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Dissertation

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by

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I responsibly declare that the submitted dissertation for the award of the diploma of the Interdepartmental Postgraduate Programme *MSc Media and Refugee/Migration Flows* Specialization *News Media of Refugee Flows* of the Department of Communication and Media Studies/ National and Kapodistrian University of Athens and the Department of Sociology/ University of the Aegean has been written by me personally and no one else has written the whole or part of it. In addition, I responsibly declare that this dissertation has not been submitted or approved for the award of any other postgraduate or undergraduate degree, in Greece or abroad. This dissertation represents my personal views on the subject. The sources I have used are mentioned in their entirety, giving full references to the authors, including internet sources.

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I aim to study the complex figure of the migrant child through the methodology of literature review of some relevant studies about migrants and migration flows and about the social construction of childhood, and how this figure is represented and framed in the public discourse. Due to the analysis of the two main aspects of the subject studied, the identity of a child and the identity of a migrant, and in the attempt to explore in depth what are the consequences in media representation when these two sides come to converge, we are going to examine in the first place how the figure of migrants are perceived and framed in different media around the world, based on their country of origin and on their political influences and beliefs, and what are the most common narratives used in order to describe them and to shape their image for the public. I will also go through the discovery of the main dominant frameworks of the social construction of childhood, its definition and nature and the detachment from the figure of the mother, as to have a clearer understanding of the social and cognitive development of the figure of the child and how a process of migration can have influences on it, shaping the way the adult in the making will build and maintain the relationships with others and with the self. In the moment the two sides of the subject analyzed merge, two main narratives will come to light, the anti-youth discourse and the anti-refugee discourse, both characterized by a negative approach of the matter, and we will see how the anti-refugee discourse will assume a predominant position when compared to the anti-youth discourse, underlining the criminal aspect of the child that, despite being a minor, still seems to be endowed with agency and thus having responsibility – and guilty - for their own decision to leave their country and traveling undocumented – hence illegally – until the moment to be able to settle down in the country of arrival. We will also see how the only moment in which migrant children seems to be again in possession of their usual elements of childhood, innocence and purity, is in front of some extreme life conditions such as child abuse and trafficking, early age marriages, pain and suffering or even death, like in the case of the little Alan Kurdi found dead on the shores of Turkey in 2015.

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INTRODUCTION

Despite migration flows is a phenomenon as old as the human being, it have been the biggest protagonist of the last decade in every media, especially after the so-called crisis of 2015 in Europe and in general in the Mediterranean area (Bigo, Diez, Fanoulis, Rosamond & Stivachtis, 2020). Migrants have been present in the public discourse of many countries, in every continent, encouraging dialogues and causing conflicts, separating political factions and social groups and environments. What is been less observed though is the figure of the migrant children: they are part of the same category, but they are also in a phase of their life, the childhood, in which the social and psychological development is still ongoing and their experience will shape the adults they will become. The research question I wish to find an answer through this dissertation is indeed how migrant children are represented in the public discourse, since their presence is less visible than migrant adults, and how the characteristic of being a child influences the way they are represented compared to other migrants – and compared to other children. As the figure of child has often being represented with an aura of purity and innocence (Zelitzer, 1985), typically characterizing this age, my hypothesis would be that it will impact the way this micro-category of migrants is framed in media, showing more the victimization of this figure through poor living conditions and extreme episodes – like child abuse or trafficking, early age marriages, abandonment, even death - than a negative or threatening side, as it often happens for adult migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Through the literature review proposed in this thesis I wish to find the space to explore more this subject which has not been explored intensively yet, since migrant children are actually a sub-group of two other main groups, the migrant one and the children one, both of them being actually studied and analyzed profoundly in the past years, but not often together as a single, whole topic. Starting from the first chapter, we will move our first steps analyzing the construction of the figure of m as “other”, how this differentiation is represented and empathized in the public discourse and how the representation can change based on the country of the media and the political orientations behind it, if they have visibility and which kind of visibility they are given, with positive or negative attitudes, if they have just being spoken about or if they actually have the chance to speak for themselves. I’ve decided to analyze European media, since it has always been a “hot spot” in the subject of migration flows during history, Russian media because of the different perception they have of migrants based on their country of origin, and a comparative study between Australian and British media, due to the geographical factor of being islands and how this influence the process of migration and its representation. All these elements come to influence profoundly the public opinion on the topic of migrants, and tend to create a

