

Runaway jihadi bride

*Media framing of Western female foreign fighters to
ISIS*

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Abstract

The constant stream of foreign fighters from Europe to ISIS has been at the centre of attention in news media all around Europe for many years now. The large proportion of women travelling has received much of this notice, and the media has tried to make sense of the phenomenon. Through a qualitative critical discourse analysis, I have studied 130 online articles from four different newspapers in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Great Britain. Through my analysis, I identified five dominating discourses: that of ‘the mother and wife,’ ‘the religious woman,’ ‘the brainwashed schoolgirl,’ ‘the warped woman,’ and ‘the political woman’. These discourses frame how we see female foreign fighters, and how we understand their motivations and actions.

The mother and wife discourse focuses largely on getting married and having babies as a key motivation for joining ISIS. The recurring focus is on the involvement of a man: wanting to be with a man, idolizing men, or being lured by men. The religious woman discourse emphasises women travelling to ISIS because they are religiously motivated, or they are lured by a false religious message. The brainwashed schoolgirl discourse emphasises girls and women being presented as young, naive, and ignorant and therefore having been deceived into travelling. The warped woman discourse revolves around older or more experienced women within ISIS, who are presented as brutal and mad. The last discourse is the political woman, where humanitarian work or the fight against Bashar al-Assad are mentioned as motivations for travelling. The political woman discourse is a rare description, and captures what is *not* being said about women who join ISIS, which is an important part of critical discourse analysis.

Many of the articles present the women as not acting with full agency. This is an overarching discourse that finds resonance in the theory presented both by Sjoberg, Gentry (2007), and Elshtain (1995) claiming that women are often understood as less active political agents in comparison to men, and are more often thought of as acting with personal rather than political motives when they take part in war, when they engage in violence, or when they take part in terrorist organisations and plots. Women have traditionally been thought of as peaceful and caring, and therefore it is easy to underestimate their involvement in terrorist groups such as ISIS. This resonates with my findings. The implications may be that we perceive women as less

threatening when or if they return to their home countries, and they may receive lesser punishment than their male counterparts. It may also have implications for existing radicalisation theory, and what kind of preventative measures are designed to tackle both male and female radicalisation.

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Any errors or omissions in this thesis lie solely with the author.

24.10.17

Julie Ræstad Owe

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Chapter I: Introduction

As of 2016, women were believed to constitute 17 percent of the approximately 5,000 people who have travelled from European Union (EU) member states to join the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Mehra 2016: 11; Noor 2016: 127). The media dedicated, and still dedicates, time and resources to cover the streams of foreign fighters from Northern and Western European countries¹ to Syria and Iraq. Feminist and international relations writer Jean Elshtain, writes, ‘when a woman gets accused of an unusually dirty deed, we are shocked’ (Elshtain 1995: 179). Shocking phenomena are known to acquire media attention, and that accounts for the coverage of women who have travelled to join ISIS. In the media coverage, they quickly received nicknames in news articles, and are often referred to as ‘jihadi brides’ (Aly 2015).

In a report written by the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism (ICCT) it is stated that: ‘The way women are portrayed in the media often leads to underestimating or overestimating the role of women in terrorist organisations’ (Mehra 2016: 11). This does not just account for their roles, but also for perceptions of why they left and whether they can be assigned responsibility for joining ISIS or not. In a time when researchers and politicians dedicate time and resources to understanding the phenomena of radicalisation, extreme Islamist militancy, and specifically foreign fighters travelling to join ISIS, it is crucial to take a step back and examine how discourses of women in militant extremism are shaped. These discourses may affect radicalisation research, which again, together with the impressions the public receives from the media, can influence what policies are made and implemented. Additionally, the public receives much of its information about what goes around them, and difficult issues such as that of foreign fighters and ISIS, through the media. The images the media presents to the public are for the most part received as objective and nuanced information, and the public bases its opinions to a large degree on what they read through the media. It is therefore crucial to approach the subject with a critical examination of the perceptions and presumptions that steer what the media writes, and that the public takes for granted.

¹ Based on UN Statistics Division’s Methodology: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/m49/>

1.1 Research question

Jean Elshtain (1995) claims that women in war have been understood as Beautiful Souls, whereas men have been understood as Just Warriors, and further asks whether ‘the emergence of a woman as a mobilized war worker, a soldier, a terrorist, a revolutionary, or the prime victim of total war [have] shattered our notions of Beautiful Souls or Just Warriors?’ (Elshtain 1995: 6, 7). Most of the literature that exist on women in armed conflict is generally about ‘women in war’. Although this does not fully capture the phenomenon on female foreign fighters and women as part of Islamist militant extreme groups, this literature is useful as a basis for my own research.

From Britain and Scandinavia, hundreds of the so-called ‘beautiful souls’ have travelled to join ISIS. The Swedish press has written about the two Norwegian sisters who joined ISIS as early as 2013, as well as about the three Bethnal Green school friends who left together to join ISIS a couple of years later (By 2014; Svahn 2015). In Norway, a newspaper took an interest in the feared Aqsa Mahmood from Glasgow who travelled to join ISIS in 2014 (Hultgreen and Krokfjord 2014). Danish newspapers could inform that a young Swedish girl had no idea what ISIS was before she had joined (BT 2016), while British press took an interest in ‘How three warped British women are secretly encouraging UK teen girls to convert to Islam and become ISIS jihadi brides’ (Birchall 2016). The relatively high numbers of female foreign fighters from these countries, and the media portrayal of female foreign fighters to ISIS, make for an interesting focus in research, aiming to explore how these women are framed in news media.

I therefore ask;

How do British and Scandinavian newspapers portray Northern and Western European women who join ISIS?

I will further ask:

- *How are European ISIS women framed in the Scandinavian and British Press?*
- *What implications might the framing have for the public’s understanding of the phenomenon, and policies to address it?*

1.2 Why it is useful to ask these questions

Similar research on media presentations of women in war has been done previously. Katherine Brown has researched media presentations of Belgian-born Muriel Degauque's suicide bombing in Iraq 2005, and found that the media focused on three interlocking themes of gender, religion, and security. Muriel Degauque's suicide attack was understood 'because of her Islamic identity, and despite of her sex and white European heritage' (Brown 2011: 705). This presentation is similar to Marta Kollárová analysis where she compared media presentations of ISIS women to female foreign fighters to Kurdish militias. Whereas the Kurdish foreign fighters were viewed as 'brave, beautiful and tough,' the women in ISIS were viewed as either victims or as mad women, not fitting with the Western image of women (Kollárová 2016: 143). Both these studies shed light on an important and highly overlooked issue with media representations of women in war, and specifically Western women who affiliate with extreme Islamist terrorist groups. I will elaborate further on their research in the next chapter. Kollárová's research is a comparative study and deals seemingly with a smaller sample of news articles. Katherine Brown does a case study of one woman and the news media coverage of her. I contribute to the research field on media framing of women in terrorism and as foreign fighters with a larger amount of data representing Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, and British news media, where women from Northern and Western European women are the focus of my study. In my study, I therefore broaden the scope of research to gain a wider insight into the media framing of ISIS women. I will also be able to give detailed insights into how Scandinavian and British media presents these women, how they talk about them and understand them. I will also point to what implications may follow the discourses I demonstrate through the analysis chapter. I chose to conduct this specific type of research because I believe that detailed insight into the media framing of women is an important contribution to the research field, whereby focusing on women solely I could dig deep into how they specifically are framed.

Previous research has demonstrated how skewed and biased understandings of women may have consequences for legal prosecution (Strømme 2017), which I will elaborate on in chapter VI. The media's framing of the women who join ISIS may impact how the public views these women, and how police, judges, and politicians view them. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the media presentations in order to see how they potentially influence key people. My research can provide useful insights into this matter.

1.3 Analytical approach

My goal with this research was to see how women were framed in written news media. The research was therefore best considered to be based on critical discourse analysis (CDA). As part of CDA I will make use of a critical feminist lens to examine how women are viewed in war, how the media presents them, and theories on why men and women join extreme militant groups, to disentangle the media presentations of women who join ISIS. In CDA it is important to critically examine how certain discourses appear, how they dominate, what they entail and the implications they may have (Bratberg 2017). I will present a qualitative analysis of 130 articles from four different British, Norwegian, Swedish, and Danish newspapers. There are between 5 and 12 articles from four different newspapers within each country which appeared in the time period from 2013 to 2016. Details as to what newspapers and how I chose these will be elaborated on in the methods chapter. I have used NVivo, an analysis data programme, to categorise and analyse my data material. The research questions will be addressed through a presentation of the five most dominant discourses I have found through analysing the data material. The third level of CDA, the discourse's implications, will be addressed in chapter VI.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

In Chapter II, I will go through some background to provide a context and an understanding of the phenomenon I am researching, namely female foreign fighters to ISIS, or more generally women's political engagement. Here I will review how ISIS became a known terrorist organisation and, in its own words, a caliphate. Then I will give an overview of the foreign fighter phenomenon, and go into more detail on the women who join ISIS from abroad and what their roles in the terrorist organisation are. Then, I will address relevant literature on men and women who join extreme groups, as well as the general research on perceptions of women in war, and the female foreign fighters in ISIS phenomenon specifically. Finally, I will go through some research on media presentations of women in war, particularly in relation to the War on Terror and radical Islamist militancy.

Chapter III will address discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological approach, and critical discourse analysis specifically. I will explain why it is useful to study print media, before I go through the data collection process. I will detail how I chose the countries, newspapers and articles for my research. I will also demonstrate how I have thought during the analysis process.

In Chapter IV, the analysis chapter, I will examine the media presentations from the 130 articles and present five empirical near discourses on ISIS women from Northern and Western European countries that dominate my data material. The chapter will be guided by CDA, a critical feminist lens, and other literature that provide useful to my argumentation.

In Chapter V, I will elevate the analysis and discuss some overarching discourses I believe dominate perceptions of women who join ISIS, as well as overarching perceptions of women's political engagement and involvement in violence generally.

Chapter VI is dedicated to discussing the social, theoretical and political implications of the discourses I present in chapter IV.

Chapter II: Background and literature review

2.1 Introduction

It is necessary to provide some background on ISIS, European and female foreign fighters, as well as an overview of the existing theories on why women join militant extremist groups and ISIS specifically in order to understand female foreign fighters and how they are framed in the news media. This overview will function as a backdrop and basis for the analysis in chapter IV. I present this background knowledge, not as preparation for analytical usage per se, but rather to provide some background on the phenomenon, and I will address the theory further when I discuss theoretical implications towards the end of the thesis.

2.2 The Islamic state

The organization which would later be known as ISIS was established in 2004 by members of Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). In the power vacuum that was left after the US invasion of Iraq, and because of the turmoil that followed, support for AQI started to increase. The invasion, and decades of dictatorship in Syria, amongst other factors, are vital to understanding ISIS' success (Ahmari 2016²). The Assad regime had over a longer period supported jihadi groups in Syria to keep them occupied with operations abroad, and therefore turning the groups' attention away from the regime and possible plans to resist or overthrow government policies (ibid 2016). Bashar al-Assad, who inherited the presidential role in 2000 from his father, had continued to support jihadi groups after 9/11 and was playing a two-faced game where the regime was acting as both a "war on terror-partner" with the West and as an anti-Western resistance force simultaneously (ibid 2016).

After the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, Assad opened a jihadi corridor stretching from eastern Syria to western Iraq. Al-Qaeda's insurgency grew, as did their Islamic proto-state in Iraq. The organisation and proto-state was later known as ISI: Islamic state in Iraq. In 2007, the US launched attacks against ISI, and the group spent several years in disarray, which eventually culminated in the assassination of Osama bin Laden (Ahmari 2016). After the so-called Arab Spring in 2011, the chaotic circumstances gave ISI ground for renewed efforts, and further expansion over the border between Syria and Iraq. Assad had brutally struck down peaceful

² The Rise of Islamic State. *The Wall Street Journal*. 08.02.16. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-rise-of-islamic-state-1454976369> (accessed 12.12.16)

demonstrations crying for democratic change. Unlike in the case of Libya, Western countries did not interfere this time (Seierstad 2016: 134). On August 21st, 2013, the Syrian government and military attacked their own population with several rockets containing the nerve agent sarin, killing hundreds of Syrian men, women, and children. The number killed varies from 300 to 1,400 pending on different sources (BBC 2013).

The strong hatred that many felt toward President Assad pushed Syrian citizens towards what was now named ISIS, which seemed to be one of the few forces capable of dealing with Assad's regime. After years of increasing expansion and annexation of territory in both Syria and Iraq, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, became the leader of ISIS, and he announced the caliphate in a mosque in Mosul, Iraq in 2014 (Ali 2015: 6; Nesser 2015: 274). He also declared himself Caliph Ibrahim – and the leader of all Muslims (Ali 2015: 7).

The goal for ISIS is to create a Muslim caliphate ruled by Sharia law. It is a Salafi-jihadi group, a religious branch somewhat similar to Wahhabism, the state religion in Saudi Arabia (ibid 2015: 7). Until recently, ISIS controlled large parts of Syria and Iraq. Since 2016 they have, however, continuously lost ground in both countries (Torpey, Gutiérrez and Scruton 2017).

2.3 Western female foreign fighters

Over 5,000 European men and women have travelled to Syria and Iraq as so-called foreign fighters to ISIS (Noor 2016: 127). Many of them have grown up in Europe, and very few have a political or religious activist background, or any connection to Syria or Iraq. Around 23 percent of those who have travelled are converts to Islam, over 90 percent come from urban areas, and around 17 percent of them are women (Noor 2016: 127; Ginkel and Entenmann 2016: 4). Whereas male recruitment to ISIS decreased somewhat during 2015, the recruitment of women continued to increase from the latter half of 2014 (Fink, Zeiger and Bhulai. 2015). The surge in female recruits during this particular time period could be due to the announcement of the caliphate, which provided, at least seemingly, safe borders for women to live and create a life within. It also created clear roles and tasks for women within the Islamic State, providing positions as mothers and wives to make up the backbone of the caliphate (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015: 12).

The number of the female foreign fighters varies between countries and year in question. In March 2015, 20 percent of the foreign fighters from France were believed to be women (Skjeseth 2015³), while in January 2016, women were believed to constitute as many as 35 percent (Ball 2016). Two months later, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-posten* (2016) wrote that more women than men were joining ISIS from France. In Denmark, 24 percent of the people travelling to join after the announcement of the caliphate in 2014 were women (Informationen 2016). In July 2016, a Danish newspaper reported 40 percent of the Dutch citizens joining ISIS were women (Kongstad and Plougsgaard 2016). In both Germany and Finland, women are believed to constitute around 20 percent of the travellers (ibid 2016). From Sweden, around 15 percent are women (Hall 2015), and from Norway around 10 percent, with a recurring number being 9 and 10 women who have travelled (Zaman 2016; Arntsen and Hopperstad 2015). In 2014, *The Sun* reported that 70 women had travelled to Syria and Iraq from Britain (Ryan 2014). In 2017, the BBC reported that a total of 850 Britons had left the UK to fight for ISIS. Of the 249 people named in the article, 41 were women, or 17 percent (BBC 2017).

2.4 The roles of women in ISIS

The roles of women in ISIS are largely reserved for the private sphere, as wives of jihadi men, and as mothers to future martyrs (Fink et al. 2015: 21). The role of women is therefore not primarily to fight, but they are expected to contribute (Bakker and de Leede 2015: 8). They should be able to take care of wounded fighters and to cook nutritious food for their husbands, thus preparing them to be capable fighters on the battlefield. The women are to raise their children to be brave, to love Allah, and hate all infidels (ibid 2015: 8). They also play an important role in recruiting others into joining ISIS. Over the Internet they chat with girls from other countries, providing help and tips on what to bring and how to travel (ibid 2015: 8).

A new and fairly unprecedented phenomenon concerning roles for women in ISIS is the al Khansaa brigade. This is a moral brigade consisting of armed women, whose job is to enforce sharia law and moral codes in the streets of ISIS-controlled territory⁴. They started as a group of women who could, because of their sex, search women under their niqabs, and was

³ The sources Skjeseth 2015, Ball 2016, Kongstad and Plougsgaard 2016, Hall 2015, Zaman 2016 and Ryan 2014 are newspaper articles, and hence there is no page number assigned to the sources.

⁴ Usually testing knowledge about prayer, fasting and hijab.

established in Raqqa soon after ISIS took control of the city (Gilsinan 2014⁵). Their role has expanded however, and they seem to have been given more responsibility (Hegghammer, in Gilsinan 2014). Thomas Hegghammer claims that there was ‘a process of female emancipation taking place in the jihadi movement’ (in Gilsinan 2014). However, despite this brigade, and the wish of many young women travelling from western countries to join in combat more actively, the vast majority are confined to the household (Ali 2015: 8).

Another aspect of women’s roles in ISIS is their underestimated legitimising role. As women are often seen as peaceful, their decision to join ISIS is therefore seen as legitimising the terrorist organisation. Also, men may feel like if the women are travelling to ISIS, then they, as men, must travel as well (Owe 2017). It is also reasonable to assume that their roles may change, especially in response to ISIS’ increasing loss of ground in the civil war (ibid 2017). Recently, a news article was published about a German girl who was caught in Mosul. She was a sniper for ISIS (Charter, Spencer and Shammary 2017). We may not know everything about women’s roles in the organisation.

2.5 Theory on men and women’s engagement in militant extremism

Tore Bjørge and Petter Nesser, two prominent researchers in the field of radicalisation and terrorism, have created typologies of people who join militant extreme groups, which share many similarities, as well as some differences. Bjørge (2011) presents a dynamic typology of participants in militant groups, which include ideological activists, drifters and followers and socially frustrated youths. He does not, however, elaborate on what gender his typology applies to, or where the groups that people join are located. Regarding gender, it is fair to assume that his research is first and foremost based on his research on men, both because female participation in such groups was not equally studied before 2011, and because more men than women, historically, have joined militant extreme groups. His research is not solely focused on Islamist militant extremism and applies therefore to right-wing extremism as well. He does however have a focus on Islamist terrorist cells (Bjørge 2011).

⁵ The ISIS Crackdown on Women, by Women. *The Atlantic*. 25.07.14. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/the-women-of-isis/375047> (accessed 10.03.17).

