also utilizes a part of a post of the woman where she stated that Shia are “heathens”. Although these sentences illustrate that the Shia are not passive victims the dichotomy frames them as the victim or the protagonist of the story whereas the Sunni woman is described as the antagonist.

One of the two experts, Antti Paronen from the National Defence University, brings forward the gender of the woman. The article states as follows:

“Paronen thinks that it is exceptional that the person who posed the public threat is a woman because women as Sunni jihadists and suicide attackers in Syria is a new phenomenon. However, according to Paronen they are taking on a more active role of a religious warrior amongst the jihadists in Syria – also in public.”

Paronen also says that the case is “even more exceptional” because the woman is Finnish. This illustrates Finland’s supposed relationship with jihadi terrorism; even though it has affected Europe in recent years, terror attacks and terror threat are rare in Finland. However, Paronen might also refer to the small percentage of Finnish citizens who have travelled to areas controlled by Daesh. At the end of the article Paronen ponders the woman’s “original nationality” and estimates that based on Facebook it could be Somalia, however it is not further explained why Paronen estimates that the woman has immigration roots. This assumption indicates that she can be viewed as an outsider.

4.6 Discussion

The data of this study presents three dominant frames developed by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000, in De Vreese 2005, 56): the human interest frame, the attribution of responsibility frame and the conflict frame. As the conflict frame is utilized as a dominant frame only by one news article it can be concluded that the topic of women supporters of Daesh is described mainly either through the stories of individuals (the human interest frame) or with the aim to explain the phenomenon,

understand what causes women to join or to find those that are responsible for their decision to join (the attribution of responsibility frame).

The number of news articles that approach the topic from the perspective of European women is very limited both in the Finnish and Swedish news media. This indicates that Daesh as a topic is more commonly approached from other perspectives and that it is not primarily viewed from the perspective of women supporters of the organization. One can assume that the human rights violations that Daesh has conducted against women explain why the topic is frequently told from the perspective of women who have been victimized or enslaved by the organization. This is evident also in those news articles of the data that depict females who have been captured and/or freed from Daesh and that aim to find a culprit for women's journey to the areas controlled by Daesh. Additionally, even if the women who have left their countries of origin to join Daesh are viewed as a security threat the blame is not shifted towards the women themselves, the responsibility belongs to other actors, such as the society, police and other officials who have not been able to prevent the women. Therefore, the data verifies academic studies that suggest that women related to political violence are represented as victims not to be blamed for. However, this does not apply to all the women represented in the data such as the attack planners of Paris.

The data also verifies the argument made by previous studies that the topic of women related to political violence is approached from the perspectives of gender which is apparent from the vocabulary that is used to describe the women. Additionally, aspects of the women's personal lives, such as their relationships and motherhood, are attached to the stories of their political violence or ideology. However, the data illustrates that different roles of women in Daesh and their motivations to join the organization are recognized which is evident especially in the articles that utilize researchers as a source of information. Apart from the terror attack planners of Paris the data does not depict women who have conducted or planned to conduct acts of political violence. However, the data argues that women can pose a threat even if they were not to conduct political violence which is depicted through their role as recruiters and propagandists on social media. The role of social media is seen as an important and perhaps primary channel for recruitment as the data does not refer to other Internet sources that the women might have used. Additionally, the news articles bring forward the possibility that the women might conduct terror attacks after they return to their countries of origin and from that aspect they are viewed as a security threat. The representations of women are thus multilayered. They are simultaneously viewed as a possible security threat and activists who are as

committed to Daesh as men, however at the same time they are submitted to rules and restrictions that restrain their lives and human rights.

The data shows that women supporters of Daesh is a securitized phenomenon although not all of the women represented in the data pose a threat themselves. However, in general the phenomenon is seen in the data as a threatening and worrying phenomenon that poses a security threat to the women's countries of origin. This message appears through frames, vocabular choices and remarks of experts and other people with authority, such as the police. The news articles that utilize the attribution of responsibility frame aim to seek a remedy for the phenomenon and understand what motivates women to join. In the literature review chapter, I wrote that according to Sjoberg and Gentry (2016, 25) a violent woman is an absurd idea for media and that they aspire to explain it away instead of seeking to understand the phenomenon. The data both verifies and dismantles this argument as it does view the phenomenon as absurd, however it does seek to understand it due to the security threat that it poses to the women's countries of origin.