dichotomy on the way they are perceived due to the frames and narrative most commonly used to represent them. In the second chapter, we are going to explore more in depth the social construction of childhood, what's the historical approach and the dominant ideas about it, the nature and definition of childhood and the detachment from the figure of the mother, in order to understand more the figure of the child sociologically speaking, their development in this phase of life and how this will shape the future adult and their relations with others and with the self. At the end, in the third chapter, we are going to go in depth on the core of our topic, migrant children, and how they are represented in the public discourse, what are the main underlined characteristics of them and how they are perceived from the society due to these frames. We are going to analyze the situation in Turkey - due to the incredible amount of migrants the country is receiving – and Canada, because the number of separated children has grown considerably in the last years. We will analyze when they are represented negatively and when positively, and what are the consequences of these different standards of narratives.

CH 1: THE CONSTRUCTION OF REFUGEE AS OTHER IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

Migration is a phenomenon that has been present in human beings' history since the beginning of time. Through the years, migration flows have been studied and analyzed, facilitated and fought, but it has been always impossible to ignore (Vanderkamp, 1971). The impact that migrations had and still have on nowadays societies is strong and undeniable. The reasons why an individual or an entire population decides to leave their own country and flee somewhere else are countless, and besides that they have to pass through an extremely difficult process of relocation starting from their country of origin, moving through the so-called "countries of entry" (countries through which asylum seekers can pass through before reaching their final destination: Italy, Greece and Spain are a perfect example for the European Union) and then finally reaching their desired countries of arrival (for the ones who manage to arrive until the end of this big journey). The countries involved can be different based on the country of origin and the need of the migrants, but there is one common denominator that links all the migrants of the world: they are seen and treated as "others", meaning something different, that cannot be integrated, and in some cases also perceived as threats by the arrival and host countries, their populations, governments and media (Chouliaraki, Georgiou, & Zaborowski, 2017).

DEFINING REFUGEE

In the attempt to analyze this process of alienation of the refugee's entity, we will move our first steps from the most important question we could ask ourselves: "who is a refugee?", since the answer will allow us to understand where the process of differentiating a certain group from another starts and what are the consequences of this differentiation. Who are the refugees? Despite the definition of refugee states clearly that "refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country"¹, we can still individuate different sub-groups of refugees based on several characteristics, such as the country of origin. Natalia Moen-Larsen (2020), while analyzing the Russian media, have remarked two distinct groups: the one from Ukraine and the MENA refugees, meaning people from Middle East and North Africa. The first group had his peak just after the annexation of Crimea but it was very quickly substituted by the second one after 2015, while also the European media were talking repeatedly about migrations (or "invasion" in some cases) from North Africa. We can thus observe how, despite having a

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html>

precise definition, the meaning of refugee can change based on the context and on the perceptions and descriptions of the media.

DISCOURSES IN RUSSIAN MEDIA

Through discourse analysis, Moen-Larsen (2020) also distinguished four main discourses used in Russian media to refer about migrants, which are security, humanitarian, integration and nationalist discourses. The security discourse comes from the representation of refugees as a threat, especially underlined through the mediatic use of words such as “illegal” or “terrorist”. This kind of representation brings a strong feeling of fear and needs to be protected from what is perceived as a “enemy”, that’s why the gap between refugees and locals is felt so strong that leads to identify the refugee as “other”, and not in the light of a good diversity but pictured as a evil and danger person. The humanitarian discourse, on the other hand, tends to represent refugees as in condition of extreme poverty and seeking for help (mostly given by non-profit organizations). Even though this type of discourse seems to put them in a good light, the constant attempt to show them as voiceless victims blurred their images as individual in favor of a mass representation that still has the outcome of a dehumanization’s process. The integration discourse, as the previous one, is based on the representation of refugee as person in need of assistance, but it has also another important element to be considered, which is the education as main tool of integration, focusing mainly on children and teenagers. The nationalist discourse, in the end, moves from a concept of cultural proximity and it surely penalizes more the MENA refugees compared to Ukrainian ones in the perspective of Russian media because MENA refugees carry with them cultures and values that are very distant from the European and Russian ones, and this make them a threat because they are different, they live differently, and thus again they are being identified as “others” compared to the concept of “us”.