Nesser (2015) provides the readers with background information about known terrorists, from European terrorist cells from GIA in Algeria and terrorism in France, to al-Qaeda and ISIS today. Nesser's goal is to 'illustrate their pathway to militancy' (Nesser 2015: 7). He does this through several case studies of terrorist cells which he examines from a variety of angles, completing the picture of the terrorist cells' backgrounds, people involved, plots and so on (ibid 2015: 18). This information comes from media sources, expert interviews, judicial papers and jihadi primary source material, as well as insights from existing studies (ibid 2015: 19). Nesser has also surveyed how people become involved in terrorist cells and interprets their answers, with a focus on their modus operandi and the context of the cells and their plots (ibid 2015: 18). Among the terrorist cells he elaborates on there are references to women, like the women in the Hofstad group in the Netherlands (ibid 2015: 153). However, most of the book deals with men, and a gendered aspect is not included in the typology (ibid 2015). I regard this lack of attention to women's involvement in extremism as a gap in the literature, and I hope to contribute with discussions on this matter later in the thesis.

The first type within the typology of people who join extreme groups or terrorist cells are the leaders, and recruiters in the organisation. The leaders, or people with central roles in terrorist cells or groups, are called ideological activists in Tore Bjørgo's typology, and entrepreneurs in Petter Nesser's typology. According to Nesser, they can also be central preachers of religious theology. Those who facilitate recruitment in terrorist cells are charismatic, and according to Nesser this charisma can involve a talent for manipulation (Bjørgo 2011: 280; Nesser 2015: 1). Whereas Bjørgo calls the recruiters ideological activists, Nesser assigns them the attribute of being religious-political activists (Nesser 2015: 13). Both Bjørgo and Nesser mention that these leaders have a strong sense of justice and are genuinely concerned for the unfair treatment of Muslims worldwide (Bjørgo 2011: 280; Nesser 2015: 13, 14). They are often resourceful and well-educated people, they can be well-integrated, and are sometimes even role models in their societies, according to Bjørgo (2011: 280). Sometimes they are family men, according to Nesser (2015: 13). They both mention a variety within this type, the jihadi veterans, who have acquired a heroic status within the group for having combat experience (Bjørgo 2011: 280; Nesser 2015: 13).

The second type within their typologies are also central in the organisations they refer to, and can also be understood as recruiters. Nesser calls them the protégés (Nesser 2015: 14). This is only a variety within Bjørgo's type, the ideological activists (Bjørgo 2011: 280). They both

mention a special bond between the leader and the protégé. They are therefore also often involved due to a combination of loyalty to the leader and political activism (ibid 2011: 280; Nesser 2015: 15). Even though they both regard the protégés as intelligent, Bjørgo mentions that they are also impressionable and can be easily manipulated, especially by the people they look up to in the group (Bjørgo 2011: 280).

The third type within their typologies of people who join extreme groups or terrorist cells are named different things in their two typologies and appear in a different order. Tore Bjørgo moves on to explain those he name drifters and followers after he has explained the ideological activists (Bjørgo 2011: 281). The drifter within Nesser's typology, appears to be the equivalent to Bjørgo's drifters and followers. According to Nesser, the majority in a terrorist cell consists of the type he names the drifters. Social processes and connections seem to be part of the process to join such groups (Nesser 2015: 16). This can for instance be through a search for friends and comradeship (Bjørgo 2011: 281). Being in such a group provides a strong sense of identity (ibid 2011: 281), and searching for one's identity may therefore be a driver for the decision to join (Nesser 2015: 17). They do not necessarily have poor socio-economic backgrounds, but may have experienced both loneliness and bullying (Bjørgo 2011: 281). Ideology does not play a big part in their decision to join (ibid 2011: 281), which Nesser sums up as having 'less specific reasons for becoming involved' (Nesser 2015: 17). Bjørgo has a distinct subtype within this group of followers, not mentioned by Nesser; the converts. This group could for example constitute someone converting to Islam and then joining a jihadi group, or it could constitute a non-white person joining an extreme right-wing group. They may not feel they belong in the community they live in, and therefore seek confirmation and belonging (Bjørgo 2011: 281, 282).

The last type within Bjørgo's typology of people who join militant extreme groups are the socially frustrated youths (ibid 2011: 283). This type resembles Nesser's misfits (Nesser 2015: 15). Here, personal misfortune plays a role in their decision to join. This can, according to Bjørgo (2011: 282), be lived or imagined discrimination. Usually they do not have good prospects for the future, they may have little or no education, unemployment is common, and involvement in extreme militant groups can be a way out. Ideology plays a minor part, if any (Bjørgo 2011: 283; Nesser 2015: 15, 16). A variety within this group are people with criminal backgrounds, convictions and so on. Joining a religious group could be a way to erase past sins, or a sort of self-healing (Bjørgo 2011: 283; Nesser 2015: 16).

This literature is relevant because it deals with radicalisation and participation in Islamist militant groups. However, neither of them has dealt with a gendered typology, and it is therefore interesting to ask if these categorizations of people within extremist groups hold if we look at the coverage of women recruits. Or does the coverage of women's extremist participation warrant different typologies?

2.6 Research on women who join ISIS

2.6.1 Women as solely victims

Looking at previous literature on women in war and armed struggle, three views of women's radicalisation processes seem to be prominent. The oldest is the understanding of women as solely victims when they have committed acts of violence, torture or terrorism. Either they are presented as the victims of violent attacks and oppressed ideologies, or they are presented as having been manipulated into becoming violent. This view is in large part built on the idea of women as mainly peaceful, as mothers, and that in order for them to support violence or to be violent they must have some sort of personal motivation, as opposed to political motivations. In other scenarios, they are understood as a deviation from the female norm; they are abnormal and cannot be understood as sane women (Sjoberg, Cook and Neal 2009: 1-7).

Jean Elshtain (1995: 165) presents the discourse on the 'beautiful soul,' which she claims is a traditional way of understanding women in war. Women are not understood as the war's initiators nor its perpetrators. Men are seen as takers of life, and women as givers of life (ibid 1995: 165). It has also been argued that 'When a woman commits acts of violence, her sex is a lens through which all of her actions are seen and understood.' (Wight and Myers (1996: xi). Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, two prominent feminist academics, take this as a starting position to examine traditional understandings of women in war (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007); more specifically women as war criminals, women suicide bombers, terrorists or perpetrators of genocide. Within the mother discourse, women's violence is understood as vengeance, driven by maternal disappointments, or a 'perversion of the private realm' (ibid 2007: 32). They are also placed in a support role within this discourse. Hence, the women are understood as domesticated terrorists, which is also why they do not confront the Western notion on femininity. In terrorism studies, the discourse of the nurturing woman is recurring. In this understanding, a woman commits acts of violence or participate in war to feel useful, to belong and feel needed (ibid 2007: 33).

The monster discourse explains a woman's violence as a consequence of her deviation from a known femininity (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 36). When women commit crimes, they are either 'bad or mad' (ibid 2007: 37). The focus within this discourse lies on the women's mental abnormality. Something is not right with them, and this deprives them of responsibility for their actions, goes the argument. As a consequence, these women are seen as even more dangerous than the men, and as deviant and unpredictable. As it is difficult to understand their violence, they can therefore not be seen as real women (ibid 2007: 37). Otherwise, everything that is known about women and femininity is challenged. This view is preferred in order not to challenge the traditional understanding of women and of violence, they argue.

The third category sexualises women's violence. 'The whore' explains her violence through her sexual deviation of some sort (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 42). This sexual deviation is divided into three categories; erotomania, erotic dysfunction, and sexual slavery. The first characterises women as perverted women who live for sex (ibid 2007: 46). The second refers to women who cannot perform sexually in a satisfying way (ibid 2007: 47). The last one, sexual slavery, is when women either are sold as sex slaves, or they are figuratively understood as being sexually enslaved by men. These sexual deviations are then understood as the reason for their engagement in violence and war. All in all, these characterisations of women who commit violence make her 'less than a woman' (ibid 2007: 49).

This literature is first and foremost about women who find themselves in war and how they have traditionally been understood. Elshain, Sjoberg and Gentry have not first and foremost dealt with women travelling abroad to fight with an armed group. Hence, this literature is relevant but does not directly address the phenomenon I am researching. Some literature has been developed on the female foreign fighters in recent years. It is reasonable to assume that there are similarities to be seen between the different settings; armed conflict and terrorist groups as well as similarities in how women are viewed both as foreign fighters and as women who acted in war times in their home countries. Certainly, there can also be differences in how the media and the public view women who travel from a European setting to a civil war, and how women who commit acts of violence where they live are viewed. I have to be aware of these differences in my own analysis and when I discuss the theoretical implications of my findings.

2.6.2 Women understood in the same way as men

A second view, which seems to dominate theory on women and violence today, understands these women in approximately the same way the men are understood. This approach emphasises the search for identity and belonging, the importance of sisterhood, as well as either a religious, political and/or ideological conviction, or commitment to a cause, as motivations to join ISIS. The latter motivation is more dominant in theory on women than men, as can be seen from Nesser and Bjørge's typologies, where religion and ideology are seen to constitute a minor part. Erin Marie Saltman and Melanie Smith (2015), Naureen C. Fink, Sara Zeiger and Rafia Bhulai (2015), and Meredith Loken and Anna Zelenz (2016) research women in ISIS specifically, and conclude along somewhat similar lines that men and women should be understood in the same way.

Saltman and Smith, and Loken and Zelenz base their research on social media posts by women from Western countries who have joined ISIS. Their posts have been found on Tumblr, Twitter, Facebook, and similar platforms. Whereas Saltman and Smith base their analysis on the largest database on Western females joining ISIS, with over 100 profiles across the platforms mentioned above, Loken and Zelenz use social media activity from 17 Western female ISIS member's accounts between 2011 and 2015 in their analysis (Saltman and Smith 2015: 7; Loken and Zelenz 2016: 4). Fink et al. (2015) base their analysis largely on the research conducted by Saltman and Smith, as well as other updated research data and interviews with former Islamist extremists who now work as mentors for women who have been convicted of any violent extremist offence (ibid 2015: 145).

This literature emphasises ideological and religious commitment as crucial to understanding women's motivations for joining ISIS (Saltman and Smith 2015: 13, 14; Loken and Zelenz 2016 :22; Fink et al. 2015: 150). Saltman and Smith divide factors that play a role in the radicalisation of women into push and pull factors, and the religious and ideological factors are amongst what they name pull factors. As for push factors, they agree that things like alienation from Western culture and the feeling that the Muslim community is being violently persecuted are important to understanding why women join ISIS. Another push factor is a feeling that the Muslim community is persecuted worldwide. Images and videos in the news, on social media and on YouTube, show Muslims all over the world living in poverty and suffering from violence in the middle of grave civil wars. Often Western countries are involved, and the image of the West against the Muslims is reinforced. Radical groups and ISIS specifically make use

of this image and further reinforce it through their propaganda (Saltman and Smith 2015: 10, 11). Another push factor is a feeling of both frustration and anger over international inaction. The lack of international intervention in Syria is one specific example. Especially after the government used chemical weapons and killed hundreds of their own population in 2013, the idea emerged that Western powers stood by and watched, perhaps not caring at all (Saltman and Smith 2015: 12,13).

It is also noted that many women feel threatened and isolated in their home countries and that these are important factors that push them in the direction of ISIS (Loken and Zelenz 2016: 21; Saltman and Smith 2015: 9; Fink et al. 2015: 88). The first push factor in Saltman and Smith's report is that the women feel isolated within Western culture. They address searching for one's identity as part of their upbringing. For those who move to a new country as children, or those who are second generation immigrants, there can be an additional layer of exploring, seeking and understanding one's identity. They note that many who are defined as an ethnic minority within a country experience some form of at least verbal abuse based on their ethnicity or religion (Saltman and Smith 2015: 9). This is the case for many women who wear the hijab or niqab, an important identity marker for many. These experiences may fuel the feeling of being isolated in their own country. The media also plays an important part when they shape the discourse and paint an image of Muslims as either patriarchal or extreme in opinion and behaviour. This has especially been the case since 9/11, and contributes further to the isolation (Noor 2016: 127, 128). Loken and Zelenz (2016: 21) find evidence in their data that women currently living within the Islamic State felt isolated and threatened when they were living in their home countries, pushing them toward extremism. According to Loken and Zelenz, they have difficulties finding friends to identify with in Western countries. They also experience a specific gendered form of discrimination linked to wearing the veil or headscarf (Loken and Zelenz 2016: 21).

However, these scholars offer differing conclusions on for example the pull factor they claim is a romanticisation of the experience of joining ISIS. On this matter, the evidence is contradictory. Saltman and Smith (2015: 16) and Fink et al. (2015: 148) find that there is a romanticisation of the experience, and that the idea of marrying a jihadi husband is an important motivation for why some young girls and women join ISIS. Loken and Zelenz (2016: 16), on the other hand, find no evidence that the women in their sample joined because of sex and romance.

In addition to addressing the push and pull factors drawing these women toward ISIS, Saltman and Smith also write that, ‘This section analyses the overarching push factors that **prime** certain women to be more **vulnerable** to extremist propaganda. This section also looks at the primary pull factors **indoctrinating** these women into subscribing to ISIS’ jihadist ideology, to the point that they are willing to leave their homes and make Hijra (pilgrimage) to join the so-called caliphate.’ (Saltman and Smith 2015: 8, my bolding). Even if they do view them as similar to men to a large degree, it is clear the researchers understands them as having to be primed to be radicalised, that they become more vulnerable, and finally that they are indoctrinated, implying a sort of brainwashing.

2.6.3 A new wave of commentary

There have been critiques of existing literature on women who join ISIS and other terrorist organisations, claiming there are some aspects of the female recruitment to violent extremist groups, and specifically ISIS, that have been left out. Journalists and researchers have commented that the act of travelling to Syria and Iraq from Western countries should be viewed as a feminist act. Rafia Zakaria (2015) says in a news article in Al Jazeera that the female foreign fighter phenomenon should be interpreted as a ‘revolt against the western construction of the Muslim woman as the lesser feminist,’ and important aspects of ‘ISIL’s dialogue with equality centred feminism’ has been left out (ibid 2015). Thomas Hegghammer claims that amongst other things, the rapid increase of female recruits from Western countries could be due to ‘a change of norms in the Islamic communities – some sort of an Islamist women’s liberation’ (Hegghammer 2014: 281, my translation). In an interview in *The Atlantic* about the al Khansaa Brigade, the all-female armed moral police in Raqqa, he claims there might be a ‘female emancipation taking place in jihadi circles.’ (Gilsinan 2014⁶). Women do possess some more prominent roles within the Islamic state, such as the al Khansaa Brigade, and as part of the recruitment machinery (Fink et al. 2015: 88; Winther 2015).

Another view along somewhat similar lines, as explained by Brynjar Lia and Petter Nesser (2014: 411), is that the jihad journey could be, paradoxical as it may seem, a rebellion against family authorities. Within the caliphate, the women are under the caliph’s authority and are therefore no longer bound by their fathers’ and brothers’ expectations and pressures on who

⁶ The ISIS Crackdown on Women, by Women, *The Atlantic*, 25.07.14
<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/07/the-women-of-isis/375047/> (accessed 10.03.17)

they can marry and not marry. In the caliphate, they can marry across ethnic lines, which for some would not be possible if they had stayed at home. In an article in *Sisterhood Magazine*, a magazine that raises a variety of Muslim women's voices, Ambreen Razia (2016⁷) claims that strong pressure from the women's families on what to do and not to do pushes them toward the path of radicalisation: 'Doubting their ability to meet their family's expectations, young women are finding other people to rely upon, opening up the risk of radicalisation.' (ibid 2016). Even though their choice to join ISIS is seen as a choice, at the same time it creates the argument that the women had little choice in order to escape from strict family dynamics.

2.7 Research on media presentations of women in war

Previous research on media presentations of women's engagement in war has specifically dealt with media presentations of Muslim women's engagements in terrorism and war. In this section, I will present general literature on media presentations of Muslim women and violence, with a few specific examples. First, I cover presentations of the so-called Chechen black widows and black Fatimas, secondly a case study on a Belgian-born convert's suicide attack in Iraq, and finally I will present a recent study comparing ISIS women to female Kurdish soldiers fighting against ISIS. These media presentations were chosen because they are recent publications dealing with the matter of women involved in terrorism and Islamist militancy in the later years. They all make use of a gendered approach to the media analysis and are therefore interesting to draw from in my own research.

2.7.1 Muslim women and the War on Terror

Katherine Brown suggests that in times of conflict and war, the media is 'often creating intensified stereotypes of victims, villains and heroes.' (Brown 2011: 706). Especially since the launch of the War on Terror in 2001, the image of a 'homogenous and threatening Islam situated in a violent trans-historical "clash of civilisations"' has been predominant (ibid 2011: 706). Because of how intertwined media sources are in the Western world, there exists a consistent discourse across countries about 'Muslims and Islam as backward, barbaric, inferior and violent "Other" in Europe' (ibid 2011: 706). Studies show how Muslim women are often seen as a symbol of deviation from Western liberal culture, and most often as victims of their own culture. The veil especially is often dominant in the argument that Muslim women are oppressed

⁷ What are they running from? *Sisterhood Magazine* 14.0716 <http://sister-hood.com/ambreen-razia/what-are-they-running-from/> (accessed 05.03.17)

victims (ibid 2011: 707). This also constitutes a part of the discourse on women in general as ‘victims, passive and largely marginal actors in “serious” news stories’ (ibid 2011: 707). Bronwyn Naylor (2001: 180) finds that women who commit acts of violence are likely to be deemed irrational or emotional, while men are more often referred to as rational. Brown also refers to a study by Brigitte L. Nacos (2005) where findings suggest both female suicide terrorists and female politicians receive attention on their ‘physical appearance, family connections and women’s equality’ (ibid 2005). Brown further lists several studies that support this finding. Women who commit terrorist acts through suicide bombing are often denied agency for their actions and usually viewed as the ‘pawns’ of men (Weinberg and Eubank 1987: 255). Therefore, Brown argues, the consequence inherently is that the political context is overlooked and the focus is instead on personal motivations (Brown 2011: 710).