Helsingin Sanomat, *Yle News* and *Dagens Nyheter* use similar frames whereas *Sveriges Television* utilizes the human interest frame and individual's stories more drastically than the other three news media. This illustrates that differences between the news media's descriptions and used frames should not necessarily be searched between the countries but between the different news media. The similar frames and stories can be explained by the fact that in 2014-2016 the phenomenon of Daesh was new to all European countries which explains the way the topic is approached (explaining the phenomenon) and the reliance on other news media. If the topic is to be studied with a later time period, the coverage can be different as the physical self-proclaimed caliphate has been demolished and women have been taken to Al-Hawl. As Finland and Sweden decide what to do with their citizens in Al-Hawl the news coverage in the respective countries may vary in the future as the countries take their own stances on the subject. Additionally, the data does not indicate differences that could be interpreted with the different immigration backgrounds of Finland and Sweden as the coverage of the topic is relatively similar in the different news media. Immigration is mentioned a few times in the news media of both countries through individuals who have an immigration background or do not share the dominant ethnicity. These articles depict ethnicity and different cultural heritage as possible explanations for the interest towards Daesh, however they do not connect the topics to the immigration policies of Finland and Sweden.

Differences can however be found in the ways that domestication is featured in the news media of the two countries: the Finnish news media reports stories from Norway, Sweden, France and Great Britain, whereas the Swedish news media limits its reporting to news stories from Great Britain. Another difference is that one article of *Dagens Nyheter* (28.5.2016) approaches the topic from the perspective of a specific area in Sweden which can be explained with the segregation of neighborhoods that has occurred in Sweden. This has not happened (at least as drastically) in Finland which can explain the broader approach to the topic in the Finnish news media. Another difference between the Finnish and Swedish news media relates to the terms used to refer to Daesh. The Finnish news media refers to the organization as “Isis” or occasionally as “the Islamic State”, whereas the Swedish news media refers to the organization as “the Islamic State” or “IS” throughout the data. This is notable as the term “Islamic State” can be interpreted as an indirect expression of approval of the self-proclaimed caliphate (Koivusaari 2016, 229).

Domestication can be seen from the data also through the representation of the women supporters of Daesh from a “Western” perspective by aiming to explain what causes women to travel to Daesh controlled territories. This attempt to explain the phenomenon indicates that it is viewed as strange and unfamiliar and by explaining it the news articles aim to localize it. The women thus serve as domesticators of a foreign and strange object, Daesh. Articles that approach the topic of Daesh from alternative perspectives might have alternative ways to domesticate the topic.

5 CONCLUSION

This thesis has studied the representations of European women supporters of Daesh in Finnish and Swedish news media. The phenomenon has raised the attention of numerous scholars during the recent years, and case studies have been conducted albeit none could be found in Finland nor in Sweden, thus there is limited understanding of how the Nordic countries view the topic. This is a research gap that this study aimed to fill. Additionally, this thesis has compared the Finnish and Swedish news media and studied whether and how their depictions differ.

The study verifies the results of previous studies that argue that women's political violence is viewed through their gender and that women related to political violence are depicted as victims not to be blamed for. However, the news articles do not present a coherent representation of the female supporters and some of the articles do recognize that women have variant roles in Daesh and aim to debunk stereotypical assumptions of them. Finally, the data views women supporters of Daesh as a security threat even if they would not have committed acts of political violence.

The data is limited to Finnish and Swedish news media articles, thus the thesis provides qualitative information that cannot be applied to other contexts. However, since the media representations of the two countries are similar it can be concluded that the data provides indicative information on how the phenomenon is understood in the Nordic countries. However, the data does not provide information on what are the policy options regarding the women supporters of Daesh nor how the news articles shape the public opinion about the women. As Gamson and Modigliani argue, meaning is constructed by life histories, social interaction and psychological dispositions of individuals (1989, 2) which means that individuals approach the topic from different perspectives.

The topic of women and Daesh is topical and likely to remain that way given that there are still hundreds of women in the Al-Hawl refugee camp in Syria. As European countries make their final decisions on how to deal with the women and their children the topic will continue to evolve and thus provide research opportunities. If we consider studies on media, an opportunity is to study current day news media coverage of the women and compare it to the coverage of the time that the physical self-proclaimed caliphate of Daesh was established. Another research opportunity is to study the differences in coverage of female and male members of Daesh. As the literature review and data analysis of this thesis illustrate, the topic of political violence is often approached from the perspective of gender. Given this knowledge comparative research would allow us to more deeply understand

what aspects are on the focus when describing female and male members of a politically violent organization such as Daesh.

The news media coverage of the phenomenon of women supporters of Daesh broadens the preexisting understanding of politically violent women by featuring their participation in the actions of political violence both directly as conductors of terror attacks and indirectly as recruiters and propagandists on social media.

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