TYOLOGIES OF VISIBILITY IN EUROPEAN MEDIA

As for the European media, the representation of refugees surely intensified and radicalized after the peak in 2015 of the so-called refugee “crisis” (Bigo, Diez, Fanoulis & Stivachtis, 2020). In the first phase, the collective image of migrants was shaped as victims, people in need of help and escaping from wars. After some precise and traumatic events for the European history, such as the terroristic attacks that took place in several cities all over European Union, another representation of refugees was given to the public, which was shaped as threatening for not only the culture but also the safety of the Occidental people. At this moment two well defined representations of refugees were established in Europe: on one

side the idea of this people fleeing violence and war seeking international protection, on the other side a mass of enemy of our nations and values (Moore, Gross & Threadgold, 2021). The figure of refugee is thus trapped and confined between these two opposing roles, both of them recalling what Moen-Larsen already saw in the Russian media. Unfortunately, both of these shaped images have reinforced a process of dehumanization of the refugee (Malkki, 1996):¹ the victim-hood brings up two different issues: the issue of massification, meaning creating indistinguishable masses of people, treating them like there are not individuals with their own lives and able to make their own life decisions but just a huge uniform group; and the issue of passivization, where refugees are framed as bodies in need of medical support and food. To the contrary, the portrait of refugee as threatening show them finally in control of their own story-line, but with a negative attribution since they are responsible of evil-doing towards our occidental society and values, coming here with the aim to harm us (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017). Once again the figure of refugee loses his humanity and is never portrayed as the human who really is. Lillie Chouliaraki and Tijana Stolic (2017) analyzed European news of 2015 and created five different typologies of visibility: visibility as biological life, reinforcing the image of bodies in need, masses analyzed only in their “anthropological minimum” (Metha, 1990) and totally dependent on the occidental rescue in order to survive, thus not really giving voices and space for their own opinions and decisions, in this case the “crisis” is represented as a humanitarian emergency; visibility as empathy, which moves in the opposite direction compared to the previous one, giving spaces to the individuals and their suffering, such as a sick and old person, a crying child or a mother with her baby. The figure of the child in particular represents vulnerability combined with the innocence and purity proper of a very young age, in perfect contrast with the sense of responsibility, guilt and failure that the figure of an adult has (El-Enany, 2016). A matching example of this kind of visibility in the media is the infamous photograph of Alan Kurdi, the kid found lifeless in the shores of Turkey after being drowned in September 2015: the image became known all around the world and symbolized the failed attempt to give protection to the vulnerable people (El-Enany, 2016). Images like this one have contributed to the process of humanization of the refugees, but on the same time the child imagery risks to infantilize refugees, portraying them as powerless and without the element of agency; visibility as threat is probably the most used frame after the terroristic attacks started in 2015, representing the refugee as a young strong male fully responsible of his own evil-doing actions: the individual is firmly represented as well as their agency but only in the light of negative connotations. Here the element of security plays again a strong role and leads to prioritize the closure of borders without discriminating who - and why - is trying to cross them over the emergency support for the victims fleeing the war (Chouliaraki & Georgiou, 2017); visibility as