2.7.2 Female suicide bombers in the Chechen war

In Western and Russian press during the Chechen war, and especially in connection with the Moscow theatre hostage crisis, the armed women were portrayed as ‘vicious, sympathetic, strong, fanatical, foolish and weak’ (Stack 2011: 83). Sometimes all at the same time. There were two particularly central images: the first was the so-called black widows, who are women forced to commit acts of terrorism because their men have died, and the second of drugged, raped, zombie-like women that had been tricked into it by Chechen men (ibid 2011: 83). Alisa Stack says stories of captured female terrorists are first and foremost filtered through male security services. This means that the truth about women’s motives, roles and involvement may be less important than the stories of how the public understands these women (ibid 2011: 84).

The understanding of the women in the Chechen war as either weak or vicious has several implications and consequences. The black widow image presents these women as being personally motivated by revenge for the killing of their husbands. This sets aside any political motivations for the suicide attacks that many of the women carried out (ibid 2011: 87, 88). The zombie metaphor implies that the women were weak both physically and mentally. In a report on female suicide bombers, referred to by Stack, they were called

...God-fearing, weak-willed, sad little girls, who are not very bright...The female shakhids (martyrs) are usually young and that is no accident. In youth the instinct of self-preservation is lowered...they are women, therefore creatures who are emotional from the beginning (Stack 2011: 88, 89).

In addition to removing agency and presenting the women as weak, Stack claims the quote above indicates that the men are taking advantage of them and therefore should be seen as the true criminals. Another stereotype mentioned in relation to the Chechen war is the black Fatima. Black Fatima was often portrayed as older, ugly, almost evil and witch-like. They represent the women that recruits other women into terrorism. Yet again, this representation is a stereotype that perhaps can be argued to be removing responsibility from other female recruits (ibid 2011: 90).

According to Stack (2011: 90, 91), Russian authorities used the media to represent the women as vulnerable individuals who have been exploited by extremist Muslim men, and that in doing so the authorities discredited the terrorist groups and downplayed the violence committed by women. Hence, the women who could potentially legitimise a terrorist organisation's goals are rather seen as victims of extremist Islamist men with insidious goals (ibid 2011: 90, 91).

2.7.3 Muriel Degauque's suicide bombing

Muriel Degauque was a Belgian-born woman who converted to Islam and later carried out a suicide attack in Iraq in 2005. Her story was featured in newspapers worldwide. Katherine Brown has researched 139 news articles about Degauque and found they emphasise her marriage to a Muslim man, and the idea that she allegedly took on his foreign identity. This was emphasised either through a focus on him supposedly making her convert to Islam, or turning her toward a more radical Islam. Her marriage to him and their life together was often compared to her life before him to prove the contrast and his influence (Brown 2011: 716). The second focus was on her background, as a deviant teenager and girl/woman, as the reason for her being more receptive to radical Islam. This further implies, according to Brown, that her conversion and 'Muslimness' is seen as abnormal, which deprives her of her agency. The abnormality of her radicalisation process is further reinforced with the absence of any political motives as an explanation for the suicide attack. Her motivations are rather portrayed as personal, and the War on Terror or the Iraqi government is not mentioned at all. The final focus was on her being an 'enemy within.' She was Belgian and white, representing a new security threat from within. However, she was also presented as not a 'real' European or a 'real' woman (Brown 2011: 716). In total, Brown argues that there were many and contradictory media discourses on Degauque's violence, but that all in all she was deprived of her agency (ibid 2011: 716).

2.7.4 ISIS women and the female Kurdish fighters

Marta Kollárová has compared media presentations of the women in ISIS to the women in the Kurdish militias, fighting against ISIS. Whereas the Kurdish women are viewed as ‘brave and beautiful,’ and perhaps resembling Western women, despite religious and cultural differences, the women in ISIS are viewed as niqab-covered, oppressed, and as something negative and alien (Kollárová 2016: 153). Kurdish women have been described as active fighters against oppression, with no mention of ties to the terrorist groups who fight for Kurdish independence. The women travelling to join ISIS are, according to Kollárová, also presented in a singular way, where stories of alienation and oppression within Western countries are left out of the picture. The Kurdish fighters have been placed over the women in ISIS, and the media has thus presented images of the good and the bad, the latter often being viewed as victims, who need the West to intervene in order to save them. She further concludes that these images of women in need of saving, or the monstrous women who enjoy violence, legitimise Western policies and measures in the Middle East region. Finally, she concludes it is only through a deconstruction of an ‘Orientalist’ representation of women as either victims, whores, or beautiful souls, that the public can try to understand their violence and motivations, and only then can researchers deal with the issue of radicalisation (ibid 2016: 154).

These studies have shown different ways in which the media frames and presents women who commit suicide bombings or who have been part of extreme groups in war, as well as female foreign fighters to ISIS. The studies show that the media framings do not necessarily just point in one direction. All the studies do however, point to a general discourse of framing women as acting with little responsibility in their involvement in extreme groups as they are often framed as victims, and that they often are portrayed as having personal rather than political motives for this engagement. In chapter IV I will present my own analysis of the media framing in the 130 articles that my data material consists of. It will be especially interesting to see if I can find some similarities between the studies presented above and my own analysis.

Chapter III: Theoretical and methodological approach

3.1 Introduction

The goal of my thesis is to understand and analyse how the media frames women who join ISIS. Specifically, I am researching Scandinavian and British media through four newspapers in each country, and I am looking at women who join from Western and Northern European countries. In order to analyse the material, I will thoroughly examine the media's choice of words, the metaphors they apply, and their presentations of the motivations the women have for joining, to see how these women are situated. The media presentations of the women joining ISIS constitute a discourse, or several discourses, on women in war and specifically on women who join ISIS. I will attempt to analyse the dominating discourses, and hence I see it as appropriate to use discourse analysis as a method. More specifically I will apply *critical* discourse analysis, as this theoretical approach seems suitable in addressing where the discourses come from, how they dominate, and what practical and political consequences follow from them.

3.2 Social constructivism

Media presentations of women in war and women who join ISIS contributes to shaping the public's understanding of the phenomenon. Most of the knowledge we receive about wars we receive through media; hence media will be central if we are interested in understanding perceptions of war phenomena (Hunt 2015: 139). Politicians, researchers, judges and police are also part of the public, and will inevitably receive stories and impressions through the media, even if they often have more specialized, expert, and perhaps confidential information as well. The media itself is also part of the public. Politicians will often, in cooperation with researchers, design preventative measures to tackle the issues of radicalisation and people travelling abroad to join foreign military groups – foreign fighters. Judges will decide what punishments the returning foreign fighters are to receive, and the police will judge what security measures are to be taken in order to prevent terrorist threats and so on and so forth. Because of these practices and consequences, analysing the media representations of a phenomenon such as that of female foreign fighters is necessary, useful and interesting. Collectively, we attach meaning to ongoing processes and events. Whatever interpretation of the women travelling to ISIS becomes the most dominant will further make way for what practices and consequences will be deemed the most useful and appropriate for the phenomenon in question.

My analysis of women who join ISIS is grounded in social constructivist thinking. The basic idea behind social constructivism is that reality is a social construct. Jørgensen and Phillips lay four key principles as grounds for social constructivism. The first is a critical attitude toward established truths. Reality is only accessible to us through the categorisations we make, and is not reflective of *one* existing reality but rather a product of these categorisations (Jørgensen and Phillips 1999: 13). The second principle is that we understand the things around us through the culture and history we are a part of. Our understandings are hence historically and culturally specific and contingent. The third principle is that there exists a correlation between how we understand the world we live in and social processes. The ways we understand the world are created and upheld through these processes. The fourth and last principle is that some actions and practises becomes the normal and natural ways of acting and doing. Different ways to view the world will then lead to different ways of acting. How we perceive the world thus leads to specific social consequences (ibid 1999: 14). In my case, this approach is useful because it is important to understand how the public and the media ascribe meaning to the women who join ISIS from Europe, and how this frames our understanding and perceptions, and further the specific social consequences.

3.3 Discourse analysis

I will move on to discussing some key concepts such as discourse, discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis before I come back to social constructivism. A *discourse* encompasses the representational practices where meaning is created (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 2). The societies we live in create and ascribe meaning to the things we see and experience in the material world, and it is through discourses that we do so. This is what we disentangle when we undertake discourse analysis; our meaning creation and what realities we have chosen to naturalise.

The second concept important to mention is *language*. Language is regarded, in this context, to constitute a set of signs that is part of a system that creates ‘subjects, objects and worlds.’ (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 2). Language does not present and explain the world as it is, but is rather contributing to producing the world itself. A discourse then, is an attempt to apprehend the production of truths about the world (ibid 2016: 2). As Kevin C. Dunn and Iver B. Neumann (2016) understand discourse: ‘discourses are practises that systematically form the objects of which they speak.’ (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 2). Discourses are incomplete, open and forever-

changing. Discourse is also a space for contestation; they will rarely persist for too long without competition (ibid 2016: 3).

What is critical in order to understand discourse is the important link between *knowledge* and *power*. As discourses produce ‘reality,’ meaning what we know and what we act upon, this inherently brings the concept of power into the discussion (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 3). A discourse does not exist free-floating in space. It constitutes power. ‘Power is the *practice* of knowledge as a socially constructed system, within which various actors articulate their representations’ (ibid 2016: 54). And as language creates knowledge this ties power to the discussion on discourses. Discourses define, they enable, they open and close certain paths of action, they let some voices be heard, and others to be silenced, by allowing some authorities to dominate and others to become irrelevant. Through all of this, discourses define what is perceived as normal and abnormal in behaviour and actions (ibid 2016: 54).

The last concept to keep in mind is *practice*. Discourses are interchangeably linked to our practises, as mentioned above: what we act upon (ibid 2016: 4). As Dunn and Neumann (2016: 4) summarise: ‘Discourses are systems of meaning-production that fix meaning, however temporarily, and enable actors to make sense of the world and *to act within it*’ (ibid 2016: 4, my italics). A continued debate in relation to discourse analysis is to what extent we can observe a social practice, or an implication, supposedly stemming from a dominating discourse. This discussion relates to causal inference. Can we draw the conclusion that a certain practise is a direct consequence of how the public has collectively assigned meaning to a phenomenon? Many critics of this method will say that we cannot, with methodological and empirical rigor, say that there exists a causal relationship (Bratberg 2017: 58). A common answer to this critique is that the strict and clear-cut causal relationship demand may not be the only way to think about a link between language and action. It is useful to ask whether a certain discourse may normalise and hence lay ground for how society deems it appropriate to act and respond in relation to certain phenomena. At a minimum, pointing to a possible link between discourse and practice makes for an interesting hypothesis to further investigate (ibid 2017: 59).

Discourse analysis then is the ‘close study of language in use’ (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 4). It shows in what way, and because of what reasons, things appear as they do and how specific actions become possible (ibid 2016: 4). The meaning productions, previously mentioned, are representations of reality. When they are represented over and over again, they become a set of

practices, where a specific type of language is eventually institutionalised (ibid 2016: 5). The institutionalised practices are often taken for granted. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, does not take anything for granted. The goal with discourse analysis is to explain the stories behind the text, and to demonstrate how the text works to reinforce this story (Bratberg 2014: 30).

To bring in the discussion on social constructivism: discourse analysis is a theoretical-methodological approach derived from a social constructivist starting position. We create our social reality by ascribing meaning to the things around us. This meaning formulation is perceived by discourse analysts to be best understood through an analysis of language. A discourse should not be understood as an existing phenomenon to be observed, but is rather a researcher's interpretation of how the meaning formulations around a phenomenon are structured (Bratberg 2017: 45, 62). This is interesting for my own research because the media contributes to creating truths about female foreign fighters to ISIS. The discourses I present in the next chapter are not established facts about female foreign fighters, but they are discourses that I believe dominate the framing of the phenomenon in question.

3.4 Critical discourse analysis

Within discourse analysis, a subtype is critical discourse analysis (CDA). This is the specific research method I make use of in my analysis. Critical discourse analysis evolved from critical linguistics (CL). CL demonstrated how ideology is often hidden in text, and how and why it is important to examine the text closer to find the 'hidden ideology' (Skrede 2017: 20). One typical critique of this approach was that it did not, at least not to a full extent, discuss the relationship between language, power and ideology. Critical discourse analysts therefore set a goal to understand these issues better through specific theories and methods. The ideologies that CDA intends to say something more about are, according to Fairclough, representations of the world that contribute to creating and upholding power relations, domination and exploitation (ibid 2017: 21). Power lies just as much, if not more, in what is *not* said in a text. A CD analyst will examine what is not said to shed light on power relations (ibid 2017: 28). In CDA the researcher can analyse how alternatives to the dominating images and stories are reduced through linguistic means. Fairclough assumes a three-dimensional model in his CDA. The first dimension is the social events, previously referred to by Fairclough as the text. The second level is social practices, previously known as discursive practices, and the last

dimension is social structures (Skrede 2017: 33). Within the first dimension the researcher is conducting a textual analysis through examining the textual functions. However, CDAs are not primarily interested in examining linguistics per se, but rather linguistics as part of a social phenomenon. The second dimension of CDA evolves around the process of production of text, and it is the discursive processes above 'sentence level' that are analysed. In the third and last dimension, it is primarily the socio-cultural practices that are highlighted. The relationship between discourse, power and ideology is central in this dimension (Skrede 2017: 30, 31).

Critical discourse analysis is problem oriented, which means it is a form of critical social science aimed at highlighting problems we are confronted with in our daily lives. Usually, the problems that Fairclough himself points to in CDA are the problems of the 'losers,' those whose stories and voices are not dominating because they are socially excluded, as for example those who are exposed to oppressive gender or race relations (Fairclough 2008: 99).

It is relevant here to bring in what Katherine Brown calls feminist news media content analysis. This method looks at how the influence of gendered understandings create and shape the content of the news media. The method is based on both hermeneutics methods as well as an interpretive method that addresses the consequences of the gendered influence (Brown 2011: 708). Fairclough and Wodak also point out that critical feminist research belongs within critical discourse analysis because it contributes to revealing gendered structures in societies, the social problems, that CDA intends to examine and reveal (Fairclough 2008: 104n).

The goal of CDA is to demonstrate that language is an important part of transformations in society. Fairclough believes that since societal changes affect many aspects of our lives, our language must inherently also be affected. Language can again affect societal changes. Therefore, to understand what is happening in society, we need to examine language (Skrede 2017: 39). Discourse may yield suppression or marginalisation with practical consequences for the groups concerned. This is a point that is pursued quite explicitly in CDA, where an important ambition is to induce social change by raising the critical awareness of groups that are oppressed (ibid 2017:39).

3.5 Discourse, media and power

Another aspect relevant to my thesis is the link between discourse, news media and power. Supposing that ‘power’ in society is closely related to how the world is presented through discourses and language, then the news media is inherently a significant and influential channel in which the public is presented with certain images of the world. However neutral and objective a newspaper or a journalist aspires to be, they must, daily, decide between angles, words and stories. Krista Hunt (2015: 139) argues it is crucial that we examine the war stories we receive in media through a critical lens, because the public receives most of its information about wars through the media. The stories we are presented with are always situated in a political context. The stories are hence arguments that try to affect our perspectives and opinions. As Brown emphasises, the media does not just present facts to the public, it presents a story, thus becoming ‘builders of reality’ (Brown 2011: 708). If we assume, as has been explained in a previous section, that language does not only reflect reality, but is also constructing reality, this must inherently affect the power relations that exist in societies. This makes discourse analysis of newspaper articles, with the aim to disentangle the discourses and power relations that exist in society and that affect our opinions, practices and policies, a specifically interesting method.

Another interesting question to ask in relations to media and power, is to what extent the media can control or affect discourses. Certainly, the media can, to a degree, decide what news topics are to be put on the agenda, as well as decide what angle to make use of, and who to interview and focus on, in a news piece. However, journalists are also affected by the dominant discourses and the way we give meaning to phenomena around us. They are also a part of that meaning production, sometimes being aware and other times unaware. Some articles in my data material are written by journalists and authors who are noticing a trend in how the media addressed women who travel to ISIS. They then further attempt to alter this trend by offering an alternative view. This is an attempt to control and affect a discourse. However, these news articles may not be enough to change the dominant discourses, and to what extent the media can control discourse will perhaps be a question without a definite answer. It is interesting to keep this question in mind when conducting an analysis of media framing such as this.

3.6 My own research

Discourses frame our understanding and conceptualisation of reality. With the constant confirmation of certain discourses these are eventually set in stone, and can hence establish

values and set the terms for how we view the world around us. Therefore, it is important to analyse, disentangle and explain the discourses around us, so that we can attain better knowledge of what and how we construct meaning. The goal with the analysis is to explain the stories that are behind the text, and how the text works to reinforce this story (Bratberg 2014: 30). In this research project, the aim is to examine the discourses that shape our reality, and how they shape the way in which we view women who travel to join ISIS from Northern and Western European countries. I am interested in discovering the ways in which the media frames stories of *women*, of *women in war*, and women as *warriors*, *extremists* and *terrorists* in media presentations.

3.7 Data collection

A common, agreed upon approach with specific analytical tools to conduct critical discourse analysis does not exist. There does, however, exist an overwhelming number of studies conducting CDA, but different researchers use different approaches and tools (Bratberg 2017: 54). Therefore, my own research must solely be regarded as grounded in, and inspired by, the theoretical and methodological basis of CDA.

Studying news media has several practical advantages: it is easily accessible, it is public, and there is no need to transcribe before conducting the analysis. Additionally, the texts will not change when being observed. Lastly, the study of news media has some substantive advantages: it very often reflects the social mainstream, especially when referring to newspapers and magazines, and should therefore be of interest to those who study social science (Wodak and Krzyżanowski 2008: 33).

I collected articles from four newspapers each from respectively Norway, Sweden, Denmark and England. I chose these countries due to the lack of a language barrier, first and foremost. There are newspapers from other Northern and Western European countries that are translated into English, and these could have been chosen and collected from as well. However, as I am conducting a discourse analysis, where the entire analysis is based on what is written, I regard it as crucial to not add an extra layer, where important words and understandings could potentially get lost in translation.