hospitality moves from the messages of welcoming refugees that were expressed by people after the first peaks of mass migrations. The refugees lose completely their component of threat and evil-doing, on the opposite, the evil-doer character in these representations is embodied by “us” and our governments that refuse to help desperate people in need. Even though it may look like a positive representation for the refugees, the mediatic hospitality’s representation is not centered at all on the migrants but on the political actors, thus they are again unseen and replaceable (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017); last but not least is the visibility as self-reflexivity, which develops in two distinct forms: the first one using celebrities to support refugees, where famous people are being photographed with refugees while talking with them or helping them in order to raise awareness and sensitivity on the subject, educating their fans and followers to be compassionate about it, and the second one with social media graphics, where again one example for all is the one of the representation and the tweets about the child Alan Kurdi, this time with re-visualizations designed to define a clear context and to invite people to explore and reflect about feelings of intimacy, guilt and responsibility, as well as the Occidental’s obligations towards the Syrian crisis or the ethics of photography (Giannakopoulos, 2016). Both cases of the last type of visibility try to humanize refugees, but as result they end up being spoken about and not speaking for themselves, so even if they result to be more on the spotlight, they have absolute no control over it. We can observe how these five main regimes of visibility tend to remark some specific characteristic based on the type of narrative they want to present but each one of them ends up hiding some aspects – if not all – of the personality of the individual, represented voiceless or responsible only of their evil-doing. These not entirely realistic representations reinforce the distance between “us” and “them” since they are never completely portrayed with their own personality and decision-making. Every human has both a good side and a bad side inside them, and showing only one will prevent people from empathize with them, increasing instead the distance because of the idealization.

VOICE OF REFUGEES IN EUROPEAN MEDIA

In another research, Lillie Chouliaraki and Rafal Zaborowski (2017) analyzed European news from eight different countries (Greece, Serbia, Hungary, Czech Republic, Germany, France, UK – at the time member of European Union - and Ireland) to understand the space that was actually given to the voice of refugees and how this was used in the narratives. They individuated three main aspects: the subjects of voice, the status of voice and the context of voice. The subject of voice focuses on the presence of refugees’ voice or, on the contrary, its absence. After analyzing the papers from the eight selected countries in different phases of

the so-called refugee “crisis”, they reached the outcome that the subjects of voice was regulated by silencing both refugees and European citizens and giving space only to the opinions of the politicians. The systematic absence of refugees’ voice lead to misrecognition, ignorance and uncertainty (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). The status of voice wants to deepen how refugees are named, represented and characterized: the strategy of collectivization is vastly used in the European news, thus again with collectivization comes the absence of representation of the individual, consequentially is impossible for them to be able to make their voice heard when they are not even represented singularly. The only exception is when the individuals are named, but dead, thus they still can’t speak for themselves: “not only were they being spoken about rather than spoken to or with, refugees also became faceless and characterless figures without capacities, experiences, relationships or emotions” (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). The context of voice, in the end, wants to analyze the historical and sociopolitical narratives that accompany the representation of refugees and explaining why they arrived and what are the consequences of these arrivals. Many narratives present elements of decontextualization that contributes, as collectivization and silencing do, to eradicate the figure of the refugee from all his historical, economical, social and political background. Without a context of why they left their countries and what does their presence in Europe means for us and for our countries, it’s difficult to empathize with them and create a strong connection, leading once again to their isolation that makes them being labeled as different, outsiders, others.

DISCOURSES IN AUSTRALIAN MEDIA

The representation of refugee framed as “other” doesn’t stop on Russian and European media; also Australian papers have been studied and found out to be perpetuating the narrative of opposition between “us” in quality of national identity and “othering”. The three main themes in Australian newspapers were the portrait of Australia as a compassionate country; the theme of border protection from the threat of “boat people”; and finally the rights of refugees, not represented though in the most important news stories (Gale, 2004). The use of certain categorizations and words were used repeatedly in the Australian media, words like “illegal migrants” and “boat people”, contributing to exclude and marginalize the category (O’Doherty & Lecouteur, 2007). One of the most used framing for refugees in Australian newspapers is certainly the one of “unwanted invaders” (Parker, 2015, p.6), showing refugees using two metaphors, the one of criminals and the one with the water. In the metaphors of refugees as criminals we can notice how they tend to be represented as a

threat for the local security, framed as dangerous through the use of specific words that make them being seen isolated, unpredictable, scaring and out of controls. This particular narrative takes the side of the Australian Government's policy and justifies arrests and detentions in the light of the danger they bring in the country. The second metaphor refers to the element of water: as Samuel Parker remarks (2015, p.7), Australia is an island, thus water is surrounding all the perimeter of the country and the "boat people" entering via the water are difficult to manage and control, allowing an exceptionally big number of asylum seekers to arrive. For this geographical reason the water metaphor results very solid and functional for the message of threat they are trying to pass. Two other repertoires Parker analyzed in Australian media are the "dishonest" and the "tragic" ones: the portrait of dishonest asylum seekers show them lying to achieve what they need, in this case hospitality and refugee permits. They know that lying about their age or their sexual orientation could help them reach their goal and sometimes some of them they use these lies. When Australian media report it though, they frame it using collectivization, in a way that for the lie of one they all are accountable and unworthy of trust and hospitality. The portrait of "tragic" refugees seems to be a bit more similar to the humanitarian narrative in the European countries, framing the immigrants as people in need, drowning (see the water metaphor), without clothes or in any kind of difficulties, while still reiterating the idea of "unwanted invaders", people surely in need of assistance but at the same time coming in masses inside the country. All these narratives taken as a whole reflect the message and the will to "keep them out" (Parker, 2015, p.10) from Australia: as this country built a strong and often criticized policy concerning asylum seekers, detaining them in other small islands before studying every single case in order to decide if they deserve the refugee permit or not and thus entering the country or not, the media narratives being used was meant to justify and reinforce the idea of blocking the mass of "boat people" arriving and not letting them entering in Australia. The narratives and frames used are the same ones found in newspapers of UK, but with a different aim: in UK, media mostly want to promote the idea of "removing them" (Parker, 2015, p.12) from the country, not distinguishing between migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, purposely making a whole image and frame for very different situations such as having already received a permit, being in the process of requesting it or just being undocumented in the country perpetuating the themes of threats, security, dishonest people, while in Australia the same themes are used looking at a step before, meaning before the "masses of boat people" manage to settle in the country.

DISCOURSES IN BRITISH MEDIA

Concentrating on British papers, three strategies emerge to be preponderant in the migration narrative: aggregation, collectivization and functionalization (KhosraviNik 2009, p.13). Through the use of a specific linguistic register regarding migrants, they are framed as a unanimous group seeking to enter the territory, without personal emotions, backgrounds, decisions, willing involved, but represented only on account of their functions, as we already saw in one of the visibility in the analysis of Chouliaraki and Stolic. In the light of this framework, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are often “depersonalized, dehumanized and objectified as numbers and figures and functionalized to ‘applicants’ (KhosraviNik 2009, p.13)”. They are represented not as singular persons but as a unique, large number with the only function of the arrival: it’s easier to dehumanize a number compared to a person with their own story, background, life and dreams. This process of dehumanization contributes to amplify and enlarge the distance between the group “us” and the group “them”, speaking for groups instead of individuals. The exception is done when the individual needs a name and a face in order to take responsibility of their evil-doing actions inside the country: in case of violence, riots and protests British media tend to identify the singular people providing as much details as possible. After alienating these individuals from the group of “us”, some media use the category of “them” as element to base the political confrontation’s discourse on (KhosraviNik 2009, p.16). Especially during election times, the migrant topic is always a hot subject to discuss in campaign and these discussions are supported by the representations that the different media embrace: conservative parties will give visibility to negative representations of migrants in order to empower their own perspective, while liberal newspapers don’t utilize a clear discursive strategy (KhosraviNik 2009, p.17), as of the right discourse was at this point too spread and believed to be challenged with an opposite consistent narrative, moving instead towards a remorseful tone. As opposite to the narrative of aggregation, collectivization and functionalization, from the war of Kosovo emerges more and more the process of humanization and individualization: refugees are here represented in normal context doing normal actions, making it easier to empathize with them. According to Majid KhosraviNik (2009, p.19), this process gives “voices to different people and asserts the diversity of these people in terms of their lifestyles, education, professions, customs, ages, sexes and political perspectives.” This process is pursued by giving names and faces to the persons the news is about, explaining who they are, what they do and what they want, and supported by the narrative of victimization, that contributes to detailed descriptions of the characters of the story and to their actions and contexts. Even in this process though, refugees, asylum seekers and migrants result to be confused thus being part of the same narratives, when in fact they are part of different groups and in all the scenarios

(collectivization versus individualization, humanitarian versus threats, passivization versus evil-doers) they should be addressed not as a unique mass but separately.

REFUGEE: THREAT OR VICTIM?