I only collected online articles, and I did so for two reasons. Firstly, they are easily accessible, and if the articles were not open and free to read I would order a subscription to solve the problem. Secondly, an increasing amount of our daily news intake comes from online news articles. Online newspapers have gradually become more and more popular in the three years from when I have collected articles. Online newspapers make up over half of Norwegians' news sources (MedieNorge 2017). It is reasonable to assume that this trend applies for the other three countries as well. When I initiated the data collection all relevant articles were included, which constituted all news articles containing stories about women travelling from any of the Northern and Western European countries to join ISIS. Therefore, stories of women travelling to Al-Qaeda were not included, those which were only about men were not included, and so on and so forth. I also chose to include both feature stories and op-eds. I did so because I wanted to grasp the full media picture, and I believe feature stories and op-eds are important parts of that picture. I have not chosen to differentiate between types of articles but I have rather analysed them collectively.

I chose to collect articles from 2013 to 2016. This seemed like a natural time frame because I could not find articles from before 2013, and since 2017 is not over yet, this year would not be equally represented in the material. Also, this is the time period where most women have travelled to ISIS, according to the articles in my data material. In total, I have gathered 130 articles, and the number from each newspaper is presented in the parenthesis. 29 from Norway, from the newspapers Dagsavisen (6), Aftenposten (5), Dagbladet (6) and VG (12). 31 from Denmark and the newspapers Informationen (8), Jyllands-posten (10), Politiken (5) and BT (8). 31 from Sweden from Aftonbladet (7), Svenska Dagbladet (9), Expressen (8) and Dagens Nyheter (7). 39 from the British newspapers The Guardian (12), The Telegraph (9), The Mirror (11) and The Sun (7).

3.7.1 Selection of newspapers and articles

The articles were selected with the research question in mind (Smith 2003: 167) to cover a wide variety of newspapers, both popular and elite, and to capture as much width as possible of newspapers and opinion shapers. Different people read different types of newspapers, so it is useful to look at both elite and popular newspapers, to capture more of the total population that reads the newspapers within the four countries. Popular newspapers and elite newspapers are often referred to as mass and quality newspapers respectively, and researchers have come up

with five main elements that distinguish them from each other: The first element is the content, where elite newspapers are said to provide hard news with more focus on presenting background and analysis, and popular newspapers are said to provide soft news with more colourful and people oriented news pieces. The second is the target audience, where elite newspapers are said to target people with higher education, usually middle to upper class people, and the popular newspapers target people with a lower educational level and lower socioeconomic backgrounds. When it comes to design and paper format the elite newspapers usually have longer articles with more text, and popular newspapers have more pictures and bolder design, as well as more colourful wording. Regarding journalistic ethics, the fifth and last element, elite newspapers are said to have a higher level and popular ones a lower level of journalistic ethics (Lehman-Wilzig and Seletsky 2012: 1, 2).

These clear-cut distinctions have been less meaningful recently. Over the last two decades we have witnessed a blur of the distinctions between the two newspaper types. Therefore, many have questioned whether such a distinction and dichotomy can be considered tenable any longer (ibid 2012: 2). However, for the purpose of choosing newspapers from which to collect articles for my data material, I regarded it as necessary to make sure at least one supposedly popular and one elite newspaper were included. Random sampling for qualitative analysis is usually not appropriate. When looking for relevant news articles it is important to first find a corpus of articles, which is then analysed, before moving on to finding more texts to add to the corpus. The researcher is supposed to search for texts until it becomes evident that what he or she finds is just more of the same (ibid 2012: 35). This has been the logic behind my own non-random sampling.

To define the chosen newspapers, I draw on both theoretical articles as well the definitions from other research articles studying news media. The Mirror and the Sun are so-called red top tabloids, meaning popular newspapers. When measured in circulation they are the two most popular daily newspapers in Britain (Sparks and Tullock 2002: 92). The Guardian and the Telegraph on the other hand are regarded as elite newspapers and are also amongst the most bought newspapers in Great Britain (Larsen and Dejgaard 2013: 291). In Norway, VG and Dagbladet are considered the two tabloid and hence popular newspapers, whereas Aftenposten and Dagsavisen are regarded as elite newspapers (Tornås 2006: 15; Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud 2015: 788). In Sweden, the popular newspapers are Expressen and Aftonbladet while Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet are regarded as the elite newspapers (Larsen and

Dejgaard 2013: 291; Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005: 408). From Denmark, the newspapers Politiken, Jyllands-posten and Informationen are regarded as elite, while BT is regarded as a popular newspaper (Larsen and Dejgaard 2013: 290, 291). In addition to assuring a representative selection based on type of newspaper, these newspapers also give a representative picture of the media that exists in the four countries. Even if I have made use of newspaper types in the data collection processes, these have not been part of my analysis, as I do not regard my data material to be large enough to draw conclusions based on newspaper type. This would however be interesting to consider in future research.

3.7.2 Data collection process

First, I skimmed through all the newspapers. I noted down all keywords that characterised the female foreign fighters, such as lured, manipulated, brainwashed, bride, wife, fighter, and so on, and themes on motivations or reason for why particular girls and women travelled to ISIS or why girls and women in general travels to ISIS. This would for instance be words and sentences like travelled to get married, wanted to live in an Islamic state, and so on. I put the words and sentences into categories that were continuously amended. The initial categories were for instance; religious belonging, political motives, and focus on marriage and motherhood. I paid particular attention to recurring keywords and themes within each category. I noticed the choice of words, especially words with distinctive evaluating meaning; words that imply a feeling or attitude towards something in a positive or negative direction (Wodak and Krzyzanowski 2008: 38). In addition to noting motivations I also noted down words that to different degrees remove responsibility from the women's actions, and any newspaper writing that removing responsibility from the women's actions was wrong. This evolved into something of a responsibility or agency axis where I, not without difficulty, tried to place the articles.

It quickly became evident that there are not one or even two different stories that are told about women travelling from Northern and Western European countries to ISIS, there are several. And often, several stories are told during the same article. In one paragraph, they have left their homes voluntarily to fight for the Islamic state. In the next paragraph, they are brainwashed into travelling, by men or women who live in ISIS, to become jihadi brides. The reasons why the women are represented this way are manifold: Firstly, there are probably several different reasons and motivations for why girls and women join ISIS. Secondly, the news articles have comments from different actors – everyone from experts and researchers to friends and family,

and sometime even quotes from the girls and women themselves. Hence, there will be several stories told and words used. Lastly, rarely does one discourse exist unchallenged as explained previously in this chapter.

After acquiring the initial overview of the articles and what they contained I started a project in NVivo, a computer programme that helps you analyse both written and oral data (Bryman 2004: 417). I went through the articles again and marked words, sentences and paragraphs that fitted into the line of arguments I broadly noticed during the first round. Some new discourses emerged as I undertook the second round. I have classified all the articles with attributes such as the country the article is from, the year the article is written, the name of the newspaper, and whether they are considered elite or popular newspapers. I also searched for keywords like brainwashed, lured, groomed, and manipulate – words I had seen repeatedly in the articles and which implied a degree of non-responsibility for the women, to see if it matched my first impression. I searched with keywords in English, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish. All of these categorisations assisted me in noticing trends and themes that eventually formed into some broader discourses that I will present in the next chapter.

3.8 Shortcomings and solutions

A typical critique of critical discourse analysis is that the research is largely based on the researcher's own interpretations. The aim of my research is to keep a neutral and value-free approach towards the phenomenon under examination (Johannessen and Tufte 2002: 16, 17). This can be difficult to achieve, and it is especially so for discourse analysis, where previous knowledge and values can affect the analysis (Jørgenson and Philips 1999: 28, 29). It is therefore essential to keep the process as transparent as possible: to explain step by step how the analysis has been conducted and situate the research, the empirical data and the findings; how one has thought through the process; and lastly to be clear on what texts have been used. The texts should all be linked to in the study, and be easy to find from the bibliography, and/or appendix. All the arguments in the analysis should be backed up by quotes from the texts, so that the readers can make up their own opinion on the researcher's argumentations (ibid 2014: 54). No research, and especially qualitative research, is without personal influence, and will inherently be slightly biased. This does not mean, however, that the research is not fruitful and not of importance, rather the contrary. If the research process is transparent and honest, important measures have already been taken to ensure the quality of the research.

Chapter IV: Analysis

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the analytical work of my thesis within the framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA). There are two components to the use of CDA here: I will trace what discourses that can be interpreted from news articles, as well as attempt to see where they come from. The last component, the implications of the discourses, will be addressed in a chapter of its own.

The discourses are not clear-cut or readily defined. They are rather images that to different degrees seem to dominate the media's focus and attention around women who travel to join ISIS from Northern and Western European countries. Sometimes the discourses interfere with each other, and sometimes they contradict one another. The five dominant discourses I have identified through the articles are defined as that of 'the mother and wife', 'the religious woman', 'the brainwashed schoolgirl', 'the warped woman', and 'the political woman'. Within each of the articles there is not necessarily one dominating understanding of why the girls and women actually chose to join ISIS, such as whether their choice to join was an independent and conscious one, or if they had been manipulated into joining.

I will present the discourses in the order listed above. I will go into detail, with examples from the articles, to outline each one of them. I will also discuss whether the girls and women are assigned responsibility or not within the discourses, i.e. the level of agency. With input from previous research on women and violence, I will explore how these understandings seem to dominate the news discourses of today.

4.2 The mother and wife

There is a dominant focus on women joining ISIS because of a man, in one way or another. This focus is formulated through a repeated use of the jihadi bride nickname, and because marriage is listed several times as a central motivation. These are some key aspects that together make up the mother and wife discourse. The readers are left with an understanding of Western women joining ISIS as either motivated to get married, to have children, or because they are heavily influenced by a man to join ISIS. Sometimes their decision to join ISIS and marry a fighter is presented as a conscious and independent choice, but not always: 'Baited by the false

promise of ... a doted husband' (Jeffery 2016). Here they are baited, meaning they were fooled into taking the bait of what they may believe is a doting husband. The sentence also implies that they are getting something very different than a loving life companion. All in all, this discourse is largely dominant in the articles.

4.2.1 The wife

Most of the articles contributing to this discourse say the women joined ISIS to get married. Examples of this formulation include 'The parents of a woman who fled the UK to marry an Isil fighter...' (Cramb 2015), 'The trio become some of Britain's most infamous Isis recruits and shocked the nation after leaving their A-Level courses and their families to marry fighters in Syria' (Bishop 2016), 'Another group are the "jihadi brides," women who join IS to get married' (Hall 2015, my translation), and 'However, just six months later, in June 2014, Salma and her sister Zahra had fled to Syria to become "jihadi brides"' (Qureshi 2015). Some articles say they join ISIS to become brides and sex slaves: 'The love-struck girls, some as young as 16, are then lured into making the journey to the war zone to become "jihad brides" — or even sex slaves' (Daubney 2014). Sjoberg and Gentry's (2007: 46) 'whore' discourse consists of several aspects, one being sexual deviation. Sexual deviation can further be divided into three categories: erotomania, erotic dysfunction, and sexual slavery. The last example from the articles then points to a sexual deviation, as argued by Sjoberg and Gentry.

Some women are said to travel with their boyfriends: 'The girl is supposed to have travelled from Western Sweden last year with her then 19-year-old boyfriend who took her there via Iraq' (Stenquist 2016, my translation), and 'Most have fled with their husbands to join the murderous faction Islamic State of Iraq and Syria' (Hughes 2014). Others have travelled to be with their boyfriends: 'According to the centre most women travel to join men' (Winther 2015, my translation), 'The first women who travelled to Syria often had husbands who already were IS-fighters' (Hall 2015), and 'A possible reunion with boyfriends could have motivated the sisters to leave their family' (Johnsrud 2014, my translation). In a research article on Italian female terrorists, Weinberg and Eubank (1985: 256) focus on a correlation between women who join terrorist organisations and their already involved male relation. They thus focus on who got the women involved, rather than why, which according to Sjoberg and Gentry is supporting what they call 'the nurturing mother' discourse. This is a sub-category of what they call the discourse of the 'mother' within their three discourses on women's violence and support

for violence as outlined in chapter II. The nurturing mother's main motivation for joining a terrorist organisation is her 'instinctual desire to be maternal' (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 33).

The women are referred to as jihadi brides throughout many of the articles. Their nickname is an important aspect in shaping the mother and wife discourse. The term 'jihadi bride' comes in many forms, appearing in a total of 48 different articles, and referred to 104 times within these articles. Some articles are trying to challenge the jihadi bride concept, usually by saying in one way or another that these women cannot only be understood as jihadi brides because this is sexist and it ignores other important aspects of their choice to join ISIS. However, this argumentation only accounts for 22 of the articles. In addition, the words wife, bride, and widow in all four languages are used in an even higher number of articles. The recurring use of these words, and the repetition of the discourse of 'the wife,' contributes to an understanding of women running away from their home countries to marry jihadi fighters, with this being presented as a primary motivation. Even though many of the articles do not say explicitly the motivation is to get married, or to have children, the reference to the mother and wife in the articles does give the impression to the reader that they join ISIS for this exact reason. Referring to the women as wives also positions women as subjects in relation to a man, instead of positioning her as an actor on her own. In the narrowest understanding, the recurring image of 'the mother and wife' implies the decision to join must have something to do with a man. This contributes to an understanding of women as an attachment to a man, rather than as a sole agent. The 'jihadi bride' discourse also positions women in a support role, and when they are portrayed as the jihadi wives they are also domesticated, locating their role somewhere offstage (Elshtain 1995: 165). The domestication of women's support for violence still leaves them within a known femininity, which is perhaps why this discourse is so dominant.

4.2.2 The mother

The second aspect of the discourse is that of the mother. Motherhood as a motivation for joining ISIS is a recurring theme in the news articles: 'Some do it to get married and have children' (Kongstad and Plougsgaard 2016, my translation), and 'Girls as young as 14 or 15 are travelling mainly to Syria to marry jihadis, bear their children and join communities of fighters, with a small number taking up arms' (Sherwood et al. 2014). The 'nurturing mother' discourse is present here as well. The motivation for joining a terrorist organisation is her instinctual desire to be maternal, as mentioned earlier. This discourse is interesting because the woman is still

seen as nonviolent, a domesticated terrorist, and is thus not confronting the Western concepts of femininity – ‘mothering violent men is mothering no less’ (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 33). Her motivations are not political, but rather stem from the maternal desire to belong, to be useful, and to feel needed as a mother and wife in the terrorist organisation (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 33).

Another use of the mother discourse is exemplified in the following quote: ‘A single mother-of-two living on benefits, Jones had grown increasingly dissatisfied with her life’ (Ensor 2016). Her difficult life as a single mother of two is portrayed as what drew her toward the final decision to join ISIS. Her personal reasons seem important, and political or ideological reasons are not mentioned. This presents, again, what Sjoberg and Gentry call the ‘mother’ discourse used to explain women’s violence or support for violence. What we can read from the article extract is that her failure as a mother, not being able to fulfil that role, pushed her in the wrong direction (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 32, 33).

4.2.3 Sexualisation

Within the mother and wife discourse one also sees the idolisation of jihadi fighters: ‘The girls worship the jihadists like pop stars’ (Høi 2016, my translation). Another article has the headline ‘Romanticised image of the Caliphate and lots of men: the Islamic state has gotten a hold of the women’ (BT 2015, my translation). The women are presented as love struck, unable to resist the attraction of jihadi fighters, and attracted to the fact that the Islamic state has a lot of men. This implies a sexualisation of these women and their involvement in ISIS. Loken and Zelenc (2016: 16) who have studied women’s posts on social media find no sign that sex and romance have motivated the women to join ISIS. These conclusions are drawn based on the ISIS women’s own statements. However, news articles draw the opposite conclusion. Sjoberg and Gentry (2008: 13) also claim there is a discourse presented in the media about ‘Islamic women’ being ‘controlled by men...and are incapable of agency in politics or violence.’ (ibid 2008: 13). Here the women are understood and presented as being controlled by the men’s sexual power. Note also how the women are seen as something one can get a hold of, as if the women were objects to take. Additionally, ‘The Islamic state has gotten a hold of the women’, implies they have not just gotten a hold of women in general, but ‘our’ women, the Western women, ‘our’ potential wives and mothers.

4.2.4 Patriarchal family structures

A fourth aspect of the mother and wife discourse is that the women are presented as being forced to make the choice to join ISIS because they are held under strict patriarchal family structures at home, within their families. They are presented as finally being able to decide for themselves who they want to marry: ‘The Brits’ theory is that Somali girls are often the victims of social control in their families and they therefore travel to Syria to be in charge over their own lives and marry who they want’ (Skjoldager 2014, my translation), and ‘They are freeing themselves from the patriarchal family culture. For the first time, they are taking command over their own life, and they choose for themselves who they want to marry’ (Stokke 2014, my translation). These articles explain the choice to join ISIS by claiming it was the internal family structures that forced these women into doing so. The articles additionally present the patriarchal family structures as the problem. It is valuable to ask if the media regards these women’s choice to join ISIS as an escape from one patriarchal and authoritarian structure to another. And also, if the media regard it as a motivation to finally be able to marry who they want. As their choice to join ISIS is sometimes seen as simply moving from one patriarchal culture to yet another one, it seems fair to state that the representation of these women and girls leaves little room for their own independent choice. They are in the end perhaps presented as victims more than anything else.

To sum up, the women’s motivations are represented as mainly personal within this discourse. They want to get married, they want to choose for themselves who they marry, they want to have children. Their involvement is often described as sexually motivated. They are drawn to jihadi fighters; they are incapable of resisting the attraction of jihadi fighters, and idolise them like pop stars. In addition to all this, the women are domesticated within this presentation and discourse. Their role in the organisation is domesticated, their motivation is domesticated and hence they stay true to a known feminine nature. They are either victims, or they are influenced by the men within ISIS, or the men they travel to ISIS with. Whether they are victims or independent agents making a conscious choice, their decision to join ISIS has something to do with a man – wanting to be with a man, have children with a man, or being lured by a man. Many women see the journey to ISIS, and the marrying to a jihadi fighter, as a Hijra – an obligatory religious migration to a true religious caliphate (Hoyle, Bradford and Frenett 2015). In the next section, this part of the women’s involvement in ISIS, as the religious woman, will be discussed.

4.3 The religious woman

Another frequent discourse which can be identified in the newspaper stories about the women who join ISIS is that of very religious women. This discourse has three main aspects: First and foremost, that of a religious conviction being presented as a key motivation for joining ISIS. Then there is the aspect of religion as a central focus when journalists write about the girls' and women's lives, without explicitly saying it had something to do with why the women left. Lastly it is the religious focus and the specific wording used, where rather than being described as highly religiously motivated, the women are instead presented as victims of religion.