At this point we can observe how several studies concerning the construction of refugee in the public discourse highlighted a precise pattern that reiterate the same dualism in every context or period we have been analyzing: the frame of refugee as victim, poor, innocent, desperate, in need of assistance, and the frame of refugee as threat, dangerous for the security of the country and the safety of its people. The portrait of victimization works because of the circumstances the refugee is finding themselves in, not depending on them, the situation is out of their control and they can't change such a big phenomenon as migration flows with their actions (Horsti, 2008). As a positive side, victimization shows to the audience the emotional and personal part of the refugees, it facilitates the empathy and reduce the distance between "us" and "them" through compassion (Steimel, 2010); as a negative side, asylum seekers result voiceless, not in control of their own lives, decisions and destiny, desperately needy and in pain (Chouliaraki, 2012). To the contrary, the frame of refugee as a threat carries with it strong associations to scaring concepts such as illegality, danger, crime, fear (Bennett, Wal, Lipinski, Fabiszak & Krzyzanowski, 2013). These correlations enlarge the distance the public feels with refugees and make them wonder – if not convince – that these foreigners maybe don't deserve to be accepted and welcomed in the host country (Lynn & Lea, 2003). In addition to these two main frames of victimization and threatening, there is a third one that has significantly emerged in the public discourse: the dehumanization of the refugee, represented often in group of a large number of people, without a defined identity, almost detached from reality (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). These three main frames have dominated the public discourse of refugees all over the world, and especially after the peak of refugee flows in Europe of 2015 they have preponderantly took the scene in every media.

CH 2: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD

As we had the opportunity to observe by now, a big part of the identity of migrant children is indeed their youth side. Understanding what being a child means in nowadays societies and how childhood is perceived in the different contexts is going to have a key role in our process. In this chapter, we are going to analyze more in depth the figure of the child, from the definition of childhood following its nature and the dominant ideas in the social sciences about this phase of life, and how it's relevant and influences the person in their years as adult.

HISTORICAL APPROACH TO CHILDREN

Mary Jane Kehily (2009, p.2) stated that historical studies can provide us with a lot of information about children and childhood in the past and in the present. Topics such as the present of children in media, child labor and the difference between children coming from different realities (like Eastern and Western world) can be remarked and understood deeply thanks to historical excursus (Kehily, 2009, p.2). It appears that childhood was firstly conceptualized and analyzed in the nineteenth century in UK (Steedman, 1990): what was empathized in the first studies was the theme of child poverty and ill and how this phenomenon influenced the economic value of children, transforming from active source of income for the family to a fragile figure to be protected and maintained (Cunningham, 1991). Even though the children economic contribution to the family became in-existent, the value of the children remained priceless for the affective meaning they assumed for their own parents, as highlighted in Zelitzer's study (1985). Henry Mayhew (1861), studying the life of working-class people in London during the nineteenth century, met a 8 years old girl street vendor, from which he realized children living in this economic and social status are not actually acting like children but as little adults; in fact, she didn't know how to play or with whom, had no idea of what leisure time was in general and she was not familiar with the concept of spending time for herself doing something she likes. Mayhew also noticed the child's life was concentrated in a very small area of London (mostly the space between her house and her job place), she was not used to eat food regularly and stopped attending school. The reality of this girl was very far from the idea of a child who is taken care of, kept warm and fed. Mayhew opened a theme, the one of lost or stolen childhood, that will remain as part of the popular contemporary discourses about childhood (Kehily, 2009, p.2). Two decades after, a children's charity opened in UK by Dr. Barnardo. Since most of his donations were coming from the public, he needed to publicize and raise awareness of their work for children. An advertising campaign was released showing children in adult-like situations, as homeless, using drugs or abusing alcohol, in prison or being sexually abused (Barnardo's,