4.3.1 Religiously motivated

One of the core aspects of this discourse is the descriptions of their religious motivations to join ISIS. This motivation is demonstrated in the example below from an article in the Guardian addressing women's motivation for joining ISIS:

(1) because they believe that Islam is under attack; (2) because they want to contribute to the building of a new society and establishment of the Caliphate; and (3) because they believe in their individual duty to migrate to the Islamic State and a sense of sisterhood among those who do. (Aly 2015)

The descriptions of these motivations are very much in line with the theory on women who join ISIS. The literature on women travelling to ISIS outlined in chapter II mentions religious commitment as a key pull-factor in women's radicalisation process (Saltman and Smith 2015: 13, 14; Loken and Zelenz 2016 :22; Fink et al. 2015:150). This similarity is partly because many of the newspaper articles are referring to the report by Saltman and Smith, as is the case in the article by Aly (2015), where the points listed above in the quote is more or less directly taken from their research. Another article, *not* quoting Saltman and Smith says: “‘Jihadi brides’ can also have a dream to live under Sharia law, and wish to help create an Islamic state’ (Hall 2015, my translation). The women are presented as highly religiously motivated and actively joining because of this motivation, according to the journalists.

In the news articles in my data material, the women themselves were quoted directly or indirectly a total of 12 times on reasons or motivations for joining ISIS. In nine of the instances they were quoted on ideological or religious reasons. Some stated their motivations through a

note or a letter: ‘Shortly after the parents found a shocking farewell letter... “We’re on the right path. We are going to Syria, fighting for Islam. See you in Paradise”’ (Eggen and Gustavsen 2014, my translation), and ““Don’t look for us. We’re serving Allah and dying for him” a note that the girls had left for their families said’ (Munch 2015, my translation). Some let it be known orally: ‘As she crossed the Turkish border, the former private school girl told her parents that she wanted to become a martyr’ (Mason 2015), and others are indirectly quoted: ‘Umm Umar had travelled to Syria because she wanted to join a perfect Islamic state’ (Jaffer 2015). Through these examples they again seem to be religiously aware and independently deciding it is time to act upon their religious convictions.

4.3.2 Religious radicalisation

Religion is also an important part of the story told about their ‘previous’ life and their radicalisation process. In the next example, the contrast between farms in Trøndelag and a burqa makes religion something alien and out of place, and in complete opposition to a ‘western lifestyle’:

There is, however, little doubt that the 28-year-old at some point began to regard the surrounding farms and great fields in Northern Trøndelag through the narrow view a burqa or a niqab provides (Arntsen and Helgesen 2015, my translation).

From the story of another woman who left, the journalist writes:

Since then, the daughter became more religious and started, amongst other things, to wear the veil and reading the Quran, even though she is from a family where religion does not play a big role (Boas 2016, my translation).

These examples demonstrate the focus on the religious women. The religious practices seem to be understood and presented as something alien, something abnormal and perhaps threatening to western culture and societies. The burqa that ‘provides a narrow view’ can be read in at least two ways; that they are for example less intelligent or that they are limited somehow in the way they view the world, and it also alienates the woman from a known Norwegian nature. The news article authors are not even sure if she is wearing a niqab or a burka. The second example would have us believe that beginning to wear the veil and read the Quran should perhaps be seen as a sign of radicalisation. The focus on religion, religious practice, and veiling, as seen in

these examples, contributes to the discourse on the religious woman. Religion as part of the women's lives before they joined, as in their radicalisation process, and as a key motivation, is central within this discourse, similar to what Brown discovers about the news reporting on Muriel Degauque's suicide bombing in Iraq (Brown 2011: 716).

4.3.3 Lured by the religious message

Women's choice to join ISIS is not always regarded as an independent choice. In an article in the Telegraph with the headline 'What is luring Western women to Syria to join Isil?' they write: 'The first "lure" is perhaps a "who" not a "what" ...a second "lure" then is the Utopian vision of society propagandised by Isil...the lure is practical, but also ideological' (Pearson 2015). In a different news article, it says they were 'Lured by false promises of an Islamic utopia' (Eggen and Gustavsen 2014, my translation). In addition to saying they were lured, the Islamic utopia is suggested to not be a reality. The false promise can also come in the form of a bait: 'Baited by the false promise of an Islamic utopia and a doted husband' (Jeffery 2016).

They are also not just lured by something, they are also lured by someone: '...which could have alerted them to the fact the girls were in danger of being lured by the terrorists' (Dodd 2016). To be lured by someone would imply that a person is influenced in making their decision. There is a need for someone else to be luring you for you to make the choice. Lured is a word that is also used to describe a false bait used to lure fish for example. Therefore, the use of lure and lured in relation to women travelling to ISIS can remove a degree of responsibility from their actions, and helps create an image of innocence and of blindly and naively following the lure right into ISIS' arms. These are more discrete ways of suggesting they did not make an entirely independent choice. Other articles suggest clearly that someone else got the women involved in religious extremism and ISIS: 'Friends of suspected terrorist: She suddenly became very religious. Fears her husband has radicalised her within a short period of time' (Mjaaland, Wibe-Lund and Widerøe 2015, my translation). Her apparently sudden turn toward religion is presented as perhaps her husband's doing. These examples demonstrate how their religious choice may not have been fully independent, which to a degree deprives responsibility from the girls and women.

Overall, this discourse presents a woman who have decided to join ISIS for different religious reasons. This discourse portrays the different religious aspects such as motivation,

radicalisation process and as ways to trick the women to join. ISIS women are sometimes viewed as active and independent in their choice to act upon their religious conviction. This makes up a rather large part of this discourse. This is especially seen in the motivations they refer to, and counting the motivations most frequently referred to within the data material, religious reasons make up the largest part. Other times the women are viewed as victims of religion. Either they are presented as having been lured by a religious message, presented as being lured by ISIS recruiters and their religious message, or they are supposedly radicalised by male relatives. As demonstrated, religion is also central to understanding their radicalisation process, or the time period before they left to join ISIS. Whatever way it is presented, religion is at the core within this discourse. When these women are presented as victims of religion, this is usually part of a larger discourse where the women are understood as mainly victims in their process and act of joining ISIS. This will be further elaborated on in the next section.

4.4 The brainwashed schoolgirl

The third dominant discourse is that of brainwashed schoolgirls, stripped of agency and cast as victims of others. Three girls travelling from Bethnal Green, referred to as the Bethnal Green schoolgirls, can arguably be considered the poster girls of this discourse. In one of the news articles the Bethnal Green schoolgirls are presented like this: ‘The trio became some of Britain’s most infamous Isis recruits and shocked the nation after leaving their A-level courses and their families to marry fighters in Syria’ (Bishop 2016). What can be read from this quote is that they became infamous, they shocked the nation, and this seems to be in large part due to them leaving their A-level courses and families to join a terrorist organisation. Jean Elshtain (1995:179) similarly claims we are always shocked to see women who decide to join terrorist organisations.

4.4.1 The schoolgirl

Within this discourse the reader is first and foremost presented with the image of the schoolgirl, and an intelligent one as well:

The judge said “B” was one of a number of cases... where “intelligent young girls, highly motivated academically” had been “captured and seduced by the belief that travelling to Syria to become what are known as jihadi brides is a somewhat romantic and honourable path for them and their families.” (Press association 2015).

In total, there are 22 articles containing the word schoolgirl in my data material, that contribute to this discourse. There is clearly a lot of focus on the fact that young schoolgirls join ISIS, and the word schoolgirl comes in many forms: Schoolgirl jihadis (Sherwood et al. 2014), ISIS schoolgirls (Myers 2016), and Muslim schoolgirls (Veevers, Patrick and Wilkins 2014) to mention a few examples. This is understandable due to both their young age and the apparent contrast to their previous life situation, and because many of the articles that use these words refer to the Bethnal Green schoolgirls, where the authors then apply this term to let the reader know they are referring to them specifically.

The schoolgirl discourse implies several things. First, it says something about a kind of innocence. A schoolgirl is often thought of as someone young and dutiful. This is perhaps an understanding the public prefers when contemplating why these girls would choose a life in ISIS. However, it reinforces a victim discourse. Someone young and dutiful would have to be impacted by someone else to join a terrorist organisation. If they, on the other hand, were portrayed as reckless teenagers, perhaps they would be seen as more likely to make such a decision on their own. The schoolgirl image is further expanded when combined with words such as brainwashed, as will be demonstrated in a later section. In the first example in this section the schoolgirls are presented as ‘captured and seduced,’ which can ‘easily happen to vulnerable teenage girls.’ Secondly, many of the articles focus on their ‘normal’ life before deciding to join ISIS, as will be further demonstrated below. They do this by focusing on their performance in school, or previous dreams for the future: ‘...after the twins, who had 28 GCSEs between them and who had hoped to become doctors, ditched their lives in the comfortable south Manchester Suburb...’ (Qureshi 2015). The focus on their ‘real’ character as caring, mother-like, and nurturing is reflected in the role of being dutiful students, who dreamed to help others by becoming doctors. This reinforces a stereotyped feminine and caring nature (Brown 2011: 711, 712), set up in stark contrast to their choice to join ISIS.

Lastly, this discourse implies that since they are A-level students, they ought to be able to make conscious and well-thought-out decisions, and that they can resist attempts at changing their established world view. This does not seem to be the case, however, as they are seen as easily manipulated and because some say they don’t know what they are getting into, as will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

Now that they have become ISIS-women, the contrast from their ‘previous life’ is set up against their ‘new life’: ‘The former Goldsmiths university student and daughter of a successful business man transformed from a happy schoolgirl to a burka clad gun toting lunatic.’ In the same article, similar words are used: ‘...from a carefree student to a burka wearing gun toting jihadi bride’ and ‘...from a happy student to burka clad, gun toting extremist’ (Birchall 2016). She was happy, carefree, and came from a good family. Now she is an alien and scary burka clad, she is a lunatic and an extremist.

4.4.2 Victims of brainwashing and grooming

In addition to being young schoolgirls within this discourse, they are additionally portrayed as innocent and as victims who, amongst other things, have been brainwashed:

All her own fault? Of course, but still it’s devastating – this is not about Sultana “getting what was coming to her”, or about the killing of a “jihadi bride”, it’s about the pointless death of a headstrong, brainwashed teenage girl... while I could never condone what Kadiza Sultana did, I can forgive a manipulated teenage girl an appalling mistake... (Ellen 2016).

Often, it is family members who say their daughter, sister, or cousin has been brainwashed (Gustafsson 2014, Shute 2016, and Johansson 2015). One father says his daughter has been deceived: ‘Based on the information he has acquired the last couple of days, the father believes his daughters have been deceived’ (Skjærli and Henden 2013, my translation). But it is not always relatives who claim this. ‘[Kalsoom Bashir] of Muslim women’s support group, *Inspire*, fears young British Muslim women are being “brainwashed in their bedrooms”’ (Daubney 2014). Brainwashing is a term that removes responsibility from someone’s actions. You are always brainwashed by someone, and you would never do what you did unless you were brainwashed. The brainwasher becomes the agent, and the brainwashed the passive victim. How come these girls, so often portrayed as smart, which the ‘A-level schoolgirl’ description would imply, are so easily manipulated and brainwashed?

‘Grooming’ is also used to describe why the girls would travel to join ISIS. The concept of grooming, which normally refers to paedophiles who groom young children for the purpose of taking sexual advantage of them, is in this context used to describe the jihadists’ recruitment strategy toward women: ‘It is thought missing 15-year-old Yusra Hussein, who ran off to join

Islamic state, was groomed on a dating website' (Nevett 2016), and 'Experts reveals how ISIS groom British teenagers into joining terrorist groups' (Wood 2015). In the latter article, she further writes that 'Cats, snaps of dinner and religious extremism all mixed together in to lay bare how Islamic State grooms British teenagers.' (ibid 2015). 'Cats and snaps' further infantilises the girls and women by referring to the social media teenage generation, in addition to removing responsibility from their act of travelling, by claiming they were groomed.

4.4.3 'Ignorance explains it'

Within the discourse of the brainwashed schoolgirl, they are additionally presented as not knowing what their decision to join ISIS involved: 'Some of these girls are very young and naive, they don't understand the conflict or their faith, and they are easily manipulated' (Sherwood, Laville, Willsher, Knight, French and Gambino 2014). In another article, the general secretary of the Muslim Women's Network UK is quoted in an interview to BBC Breakfast: 'Not for a moment do I believe the girls know what they are getting into' (Webb 2015). The Mirror writes that 'A total of 43 females were thought to have fled to Syria in the previous 12 months, without knowing the true brutality of the terror group ISIS' (Myers 2016). The discourse implies that if the girls knew what they were going to, they would never go. If they do not know what they are going to, the public can more easily understand why they left. It agrees better with people's understanding of the world and their perceptions of right and wrong, the good and the bad. This suggests, in the end, that they are seen as not having responsibility for their decision to join. Even if this is true for some, it may not be so for all, as is the presumption in several articles. This view is interesting when put up against the schoolgirl aspect. They are so often characterised as A-level students, and as bright girls who had the world at their feet. But at the same time, they have no idea about ISIS' brutal ways and the poor living conditions in a civil war. It is interesting to note how these two aspects seem to be in opposition to one another.

4.4.4 'In need of saving'

Finally, one article in the data material states: 'Officers said they were "deeply concerned" by the figures as many women were unaware that they will probably never be able to return home' (Myers 2015). The latter is an example of how they write as if the girls and women want to return and escape, which implies they are victims: 'British jihadi brides being forced to

radicalise others and have “zero chance” of escaping terror group’ (Jeffery 2016). And finally, that they want someone to save them:

Detectives are hoping if contact can be made with the trio before they cross the border into war-ravaged Syria, they can be saved from a life of brutality at the hands of Islamic terrorists (Webb 2015).

The focus is on their young age through the use of words like young, teenagers, and schoolgirls. This is combined with an understanding of the girls being brainwashed, deceived, and groomed. Additionally, they have no idea what conflict they are going to or what organisation they are joining. This presents the girls and women as innocent, and as victims. Young schoolgirls will inherently be understood as the fairer and weaker ones in a situation as dreadful as this. The young, brainwashed schoolgirl is one of the most dominant images in the articles. ISIS and its jihadist men are presented as the perpetrators, the recruiters and brainwashers. They are to be blamed, not the girls and women themselves.

4.5 The warped woman

The discourse of the warped woman is similar to that of Black Fatima. Black Fatima is a term used to describe women who recruited other women into terrorism during the Chechen war. They were often portrayed as older, ugly, evil and witch-like. They were presented as the masterminds behind whatever the other ‘innocent and helpless’ women did (Sjoberg and Gentry 2008: 13). In Stack’s study on women participating in the Chechen war, the Black Fatimas are therefore seen as among those who deprive responsibility from other female recruits (Stack 2011: 90). We see the Black Fatima metaphor with two women in British and Scandinavian articles. The two are Sally Jones and Aqsa Mahmood. I will discuss the presentation of the two women further down. In one article dedicated to two ISIS women, and a third woman recruiting to al-Shabaab, the headline states, ‘TERROR TRIO: How three warped British women are secretly encouraging UK teen girls to convert to Islam and become ISIS jihadi brides’ (Birchall 2016). Warped means some sort of twisted, so they are, according to this headline, not sane women, and something is not right with them. They are ‘secretly encouraging’ girls, so they are sneaky. And they are encouraging UK teen girls, which portrays warped sneaky women targeting young innocent girls, not only trying to make them into jihadi brides but allegedly

also convincing them to convert to Islam. The contrast between the crazy and evil women and the innocent women is evident in this headline.

4.5.1 Sally Jones

Sally Jones' social media is often quoted, portraying her brutal way of being:

On Twitter, she calls herself Umm Hussain al-Britani. There she has wished all Christians dead: "You should be beheaded with a blunt knife and hanged on the racks of Raqqa...Come here and I'll do it for you", she writes (Gustafsson 2014, my translation).

Her role in recruitment and training of Western women is repeatedly stated in some articles, such as, 'Revealed: Isil bride Sally Jones's role in training female recruits for attacks on the West' (Ensor 2016). Her role as mother is often put into the mix: 'The truth about terror mom Sally Jones: "Helps ISIS to recruit girls"' (Larsson 2016, my translation).

Emphasis on her age is common, similar to Black Fatima in the Chechen war: 'The 47-year-old Sally Jones' (Larsson 2016, my translation), 'The four are Sally-Anne Jones, a 46-year-old Muslim convert from Chatham, Kent...' (Mason 2015), '...Sally Jones (a 45-year-old one-time punk rocker turned jihadi bride from Chatham, Kent) ...' (Shute 2016), and 'Former punk rocker Sally Jones, 45, also vowed to sneak back into Britain' (Webb 2016). She is also referred to as a 'British terrorist' and 'ISIS terrorist' (Larsson 2016, my translation). Another nickname is 'Mrs Terror': 'Mrs Terror Sally Jones converted to Islam and moved to Syria five years ago and is thought to have recruited dozens of brides' (Birchall 2016). The nickname creates a discourse of a very dangerous woman. She is also given far more responsibility for her actions, compared to other women the newspapers report on. Emphasis is put on her role in recruiting others, and the pictures used in the articles reinforce the image of an old, cruel woman. Like Belgian-born Muriel Degauque, she is seen as a threat from within, with emphasis on her potentially sneaking back into Europe (Brown 2011: 714).

4.5.2 Aqsa Mahmood

Aqsa Mahmood is a woman in her twenties from Glasgow who left her home in 2013. Even though she does not fit into the part of being older, she is viewed as more experienced, as she

left Britain relatively early. She is said to be part of the women's brigade Al-Khansaa (Hall 2015). She is also assigned more responsibility for her actions: 'Glasgow-born Jihadists Aqsa Mahmood left university in 2013 to fight in Syria' (Whitehead 2016). She is referred to as an active recruiter of other women: 'She is a prolific social media user and writes a blog in which she advises other young women about the best way to travel to Syria and marry a fighter' (Sherwood et al. 2014). She became a central figure in British newspapers after the Bethnal Green schoolgirls from London travelled to Syria. She is repeatedly mentioned as someone involved in the girls' disappearance: 'The IS-woman Aqsa Mahmood is now accused of getting the girls to run away' (Eriksson 2015, my translation). There is also a lot of focus on her brutality, compared to other women from the West who have joined ISIS:

Through her Twitter profile Umm Layth, Aqsa Mahmood is connected to the al-Khansaa-brigade. On Twitter, she spreads IS' message, posting pictures of AK47s and writing about beheadings (Gustafsson 2014, my translation).

4.5.3 Responsible or not?

By focusing on their brutality, these women are no longer seen and therefore presented as innocent, unlike some of the other girls and women who join ISIS. The Black Fatimas are also credited with more responsibility for their actions. They were not brainwashed, but they are deliberately and intentionally recruiting and hence ruining other young Western women's lives. By giving the women responsibility, the article authors could be interpreted as creating a distance between the women and their home societies. At the same time, she must be either 'bad' or 'mad,' as Sjoberg and Gentry (2007: 36, 37) argues. This is the only way we can understand why a woman, the gender that is supposed to be caring and nurturing, could act brutally. They must be a deviation from the female norm, so that the perception of the female norm still can hold. Hence, they are warped women, not normal women as illustrated in the first example. Some would say they are portrayed as mentally ill. This resembles an understanding that Jean Elshtain claims have existed for a long time: 'as the lustful, disordered and unstable sex, women have not been held accountable for what they did.' (Elshtain 1995: 169). Therefore, the articles can also be interpreted as depriving them of their responsibility. The articles do not actively choose to assign them responsibility or not, hence a grey zone appears, and a bit of both can be observed.

4.6 The political woman

The last discourse is that of the political women, or as clearly voluntary participants joining for a political cause. They are understood as independently and consciously making the choice to join, either for political or humanitarian reasons. They were not, at least not to a large degree, described as influenced by someone else. One of the most common ways in which women are viewed as voluntary participants is through a confrontation of what is labelled, in some of the articles, ‘the jihadi bride’ discourse. The political woman could be understood as an opposite to both ‘the mother and wife’ and ‘the brainwashed schoolgirl,’ within my five discourses.

The substance of the articles that build this discourse usually argue that these women cannot be understood as fools who do not know what they are getting into, and they must instead be seen as thinking and rational human beings, who should be seen in no other way than how men who join ISIS are seen. All in all, 21 out of the 130 articles are trying to confront a ‘jihadi bride’ discourse and present an alternative understanding of women who join ISIS, either throughout the article, or as implied through single sentences and paragraphs within the article. England has the most articles with this view, almost all by The Guardian. Norway has the second-highest number, where Dagsavisen has four out of six articles where they confront the jihadi bride discourse.

‘Jihadi brides’ aren’t oppressed. They join Isis for the same reasons men do...The ‘jihadi bride’ discourse is inherently sexist – it fails to acknowledge the agency of Muslim women, either in conflict or in preventing terrorism (Aly 2015).

These sentences sum up the core of the confrontation that is indirectly or directly brought up in 21 articles in the data, and that contributes to a discourse of political women on the same level as the men. The political woman presentation was brought up in Sweden as well: ‘Instead of perceiving these women as victims who have been “deceived” to become part of IS, we should perhaps view them as equally dangerous as the men’ (Hansson 2015, my translation). In Norway, Dagsavisen confronts the jihadi bride discourse several times: ‘But they are active, conscious and many are as bellicose as their male counterparts’ (Skjeseth 2015, my translation). Some do not confront it as obviously, but any sentences like the next examples suggest they are given responsibility for their actions: ‘Six have travelled voluntarily from Norway’ (Hultgreen and Krokfjord 2014, my translation), and ‘What you now see are more active women, who happily travel on their own initiative and alone’ (Dagsavisen 2013, my translation).

In addition to this, the political woman implies a woman situated in a context of civil war with political actors, where she is politically engaged by choosing a side and someone to support. There are, however, only two articles that mention the fight against Bashar al-Assad as the motivation for joining ISIS:

But while the women may have become embroiled in the war in the hope of ousting hated president Bashar Assad, experts fear the foreign fighters could be unwittingly helping him stay in power by clashing with other rebels also trying to depose him (Hughes 2014).

And:

SYRIA: Hundreds of European Muslims are travelling to Syria to fight president Bashar Assad's regime. Many of them are now women (Dagsavisen 2013, my translation).

The latter article says many Muslims travel to Syria to fight Assad, and then the women are added to that general statement.

Another part of the political woman discourse is women who travel to join ISIS because they want to partake in humanitarian work. Sometimes the women and girls themselves have been quoted indirectly and directly. In one article, the farewell letter from two Somali sisters who travelled from Norway to ISIS can be read:

The Muslims are being attacked from all angles and we must do something. We would very much like to help, and the only way we can truly help is to be with them in their sufferings and joys. It is no longer enough to sit at home and send money. With this in mind we have decided to travel to Syria to help with whatever we can (Hopperstad and Widerøe 2013, my translation).

Humanitarian work seems to be their motivation. They do not mention a caliphate, nor men, just helping Muslims. In Jyllands-posten, the British researcher Erin Marie Saltman says: 'many of the women are also attracted by a humanitarian message, when they are recruited to the war zone' (Jyllands-posten 2016, my translation). Another article cites Shaista Gohir who says, 'some may believe they are taking part in a humanitarian mission' (Sherwood et al. 2014). In Aftenposten you can read: 'They left before IS showed their true face, they left to help Syrians

in need' (Stokke 2014, my translation). Humanitarian work is generally both seen as legitimate and rational. ISIS is seen as neither. Western men and women travelling to ISIS are also seen as neither legitimate nor rational. Perhaps we therefore do not see this as part of the discourse more often.

To sum up, even if the women are sometimes presented and thus regarded as political agents, this discourse is rarer in these articles, compared to the other discourses. As I elaborated on in chapter III, CDA is equally interested in examining what is *not* said and written, as much as what *is* said and written. An overwhelming absence of the aspects this discourse entails tells us perhaps something about what versions of reality does not surface to the same extent as the other versions.

Chapter V: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I elevate the analysis by on a higher level discussing what discourses exists on female foreign fighters and what more overarching discourses exist on female political engagement and participation in violence. This level of analysis first and foremost deals with whether or not the women framed in the articles are perceived to be motivated by personal or political issues and whether or not they are perceived as acting with responsibility, or agency, as will now be discussed.

5.2 Agency

Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry (2007: 50) claim that whenever female criminals or female terrorists are presented in mainstream media, they present a story about women who could not have made a conscious choice to either commit or support acts of violence. The choice of words, the stories and metaphors, contribute to discourses where women are *not* understood as making an independent and conscious choice. In some of the media coverage they are either described as lured or brainwashed, seen as a flock, as women blindly following the rest. They have been deceived due to their young age, gender, schoolgirl status, or something similar. Aqsa Mahmood and Sally Jones, who fit in to the image of the Black Fatimas of the Chechen war or within the ‘monster’ discourse of Sjoberg and Gentry, are rather seen as a deviation from the female norm. Additionally, the women they portray are perhaps regarded as mentally ill of some sort, which is another way that arguably remove responsibility from their actions.

A few times in the media coverage there are comparisons between women and men in the articles. In this example, one can see how men and women, their choice to join, and the understanding of an act with or without agency differs: ‘As alarm mounts about British men who have joined the militants...less attention is being paid to an explicit recruitment drive...to lure women and girls to the cause’ (Khaleeli 2014). The men have joined, the women are lured to join, according to the ways in which journalists report on the case.

‘Women may be the war’s victims, and in this reigning discourse, neither its initiators nor its perpetrators’ (1995: 164). Even though Jean Elshtain’s book, along with this quote, was published in 1995, over 20 years later the view on women as victims rather than perpetrators,

and as weak enough to be brainwashed and deceived into travelling to a terrorist organisation, can still be found within media presentations of women's engagement in wars and violence.

Whether or not the public and the media are assigning responsibility to the girls and women for their involvement in ISIS inherently raises the question of whether or not they are perceived as having 'the ability to make deliberate choices.' According to Sjoberg and Gentry (2007: 14), this is a question of *agency and autonomy*. They further claim that the existence of a choice should be universally recognised (ibid 2007: 19), meaning it should apply to both men and women. When discussing the girls' and women's involvement in ISIS within the discourses I have presented, the matter of agency seems to be blurred. Within one discourse, they can be interpreted as having the ability to make that deliberate choice, and sometimes not. This is for instance the case with 'the religious woman.' She is either seen as a victim of religion, or someone who is deliberately making the choice to act on her religious convictions.

Sjoberg and Gentry (ibid 2007: 14) also point out that once a woman's agency is accepted as possible, the focus turns to her personal choice, rather than political choice. The fact that 'the wife and mother' discourse is among the two most dominating discourses shows that personal choice is central also in understanding women's involvement and agency in ISIS. Mention of political issues is rare in the articles and this says something about what spheres women are perceived to be living in (ibid 2007: 14).

5.3 The victim

In my data material, I have noticed three discourses along an agency-non-agency axis that go across or above the presentations from the previous chapter; the victims, the mad, and the conscious. The first and the most often recurring overarching discourse is the easily influenced women who have been deceived or lured by either Islamic State propaganda, men in ISIS through social media and dating websites, their husbands who they travel with or to, powerful religious messages, or other more vicious women who live in ISIS. The discourse of the male life takers and the female life givers as presented by Elshtain (1995: 165) exists within this discourse. You find 'the victims' partly within the discourses of 'the mother and wife,' and 'the religious woman,' and fully within the discourse of 'the brainwashed schoolgirl.'

5.4 The mad

The vicious women mentioned above constitute the second overarching discourse. These are women who are seen as warped, evil lunatics who, in addition to joining ISIS themselves, are also recruiting other girls and women to join. The innocent woman, or the beautiful soul as named by Elshtain, is constantly set up against the evil women and evil men of ISIS and their deceitful propaganda. The ‘mad’ women, the monsters as named by Sjoberg and Gentry, are deviations from a female norm, and by painting an image of an insane woman her perceived degree of conscious decision-making is lowered (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 12, 13). This discourse is fully summed up in the discourse of ‘the warped woman.’

5.5 The conscious

The third overarching discourse is of women who, whatever motivation for joining, have made a conscious choice and are presented as not having been affected, at least not to a large extent, by someone else in their decision to join. Some are religiously motivated and have decided to act upon their conviction. Others have decided that they want to join because they wish to marry a jihadist fighter. Others have travelled to partake in humanitarian work or in the fight against the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad. This discourse consists of people who are presented as being responsible for their choice and actions by the journalists. We find ‘the conscious’ partly amongst the discourses of ‘the mother and wife’ and ‘the religious woman,’ as well as fully in ‘the political woman’.

The conscious discourse works as a counter-story of these women, a story actively trying to confront a perception of women as weak and acting without agency. Articles that contribute to this discourse are actively engaging in a discursive destabilisation (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 53). The authors are saying something is wrong with how the media presents the women, and they are trying to present an alternative understanding. The articles are contributing to the balancing of how we see women in war, and specifically how we see girls and women who travel from Western countries to join ISIS. The other discourses are not left without competition.

While this is an important and fortunate aspect of the media presentation of the women, it only accounted for one in six articles in my data material. The underlying and dominant discourse

on women as victims remains strong, permeating the media's presentations of women in ISIS who have travelled from Northern and Western European countries.

5.6 The personal over the political

Generally, another trend can be drawn from my analysis: due to the overemphasis on other motivations for joining than political motivations, it is reasonable to argue that when the newspapers are portraying the women who join ISIS from Northern and Western European countries, they paint a picture of women motivated by personal issues. These would include, as shown in the analysis, the largely dominant focus on 'the mother and wife.' The rather few articles mentioning humanitarian work and the fight against al-Assad demonstrates that the women are predominately not perceived to act in a political sphere.

Katherine Brown argues that when we see women as passive, the consequence is that the political context for women's involvement in violence is overlooked, and the focus is rather on her personal motivations (Brown 2011: 710). Toles Parkin (2004: 85) also claims that when we try to understand women's violence we emphasise the emotional over the ideological, and when we present both personal and political motivations for women to commit or support acts of violence, we place the personal over the political. Where the article authors imply that political motivations are more important than personal motivations, they also imply the existence of a rational choice situated in a political context. This is a domain normally reserved for the men. This is exemplified by the news coverage of Belgian-born Muriel Degauque's suicide bombing in Babuqa, Iraq in 2005. In her case, none of the articles collected for the study said anything about the war in Iraq, nor the War on Terrorism, or any other political motivation to commit such an act (Brown 2011: 710). Rather, the articles focused on her Muslim husband and how he was the reason for her attack. Sometimes they wrote it happened because her life lacked meaning, that she was unhappy, or because of her sexually promiscuous mind (ibid 2011: 710). Men, on the other hand, are often attributed different motivations than women, and more often they are understood as political (Kollárová 2016: 152). My own research supports these findings.

Chapter VI: Implications

6.1 Introduction

The discourses that exist within media coverage on women in ISIS, presented in chapter IV enable certain actions, ways of thinking, and allow for certain implications (Dunn and Neumann 2016: 60; Smith 2003: 175). The discourses influence the general population, policy makers, and academics to see and understand the women in ISIS in particular ways. As part of the analysis I will therefore discuss the theoretical, social and political implications of the discourses, and how these implications may shape the discourses in return.

6.2 Theoretical implications

Considering my findings, it is interesting to assess the theory outlined in chapter II. Here I will see whether the theory corresponds with what the articles show, where they potentially differ, and what consequences that may have. The way the phenomenon of female foreign fighters is presented in the media can easily both guide and influence research, as well as vice versa.

6.2.1 The role of religion

In the theory of Bjørgo (2011) and Nesser (2015), religion and ideology are seen as motivations for the few, more skilled members of extremist militant groups. For the women referred to in the articles in my data material, religion and ideology are the dominant explanations, and there is a lot of focus on religion in other aspects of their framing. One may ask why the role of religion is understood so differently in the media that I have researched, and in the theory of Bjørgo (2011) and Nesser (2015). Religion is, on the other hand, pointed out as an important part of the women's decision to join ISIS in the research of Saltman and Smith (2015), and Loken and Zelenz (2016). Hence, the difference in opinion on the role of religion could be due to an actual difference between men and women and their decision to join ISIS. It could also be because general research on involvement in violent extremist groups, or Islamist terrorist cells in Europe, differs from research on how involvement in ISIS occurs. Either of these differences could cause different conclusions, and can thus explain the media's focus on religion. This also points to the consequences of the knowledge gap in Bjørgo and Nesser's research, where a gendered approach is absent.

Another reason could be the different research approaches or understandings of self-proclaimed motivation and actual reasons for joining, alongside a possible gap between the two. Women's tweets and similar social media data which makes up the basis of the research of Saltman and Smith (2015), as well as of Loken and Zelenz (2016), proves to them that religion is key to understanding why women are travelling and joining ISIS. On social media, people present themselves in the way they want to be perceived. As Dr. R. K. Green writes in the Huffington Post (2013⁸) 'In essence, our online selves represent our ideals and eliminate many of our other real components' (ibid 2013). Also, when it comes to people who commit crimes of different sorts, law Professor Stephen Holmes was quoted in an article in *The Atlantic* where he said that 'private motivations cannot always be gleaned from public justifications' (Cottee 2015⁹). Sometimes they do what they do for the reasons they claim, but other times they do not, perhaps because their real motivations are too dark or weird to be publicly announced. So, when they do announce it publicly they may justify and excuse their actions rather than explain them (ibid 2015). If the different studies have different methodological approaches, then different results and opinions on religion and ideology's role in the stories of men and women's decision to join violent militant groups such as ISIS can occur. This would, whatever reason for differing conclusions, be valuable to research further. It may also have implications for how politicians design preventative measures, as well as it may have certain social implications for how the public in general view Muslim women and men.

If Islam is part of the problem, then this could be expected to increase the general scepticism towards Islam and Muslims in non-Muslim countries. This has been the case in many European countries, as well as in the United States, over the last years. This is obviously also due to terrorist attacks in European countries and in the United States in previous years (Cassidy 2016; Gornall 2016; Lindvåg 2016).

Additionally, it has previously been noted that there is a general trend of stereotyping Muslim women as 'oppressed' and 'not being able to stand up for themselves' (van Es 2016: 75). In a

⁸ The Social Media Effect: Are You Really Who You Portray Online? 07.08.13 *Huffington Post*. https://www.huffingtonpost.com/r-kay-green/the-social-media-effect-a_b_3721029.html (accessed 01.03.17)

⁹ What Motivates Terrorists? *The Atlantic*. 09.06.15 from: [https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive\(2015/06/terrorism-isis-motive/395351/](https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive(2015/06/terrorism-isis-motive/395351/) (accessed 10.02.17)

study of stereotypes and self-representations of women with a Muslim background by Margaretha A. van Es, she elaborates on how the women she interviewed felt both stigmatised and excluded from their societies (in this study, Norwegian and Dutch societies), partly due to how Muslim women were framed in the media. This in turn caused emotions such as anger, frustration, and a sense of defeat (ibid 2016: 75). The stereotype of being oppressed is expressed through the brainwashed schoolgirl discourse and partly within the religious woman, in my analysis, and builds on the larger corpus of news articles about Muslim women in countries such as Norway and the Netherlands. It is reasonable to assume that similar trends can be found in other European countries, for example in the Swedish, Danish, and British societies.

In the same study, van Es (2016: 76) further asks, ‘what exactly is the problem with this representation of Muslim women?’ One problem, she claims, is that the women do not want their men to be perceived as oppressing and violent. Another is that religious women do not want Islam to be perceived as an oppressive religion. A third aspect she refers to is that the focus on Islam, foreign cultures and oppressed women, which is set up against the emancipated Norwegian or Dutch originated women, is contributing to a process of ‘othering’ (ibid 2016: 77-79). There is a strong focus on both brainwashed women and on religion in the articles in my data material. We can also recall the quote from chapter IV about the woman who ‘began to regard the surrounding farms and great fields in Northern Trøndelag through the narrow view a burqa or a niqab provides’ (Arntsen and Helgesen 2015). She is portrayed as a stranger and outsider within her surroundings. The articles about women who join ISIS and the way they are presented, the producing of the ‘others,’ may strengthen some of the feelings presented by van Es (2016: 75).

Another aspect, evident in the data material, is the focus on the men’s involvement in the women’s decision to join ISIS. They are set up as the person on the other side, grooming and brainwashing the women, luring them to join ISIS, and keeping them imprisoned once in ISIS. It is reasonable to argue that the stereotypes of oppressed Muslim women, of bad Muslim men, and a process of ‘othering’ religious women, can be observed in my data material. This exemplifies one of the reasons why further research on the role of religion in the process of joining ISIS is so important.

6.2.2 The role of sex and romance

Within both Nesser (2015) and Bjørgo's (2011) typologies, sex and romance are not mentioned as a way of understanding men's involvement in extremist militant groups. Within the theory on women, the findings are, as mentioned, contradictory. Loken and Zelenz (2016: 16) find that sex and romance do not play a part in why women join ISIS. Saltman and Smith (2015: 16), on the other hand, find the opposite. In the news articles in my data material, the mother and wife discourse dominates to a large degree. A wish to marry, to have children, idolisation of jihadi fighters, attraction to lots of men, and even becoming sex slaves are stories that occur in the articles. Do sex and romance matter? There is no doubt that it matters in the media framing. Therefore, it is clearly a need for further research. A focus on sex and romance as key to understanding the women who join ISIS would imply an emphasis on the personal over the political. Either this is the case, or we see a case of gender stereotyping such as that explained by Sjoberg and Gentry (2007), where there is an imbalance in that men are more often assigned political motivations. Hence there is a need to examine whether these are gendered assumptions, whether there is a difference between men and women, and whether it is useful in designing preventative measures.

6.2.3 Sjoberg and Gentry's continued relevance

Sjoberg and Gentry's (2007) discourses of mothers, monsters, and whores have recurred in the analysis. To sum them up, the discourse of 'the mother and wife' in my analysis holds parts of 'the mothers' of Sjoberg and Gentry's own discourses. These are understood as women who simply are 'fulfilling their biological destinies' (ibid 2007: 12). Within the same discourse in the analysis, under the aspect of the sexualisation of some of the women, one can detect Sjoberg and Gentry's whore discourse: women whose violence is inspired by 'sexual dependence,' and who are depicted as 'men's sexual pawns and possessions' (ibid 2007: 12, 13). The monsters are reflected in 'the warped women,' who are, according to Sjoberg and Gentry (2007: 12, 13) understood as 'pathologically damaged' and 'drawn to violence.' They are 'insane.' (ibid 2007: 13). Sjoberg and Gentry's book was launched 10 years ago and was as mentioned first and foremost about women who acted in war times in their home countries and similar. Even though they do not address female foreign fighters per se, their findings match what I discovered on the media framing of female foreign fighters to ISIS. It is reasonable to argue that the media still holds seemingly uncritical assumptions about women and violence, and women and ISIS specifically, if we are to follow Sjoberg and Gentry's argumentation.

6.3 Policy implications

6.3.1 Legal prosecution

Ester Strømme has conducted research on returned ISIS women, to some European countries and the United States, and their legal prosecution. She argues that the women in the court cases she has studied have received shorter sentences and sometimes even pardons due to an impression of women as mainly victims and not as perpetrators. According to Strømme, the women are understood as ‘unknowing, lured and brainwashed’ (Strømme 2017: 3). This in turn results in the women returning to their home countries and receiving shorter sentences than men who do the same. The Bethnal Green schoolgirls were all pardoned (ibid 2017: 3). Strømme claims it is the public’s understanding of the women that creates unfair legal precedent. She also says it is crucial to define them as participants, which will in turn give them a legal personality, and perhaps yield equal terms for sentencing (ibid 2017: 4). Hence, the media and the framing of women in ISIS may impact legal prosecution and should therefore be held under continued scrutiny to assure fair sentencing, free from the impact of gender stereotypes. The media framing of the women in ISIS, with some of the discourses outlined in chapter IV, such as the brainwashed schoolgirl and the mother and wife, places the women in a victim role and one could reasonably argue that this in turn can be at least linked to the differing prosecutions as observed by Strømme.

6.3.2 Security measures

In addition to the aspect of legal prosecution, Strømme also discusses the dangers of not viewing women as equally large threats to society. The women are repeatedly referred to as brides, and their involvement is, according to Strømme, ‘narrated down to a minimum’ (ibid 2017: 3) The ‘mother and wife’ discourse, which is among the most dominant discourses, affects how we view women. We see them as in need of and in want of finding a husband. We therefore perceive them as driven by personal motivations. In addition to this, and as previously mentioned, we see them as domesticated terrorists who do not pose as big of a threat to our national and international security as men. When they have stayed indoors, caring for children and cooking, the public has difficulties seeing how they have done something illegal, or how they could potentially pose a threat to national security if or when they return home. A possible failure to see the complexity of the security threats may lead to ‘potential gaps in security structures’ (ibid 2017: 3). The media influences the public’s and politicians’ understanding of

phenomena, such as that of female foreign fighters. The discourses I have found may contribute to this failure, and the gap in security structures may be a result.

One article in my data material is particularly interesting, pointing to the consequences of viewing women and men differently. It also lines up with Strømme's findings. The headline of the article is, 'Three "Jihadi brides" from London who travelled to Syria will not face terrorism charges if they return.' Assistant commissioner to Scotland Yard's counter-terrorism command says there is a "difference between the person running around northern Iraq with a Kalashnikov" and three schoolgirls who had been duped into travelling to Syria' (Barrett and Evans 2015). The discourse of men as life takers, and women as life givers is evident in this article (Elshtain 1995: 165). In addition to newspapers that through specific wording remove agency from women's decision to join ISIS, this article and the comment from a high-positioned police officer sums up and concludes how we should view these women: as innocent people who have been duped into travelling, and when or if they return to Britain, they will not face terrorism charges. The latter is the practical consequence from this discourse, but it also helps reinforce the discourse of the passive jihadi brides who have been deceived into travelling, and who should therefore not be prosecuted.

The women are seen as domesticated terrorists, and are not seen as threats. This is clearly exemplified in the quote above. In addition to this, when women and men are seen as having different motivations, with men being politically motivated and women personally motivated, the men are again perceived to be a bigger threat than the women. In addition to shaping the public's view and opinion on the women who join ISIS, this may have consequences as demonstrated in Strømme's article. It could affect judicial prosecution, the way politicians design preventative measures and perceive terrorist threats, and so on and so forth.

The findings in my analysis then suggest there needs to be a critical examination of what policy responses are created and on what basis. This is crucial for detecting any gendered understandings, which may lead to inaccurate policy and security measures.

6.3.3 Preventative measures

The dominant presentation of women as religiously motivated and the discourse it belongs within can lead to certain practical implications. For instance, it may affect how politicians

design preventative measures for radicalisation and violent extremism. The new approach with inclusion of imams as part of preventative work is one example (RAN 2017: 117). This demonstrates that researchers and politicians find it necessary to counter ISIS' religious message, and further helps to reinforce the presentation of women who are religiously motivated. Similarly, the former Norwegian ambassador to Saudi-Arabia has stated that some mosques should be closed due to the fear they may be arenas for radicalisation (Underhuset, TV2, 28.04.2017). Again, this is reinforcing an understanding of religion's role in the radicalisation process and an eventual decision to join ISIS.

Religion is largely dominant in the articles, but neither Bjørge nor Nesser believes it matters significantly for most people who join such groups, at least not initially (Bjørge 2011: 280-83; Nesser 2015: 1-16). Therefore, a thorough examination is necessary for understanding whether religion is as important as the articles seem to demonstrate, and how it is useful in discussions on preventative measures for radicalisation.

Another aspect, concerning the media's understanding of women as brainwashed victims, should also impact what measures are designed towards female radicalisation. If many of the girls and women are educated with good performances in school, then perhaps enhanced focus on critical thinking as part of the curricula is important. Many more questions on preventative measures arise; is a female-oriented approach included in preventative measures, or are they first and foremost designed with male radicalisation in mind? Should the two be thought of as separate phenomena, or be dealt with collectively? These are some of the questions that should be raised on the issue of media framing and preventative measures designed by politicians and researchers. Similarly, if women are not understood to be political, then surely there would be no need to counter the political messages, or to discuss Western intervention in the Middle East, the War on Terror, and so on and so forth. Hence, it is crucial to see if the understanding of women as apolitical in their decision to join ISIS is a gender stereotypical understanding reigning in the media, such as my findings would substantiate, or if there is really no need to assess the political aspect.

Chapter VII: Conclusion

7.1 How are ISIS women portrayed in Scandinavian and British media?

My intention with this thesis was to shed light on the media framing of women travelling from Northern and Western European countries to join ISIS in Syria and Iraq. I did so through looking at newspaper articles from four different newspapers from four countries; Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Britain, from the years 2013 to 2016. Through critical discourse analysis, alongside application of a feminist critical lens and other relevant literature on the topic I was to examine what discourses I could interpret from the articles on the women who join ISIS. I was to see what discourses I believe exist, how they dominate and what implications they may have.

I found that mainly five discourses dominate in the media coverage. The five discourses were that of 'the mother and wife', 'the religious woman', 'the brainwashed schoolgirl', the warped woman' and 'the political woman'. 'The mother and wife' had a dominant focus on getting married and having babies as a key motivation for the women to join ISIS, as well as the repeated mentioning of a man having something to do with the women's decision to join ISIS. I noticed a recurring sexualisation of the women as well as a combination of assigning them agency through saying the wish to join ISIS to marry a fighter was something they actively did, as well as a focus on men's involvement and often in a way that removed agency from their decision to join. Then words such as lured and brainwashed could come into the mix of the story of women joining ISIS. 'The religious woman' contained images of very religious women joining because of religious convictions. Religion was also portrayed as an important part of their life before joining and the radicalisation process. This discourse also proved two-fold on the matter of agency. Some were portrayed as joining actively due to their religious convictions, whereas others were portrayed as tricked by a religious message. 'The brainwashed schoolgirl' was a discourse with removal of agency throughout the discourse. A lot of emphasis was put on the women's young age, their vulnerable age, easily influenced and unknowing personal characteristics. They were presented as not knowing what they had gotten themselves into, and this in spite of the recurring focus on their A-level status in the schools they went to before joining. 'The warped woman' is a discourse similar to that of the 'Black Fatimas' of the Chechen war. They are both presented as being more brutal and active than other women, as well as being presented as mad and evil, older or more experienced. Through calling them

warped and by focusing on their insane brutality they are somehow deprived of their agency for their actions. The last discourse is ‘the political woman’. Though not as dominating as the others, it exists and is part of a discursive destabilisation. This discourse is competing with the other discourses, especially that of ‘the brainwashed schoolgirl’ and ‘the wife and mother’. It is reasonable to assume that this discourse could become more dominant as this competitor of truth telling is more often recurring both in news articles and in research such as my own.

7.2 The importance of research on media framing of ISIS women

First and foremost, the discursive field on women in ISIS is not a one-track road. It is a field full of different stories, images and understanding. The five discourses I outlined in chapter IV are not set in stone, they are continuously negotiated and amended, and they are not left without competition. They do not always go together, and many stands in stark contrast to one another. We are, in society, continuously negotiating how we are to understand the women who join ISIS. We do so when we read the newspapers, discuss it at lunch break at work, and when the news reporter on television reports on the ongoing battle in Mosul, Iraq. The newspapers certainly vary on how they present the women and their decision to join. The public’s opinion varies and politicians are not agreeing either.

Most likely are there several unique stories, with different reasons and motivations, for the women who have joined ISIS. Some of the women did perhaps decide to join ISIS with heavy pressure and indoctrination from other people. Some women did perhaps decide for themselves without much involvement. They probably travelled with different motivations in mind. The stories in the newspapers will inherently vary. But, if the stories we read in the newspapers are coloured by gendered assumptions, such as that women are mainly personally motivated as explained by Sjoberg and Gentry (2007), or that they are more easily influenced than men in matter of violence and war, then the stories may easily provide incorrect images of these women. If they are incorrectly presented than we may not capture the phenomenon fully. We may not be able to design useful measures to tackle female radicalisation. We may let them off unpunished, and they may commit an act of terrorism at a later point in time. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the media presentations of these women, to see what they consist of, and what their impact may be.

7.3 Future research

I therefore regard it is crucial to further study media presentations of women in ISIS and women in war generally. In so doing, I believe that more systematic large-N studies will provide useful in detecting clearer patterns and trends. Larger-N would mean you could compare different countries' framing of the women, different newspapers', both newspaper type and differences between tabloid and elite. You could also draw more clear conclusions on how the framing potentially has changed over time, while at the same time placing the findings within the political context of the time period in question. More detailed research into whether the type of article, angle and so on matters for how they are framed, and who the articles call on to give expert comments, comments from relatives and so on, and what that potentially does for the framing, would certainly be interesting to conduct. Another interesting research project in the future would be to more systematically compare how men and women are framed. It would be interesting to see if the brainwashing-explanation is an equally frequent explanation for the men's decision to join, as for the women. I hope that my research can provide useful insights for those who may in the future study the phenomenon of female foreign fighters, and media framing.

7.4 Concluding remarks

It is certain that western media, here presented by Scandinavian and British media, is fascinated by women travelling from Northern and Western European countries to ISIS. The public cannot understand why they would leave peaceful societies to join what the media name a murderous terrorist organisation and live in the middle of a civil war. The public is shocked by the women's decision to join, similar to how Elshain (1995) say we are shocked by the ferocious few, the female terrorists and supporters who commit 'unusually dirty deeds' (ibid 179). Unusual because of their gender and hence the deviation from the female norm.

It seems clear that there is a need for an assessment of what gendered assumptions exist. It also seems important with a gendered approach, but without stereotypical assumptions. This means it is important to acknowledge that there may be differences between men and women, but it also means that these potential differences should not be guided by traditional gendered thinking, but rather be guided by nuanced research.

Sjoberg and Gentry concludes their book by saying that “a woman’s involvement in political or criminal violence in not necessarily men’s fault, nor does it make her less of a human being or less of a woman” (Sjoberg and Gentry 2007: 19). However, blaming men as within ‘the mother and wife’ and ‘the brainwashed schoolgirl’ discourses, or narrating them down to insane women as in ‘the warped woman’, is implicitly narrating the women down to less of a human being and less of a woman.

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Appendix - full list of news articles:

Source	Author(s)	Title of piece	Date	Country	Link
Aftenposten	Olga Stokke	Unge Europeiske kvinner blir jihadistenes koner.	18.08.2014	Norway	http://www.aftenposten.no/verden/Ur-europeiske-kvinner-blir-jihadistenes-l-81881b.html
Aftenposten	Olga Stokke	Taust fra Norsksomaliske søstre i Syria. Farenleter fortsatt.	16.11.2013	Norway	http://www.aftenposten.no/verden/Taust-fra-norsksomaliske-sostre-i-Syria-Faren-leter-fortsatt-103655b.html
Aftenposten	Kevin Sullivan	Kvinner under Is' terrorregime – "til martyrdøden skiller oss ad".	03.11.2015	Norway	http://www.aftenposten.no/verden/Kvinner-under-IS-terrorregime-Til-martyrdommen-skiller-oss-ad-60557b.html?spid_rel=2
Aftenposten	Petter Winther	Kvinner romantiserer det å bli gift med en jihadist	10.02.2015	Norway	http://www.aftenposten.no/norge/--Kvinner-romantiserer-det-a-bli-gift-med-en-jihadist-63949b.html
Aftenposten	Anne Birgitta Nilsen	Kronikk: Facebook som verktøy for å forstå kvinners radikaliserings	08.05.2015	Norway	http://www.aftenposten.no/meninge/r/kronikk/Kronikk-Facebook-som-verktoy-for-a-forsta-kvinnens-radikaliserings-40907b.html
Aftonbladet	Niklas Eriksson	Hon anklagas ha locket flickorna til Syrien	23.02.2015	Sweden	http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article20359041.ab
Aftonbladet	Ida Gustafsson	Kvinnorna som strider för IS	10.09.2014	Sweden	http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article19507552.ab
Aftonbladet	Wolfgang Hansson	Borde vi se kvinnorna som presumtiva terrorister?	31.08.2015	Sweden	http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/kolumnister/wolfganghansson/article21338830.ab
Aftonbladet	TT	Svenska kvinnor til terrorgrupper	07.07.2015	Sweden	http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/article21130089.ab
Aftonbladet	Joakim Medin	De väljer jihad framför jämställdhet	02.05.2016	Sweden	http://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/article22728893.ab
Aftonbladet	TT	Svenska levde med IS-ledare	15.04.2016	Sweden	http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/849RE/regeringen-vagnar-berattom-saudi-omrostningen
BT	Niels Pedersen	Chokerende afsløring: Danske kvinder drager i krig for IS – og tager deres små børn med	21.01.2016	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/danmark/chokerende-afsloring-danske-kvinder-drager-i-krig-for-is-og-tager-deres-smaa-boer
BT	Siska Simone Bengtsson	En forælders værste mareridt: derfor	29.11.2015	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/udland/en-foraelders-vaerste-mareridt-derfor-drager-unge-kvinder-i-krig-for-is

BT	Camilla Schouw	dragger unge kvinder i krig for IS Islamisk stat lokker kommende brude med lykkelig liv: men der er nul procent chance for at de slipper væk I live	15.08.2016	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/udland/islamisk-stat-lokker-kommende-brude-med-lykkelig-liv-men-der-er-nul-procent-chance
BT	Bo Paulsen	Teenagepige blev hellig kriger for islamisk stat_ fortræd og blev tævet i hjel	25.11.2015	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/udland/teenagepige-blev-hellig-kriger-for-islamisk-stat-fortroed-og-blev-taevet-ihjel
BT	Simon Boas	Flere kvinder fra Danmark frygtes at have tilsluttet sig islamisk stat	03.07.2016	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/danmark/flere-kvinder-fra-danmark-frygtes-at-have-tilsluttet-sig-islamisk-stat
BT	None mentioned	Romantisk forestilling om kalifate tog masser af mænd: Islamisk stat har fået tag i kvinderne	12.12.2015	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/udland/romantisk-forestilling-om-kalifatet-og-masser-af-maend-islamisk-stat-har-faaet-tag-
BT	Bo Paulsen	Nødreb fra Brændby Strand: Mine døtre er forsvundet – jeg frygter de vil kæmpe for Islamisk stat	02.07.2016	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/krimi/noedraab-fra-broendby-strand-mine-doetre-er-forsvundet-jeg-frygter-de-vil-kaempe-for
BT	Poul Høi	Pigerne tilbyder jihadisterne som popstjerner	14.01.2016	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/krimi/pigerne-tilbeder-jihadisterne-som-popstjerner
BT	None mentioned	Befriet svensk pige: Jeg vidste intet om Islamisk stat	24.02.2016	Denmark	http://www.bt.dk/udland/befriet-svensk-pige-jeg-vidste-intet-om-islamisk-stat
Dagbladet	Gunnar Hultgreen, Torgeir Krokfjord	IS-kvinnene – de lager mat og støtter mennene	18.12.2014	Norway	http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/is-kvinnene---de-lager-mat-og-stotter-mennene/60915443
Dagbladet	Marius Husebø-Evensen	Tenåringsjenter pågrepet: ville ofre seg som IS-slaver	11.01.2015	Norway	http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/tenaringsjenter-pagrepet---ville-ofre-seg-som-is-slaver/60792134
Dagbladet	Gunnar Hultgreen	Slik blir de ekstreme islamister	01.02.2015	Norway	http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/slik-blir-de-ekstreme-islamister/60813993
Dagbladet	Gunnar Hultgreen, Torgeir Krokfjord	Oslo-kvinne jages for terrorplan, nå er venninnene hennes i Syria	20.02.2015	Norway	http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/oslo-kvinne-jages-for-terrorplan-na-er-venninnene-hennes-i-syria/60838851
Dagbladet	Therese doksheim	“IS-kvinnene er som cheerleadere”	30.01.2015	Norway	http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/is-kvinnene-er-som-cheerleadere/60811768

Dagbladet	Khan Farooq	Første livstegn fra ungdomsjentene som reiste fra London for å bli hellige krigere i Syria	27.04.2015	Norway	http://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/foerste-livstegn-fra-ungdomsjentene-som-reiste-fra-london-for-a-bli-hellige-krigere-i-syria/60777424
Dagens nyheter	Clas Svahn	Brittiska flickorna framme hos IS	09.03.2015	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/brittiska-flickorna-framme-hos-is/
Dagens nyheter	Clas Svahn	Kalla fakta: Från vanlig tonåring till IS-brud	10.11.2015	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/kalla-fakta-fran-vanlig-tonaring-till-is-brud/
Dagens nyheter	Thomas Hall	Därför lockas kvinnor till IS	26.02.2015	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/darfor-lockas-kvinnor-till-is/
Dagens nyheter	Thomas Hall	Flickornas IS-resa rör upp starka känslor	26.02.2015	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/flickornas-is-resa-ror-upp-starka-kanslor/
Dagens nyheter	Pia Gripenberg	15-årig flicka rymde till IS – stoppades på flygplatsen	18.12.2014	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/15-arig-flicka-rymde-till-is-stoppades-pa-flygplatsen/
Dagens nyheter	Pia Gripenberg	Flickor åkte på terrorresa på skollovet	23.02.2015	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/nyheter/varlden/flickor-akte-pa-terrorresa-pa-skollovet/
Dagens nyheter	Ulrika By	Unga kvinnor reser från Stockholm till kriget i Syrien	10.06.2014	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/sthlm/unga-kvinnor-reser-fran-stockholm-till-kriget-i-syrien/
Dagens nyheter	Ulrika By	Svenskas rekryteras för att strida för IS	28.03.2015	Sweden	http://www.dn.se/sthlm/svenskar-rekryteras-for-att-strida-for-is/
Dagsavisen	Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth	Kvinner som kriger	16.03.2015	Norway	http://www.dagsavisen.no/nyemeninger/kvinner-som-kriger-1.449982
Dagsavisen	Heidi Taksdal Skjeseth	De er ikke ideologisk motivert	10.10.2014	Norway	http://www.dagsavisen.no/verden/de-er-ikke-ideologisk-motivert-1.290302
Dagsavisen	Fore Kvam	Savnede søstre sier de er villige til å dø i Syria	23.10.2013	Norway	http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/savnede-sostre-sier-de-er-villige-til-a-do-i-syria-1.295745
Dagsavisen	None mentioned	Drar for å kjempe mot Assad	24.10.2013	Norway	http://www.dagsavisen.no/verden/drar-for-a-kjempe-mot-assad-1.295909
Dagsavisen	Marianne Skaiaa	Krigerske kvinner	16.04.2015	Norway	http://www.dagsavisen.no/nyemeninger/krigerske-kvinner-1.458698
Dagsavisen	Nina Johnsrud	Fanget som IS-kriger i Syria	25.09.2014	Norway	http://www.dagsavisen.no/innenriks/fanget-som-is-kriger-i-syria-1.289160

Dailey Mirror	Carl Green Wood	Britains jihadi brides: experts reveals how ISIS groom British teenagers into joining terrorist group	08.04.2015	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/tv/tv-news/britains-jihadi-brides-expert-reveals-5482354
Dailey Mirror	Yakub Qureshi	Jihadi bride who fled UK to join ISIS 'quizzed over terrorist image on computer months earlier'	10.03.2015	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/jihadi-bride-who-fled-uk-5305675
Dailey Mirror	Joshua Nevett	ISIS target dating website to lure jihadi brides in lates sickening recruitment drive	17.05.2016	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/isis-target-dating-websites-lure-7993149
Dailey Mirror	Rachel Bishop	Bethnal Green jihadi bride who left UK to join ISIS killed in airstrike before she could flee terrorists	11.08.2016	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/bethnal-green-jihadi-bride-who-8611519
Dailey Mirror	Lauren Crooks	Runaway British jihadi bride writes shocking suitcase checklist for schoolgirls wanting to join ISIS	02.08.2015	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/runaway-british-jihadi-bride-writes-6179441
Dailey Mirror	Sam Webb	See the women who have fled the UK to join ISIS' brutal regime in Syria	17.02.2016	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/see-women-who-fled-uk-7386048
Dailey Mirror	Sam Webb	A living hell: the grim fate that awaits British teenage girls believed to be joining ISIS	21.02.2015	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/a-living-hell-grim-fate-5203372
Dailey Mirror	Jack Blanchard	British teenagers are being radicalised in their bedrooms by terrorists as government fails to act	26.03.2015	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/british-teenagers-being-radicalised-bedrooms-5401426
Dailey Mirror	Chris Hughes	British women among HUNDREDS of UK jihadists fighting brutal holy war in Syria	24.04.2014	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/syria-conflict-british-women-among-3453236
Dailey Mirror	Russel Myers	British girls are flocking to join ISIS in Syria as numbers soured last year	21.01.2016	England	http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/british-girls-flocking-join-isis-7167238
Express en	Tommy Schönstedt	IS-krigare rekryterar kvinnor från Sverige	01.10.2014	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/is-krigare-rekryterar-kvinnor-fran-sverige/
Express en	Mats Larsson	Sanningen om terrormamman Sally Jones "hjalper IS att värva flickor"	14.09.2016	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/geo/mats-larsson/sanningen-om-terrormamman-sally-jones-hjalper-is-att-varva-flickor/

Expressen	Filip Johansson	Svensk flicka gripen – skulle ansluta sig till IS	06.12.2015	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/svensk-flicka-gripen--skulle-ansluta-till-is/
Expressen	Elias Andersson	Kvinnorna som slåss för islamska staten	02.12.2014	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/kvinnorna-som-slass-for-islamiska-staten/
Expressen	Emilie henricson	Flickor befaras på väg att ansluta sig till IS	21.02.2015	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/flickor-befaras-pa-vag-att-ansluta-sig-till-is/
Expressen	Anna Skarin	Svenska flickor åker för att ansluta till IS	04.04.2015	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/nyheter/svenska-flickor-aker-for-att-ansluta-till-is/
Expressen	Carl Fridh Kleberg	Vad en brittisk skolflickas tragiske död visar om IS	12.08.2016	Sweden	http://www.expressen.se/geo/vad-en-brittisk-skolflickas-tragiska-dod-visar-om-is/
Informationen	None mentioned	Desperat far: mine døtre har sluttet sig til IS	02.07.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/telegram/2016/07/desperat-far-doetre-sluttet-is
Informationen	None mentioned	Ung kvinde er anholdt i Holland efter flugt fra Syrien	02.08.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/telegram/2016/08/ung-kvinde-anholdt-holland-flugt-syrien
Informationen	N.M	Befriet svensk pige: Jeg vidste intet om Islamsk stat	24.02.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/telegram/2016/02/befriet-svensk-pige-vidste-intet-islamisk-stat
Informationen	N.M	Flere franske kvinder end mænd tiltrækkes af jihad	14.04.2015	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/telegram/2015/04/flere-franske-kvinder-maend-tiltraekkes-jihad
Informationen	Charlotte Aagaard	Hver tiende Syrienkriger er en kvinde	13.01.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/udland/2016/01/hver-tiende-syrien-kriger-kvinde
Informationen	Charlotte Aagaard	Islamistpiger får tilbudt nyt liv	15.01.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/indland/2016/01/islamistpiger-faar-tilbudt-nyt-liv
Informationen	Andreas Harbsmeier	Hun er ikke radikaliseret eller forrykt, hun er bare sårbar	18.10.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/kultur/anmeldelse/2016/10/radikaliseret-forrykt-bare-saarbar
Informationen	Mustafa Kemal Topal	Far hylder feminister – hans døtre bakker op om Islamsk stat	13.07.2016	Denmark	https://www.information.dk/debat/2016/07/far-hylder-feminister-doetre-bakker-islamisk-stat
Jyllands-Posten	Jacob Haislund, Jonas Hvid	Martyrenes enke	12.12.2015	Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/protected/premium/indblik/Indland/ECE8296728/Martyrens-enke/

Jyllands-Posten	None mentioned	Toarig søn til mistenkt jihadist meldes død i Syrien	23.02.2015	Denamrk	http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/mideast/ECE7475428/Toarig-søn-til-mistænkt-jihadist-meldes-død-i-Syrien/
Jyllands-Posten	None mentioned	Flere fransk pige end drenge slutter sig til Is	11.03.2016	Denmark	http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/ECE8504481/flere-franske-piger-end-drenge-slutter-sig-til-is/
Jyllands-Posten	Berit Ertman	Tre britiske teenagepiger frygtes "flyftet" til Syrien	22.02.2016	Denmark	http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/europa/ECE7473203/Tre-britiske-teenagepiger-frygtes-flygtet-til-Syrien/
Jyllands-Posten	Jesper Haue Hansen	Vestlig kvinde tog fireårig søn med til IS o gen "tur I helvede" – Jeg begikk en monumental fejl"	10.01.2016	Denmark	http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/europa/ECE8356604/vestlig-kvinde-tog-fireaarig-soen-med-til-is-og-en-tur-i-helvede-jeg-begik-en-monumental-fejl/
Jyllands-Posten	Jesper Haue Hansen	Anklage; Mor har kidnappet sine to børn og rejst til Islamisk stat	17.03.2015	Denmark	http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/ECE7551717/Anklage-Mor-har-kidnappet-sine-to-børn-og-rejst-til-Islamisk-Stat/
Jyllands-Posten	Sara Kott	Kvindelig Is-afhopper: Jeg er bange hver dag, hvert minutt, og for alle jeg møder	28.05.2015	Denmark	http://jyllands-posten.dk/international/mideast/ECE7740569/Kvindelig-IS-afhopper-Jeg-er-bange-hver-dag-hvert-minut-og-for-alle-jeg-møder/
Jyllands-Posten	Jesper Kongstad, Heidi Plougsgaard	Europol: flere kvinder tilslutter sig Islamisk stat	31.07.2016	Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/protected/premium/international/ECE8882807/europol-flere-kvinder-tilslutter-sig-islamisk-stat/
Jyllands-Posten	Søren Munch	Islamisk stats Østerigske reklamesøjle meldes dræbt	02.11.2015	Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/premium/briefing/ECE8242337/Islamisk-Stats-østrigske-reklamesøjle-meldes-dræbt/
Jyllands-Posten	Mette Mayli Albæk	Profilen af en terrorist	17.01.2015	Denmark	https://jyllands-posten.dk/protected/premium/international/ECE7367351/Profilen-af-en-terrorist/
Politiken	Jakob Stig Jørgensen	Islamisk stat lokker flere og flere kvinder med romantiske løfter	23.04.2015	Denmark	http://politiken.dk/udland/fokus_int/fokus_IS/art5574101/Islamisk-Stat-lokker-flere-og-flere-kvinder-med-romantiske-løfter
Politiken	Jakob Sheikh	Presset fra venindeslæng får flere kvinder til at rejse til Islamisk stat	05.07.2016	Denmark	http://politiken.dk/debat/klummer/art5628644/Presset-fra-venindeslæng-får-flere-kvinder-til-at-rejse-til-Islamisk-Stat
Politiken	Jakob Sheikh	Mor frygter, at 18-årig datter er rejst til Islamisk stat	06.07.2016	Denmark	http://politiken.dk/indland/art5628612/Mor-frygter-at-18-årig-datter-er-rejst-til-Islamisk-Stat

Politiken	Morten Skjoldager	Tvillingsøstre voksede opp i Aarhus – nu er de flyttet til Islamisk stat	01.11.2014	Denmark	http://politiken.dk/udland/fokus_int/fokus_IS/art5550496/Tvillingsøstre-voksede-op-i-Aarhus-ndash-nu-er-de-flyttet-til-Islamisk-Stat?track=lokalavisen
Politiken	Cecilie Lund Kristiansen	Familie frygter at britiske skolepiger har sluttet sig til IS	23.01.2015	Denmark	http://politiken.dk/udland/art5566420/Familier-frygter-at-britiske-skolepiger-har-sluttet-sig-til-Islamisk-Stat
Svenska Dagbladet	Jenny Nordberg	Kvinnor är effektiva rekryterare åt Islamska staten	21.08.2015	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/kvinnor-ar-effektiva-rekryterare-at-islamiska-staten
Svenska Dagbladet	Martin Mederyd Hårdh	“Kvinnornas öde star och faller med Is framgångar”	17.07.2015	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/kvinnornas-ode-star-och-faller-med-is
Svenska Dagbladet	TT	Kvinnor från Sverige till Is	02.10.2014	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/kvinnor-fran-sverige-till-is
Svenska Dagbladet	TT	Få kvinnor anslutar sig till Is	17.02.2016	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/fa-kvinnor-ansluter-sig-till-is
Svenska Dagbladet	TT	Flere kvinnor och barn lockas til Raqqa	04.02.2016	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/fler-kvinnor-och-barn-till-raqqa
Svenska Dagbladet	TT	Svenske Sara levde med IS-ledare i Syrien	15.04.2016	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/svenska-sara-levde-med-is-ledare
Svenska Dagbladet	TT	Kvinnliga jihadister söker gemenskap	28.05.2015	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/kvinnliga-jihadister-soker-gemenskap
Svenska Dagbladet	TT	Brittiska Skolflickor gifta med IS-män	04.07.2015	Denmark	https://www.svd.se/brittiska-skolflickor-gifta-med-is-man
The Guardian	Anne Aly	Jihadi brides aren't oppressed. They join ISIS for the same reasons men do	03.03.2015	England	https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/04/jihadi-brides-arent-oppressed-they-join-isis-for-the-same-reasons-men-do
The Guardian	Barbara Ellen	Pointless death of this brainwashed teenage bride	14.08.2016	England	https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/aug/13/kadiza-sultana-isis-death
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The Guardian	Joanna Witt	Guardian Live: Why do young women want to join Islamic state	27.07.2015	England	https://www.theguardian.com/membership/2015/jul/27/guardian-live-why-do-young-women-want-to-join-islamic-state
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The Guardian	Rowena Mason	Four Britons fighting with Islamic state sanctioned by UN	28.09.2015	England	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/28/four-britons-fighting-isis-put-on-un-sanctions-list
The Guardian	Vikram Dodd	Four London Schoolgirls who left UK for Syria married men approved by Isis	19.01.2016	England	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/19/four-london-schoolgirls-who-left-uk-for-syria-married-men-approved-by-isis
The Sun	Ellie Ross	Two of the three London teenage jihadi brides already widows after new husband died fighting for ISIS	21.02.2016	England	https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/194189/two-of-three-london-teenage-jihadi-brides-already-widows-after-new-husbands-died-fighting-for-isis/
The Sun	Guy Birchall	TERROR TRIO How three warped British	16.09.2016	England	https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/1794928/how-three-warped-british-

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The Sun	Jake Ryan	I was recruited as jihadi bride	10.10.2014	England		https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/399951/i-was-recruited-as-jihadi-bride/
The Sun	Lauren Veevers, Guy Patrick, Dean Wilkins	Off to fight in Syria... Brit terror twins, 16, with 28 GCSEs	09.07.2014	England		https://www.thesun.co.uk/archives/news/964870/off-to-fight-in-syria-brit-terror-twins-16-with-28-gcses/
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The Telegraph	David Baret, Martin Evans	Three 'jihadi brides' from London who travelled to Syria will not face terrorism charges if they return	10.03.2015	England		http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/11461693/Sisters-of-the-missing-jihadi-brides-to-face-radicalisation-tests.html
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The Telegraph	Joe Shute	How Isil are preying on female converts in Britain to make them into jihadi brides	09.01.2016	England		http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/islamic-state/12089882/How-Isil-are-preying-on-female-converts-in-Britain-to-make-them-into-jihadi-brides.html

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VG	Cathrine Ekehaug	Slik lokkes jihadist-kvinnene til Syria	07.09.2014	Norway	http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/terrorisme/slik-lokkes-jihadist-kvinnene-til-syria/a/23290509/
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VG	Erlend Ofte Arntsen	Farent il Syria-søstrene fra Bærum: Åtte tegn på mine døtres radikaliserings	17.12.2015	Norway	http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/krim/faren-til-syria-soestrene-fra-baerum-aatte-tegn-paa-mine-doetres-radikaliserings/a/23581104/
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VG	None mentioned	Savnede søstre sier de er villig til å dø i Syria	23.10.2013	Norway	http://www.vg.no/nyheter/utenriks/syria/savnede-soestre-sier-de-er-villige-til-aa-doe-i-syria/a/10127401/
VG	Ola Mjaastad, Tanja Wibe-Lund, Rolf J. widerøe	Venner om terrormistenkt: ble plutselig veldig religiøs	20.02.2015	Norway	http://www.vg.no/nyheter/innenriks/terrorisme/venner-om-terrormistenkt-ble-plutselig-veldig-religioes/a/23400217/