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1999). Particularly, an image about a child injecting drug with a syringe was a huge scandal and managed to receive many complaints from organizations and single individuals, as much that Bernardo decided to remove this image from the advertising campaign and substitute it with the image of a happy child. The shocked reaction to the image can be explained because, coming back to the idea of children as innocent and pure, they are not expected to be seen in contexts that cross boundaries and are not perceived as safe, but one of Bernardo's core points is exactly to link the childhood with the adulthood, because children inevitably are going to grow up into adults and they are gonna carry the experiences they lived as children (Bernardo's, 1999). Both Mayhew and Bernardo's ideas about childhood can be explained through a romantic vision of children, characterized by purity and innocence that is only going to be corrupted by the outside, grown-up world. These idea of contact between the children's purity and the outside world has been resumed by John Locke who declared that children are coming into the world as a blank state and they can be trained and educated in order to become rational human beings (Burr & Montgomery, 2003): this concept will reinforce the idea of children as "adult-in-the-making" with educational needs fundamental in the process of creating good adults and citizens (Kehily, 2009, p.5).

DEFINING CHILDHOOD

In every culture there are specific ideas of how a child should be, and this influences and defines our representation of childhood. Being us not only logical and rational human beings, but also complex people for their own ideas and culture and background, and having being ourselves children before being adults, it comes logical to think that childhood as well is characterized by fragility and complex ideas behind it, as it is for adults (Kehily, 2009, p.36). At the end, childhood seems to be more an adult social construction based on a multitude of different ideas and memories from our own childhood years, including contradictory ones, desires and myths (Walther, 1979). Being a child is a transitory state of life that ends in a different moment based on the cultural and historical circumstances. The term "child" even referred to social groups perceived as inferior and vulnerable- such as colonized people, slaves and women – up until the eighteenth century (Gillis, 1981). This was possible because the term itself does not define only immaturity but also dependency, inferiority and absence of power (Kehily, 2009, p.37). Despite that, the idea of childhood was created by time and changed based on the societies and cultural environments, as much as its definition. For example, in Occidental societies the period of childhood was believed to end when the boys were starting to work full time and initiate their career and, for the girls, when they were getting married or at the moment of childbirth, and this aspect come to a change only in recent years (Kehily, 2009, p.37). Childhood is thus a construction, defined by contrasting

cultural representations that differ children based on their gender, ethnicity, religion, social class and physical abilities, and it has always been understood and constructed in relation to the ideas adults were having on how a child was supposed to be (Kehily, 2009, p.38).

THE NATURE OF CHILDHOOD

The figure of the child embodies both biological and sociological facts: for instance, the immaturity of children is a biological fact but the way in which this immaturity is understood and accepted and perceived is a matter of cultural and sociological facts, or “facts of culture” (La Fontaine, 1979). These so-called “facts of culture” might vary and define childhood as a social institution, making possible constructing and therefore also deconstructing and reconstructing the figure of child in the different societies (James & Prout, 2015, p.7). There are some key points to considerate in order to understand the emergent paradigm about childhood in sociology (James & Prout, 2015, pp.8-9): firstly, as we already stated, childhood is understood as social construction, and it frames the first years of human life based on the context and the different circumstances; secondly, childhood is a variable that cannot be considered without all the other variables, like social class, gender, ethnicity etc.; thirdly, childhood and the social relationships children maintain are worth studying as a whole topic, and not necessarily linked to the perspective of adults; fourthly, children are not passive objects in the social process but active human beings capable of creating their own social life; fifthly, in order to study childhood the ethnological methodologies can be very useful, since they allow children to be more active and participate in the production of sociological data; and lastly, in order to proclaim a new paradigm of childhood sociology it’s needed to engage in the process of reconstructing childhood in society. These six core concepts represent in reality only the starting point of what a new paradigm could mean for the studies of childhood; sociologists have not spent a lot of attention to childhood as topic of interest in itself and many concepts about childhood are problematic, but there is actually so much more knowledge coming from the studies of the twentieth century compared to the nineteenth century. The psychological explanation of child development announced in the early twentieth century surely influenced the childhood studies, that were dominated – until that moment – mostly from the historical approach. The new current giving space to the psychological side of a child life was finally explaining children’s nature, but soon many different schools of thoughts were going to be developed in the matter of childhood.

DOMINANT FRAMEWORKS

The dominant ideas around childhood and children were at this point based on three main themes: rationality, naturalness and universality (James & Prout, 2015, p.10). The concept of

“development” in children were finally adopted in the main discourses and was strictly related to the immaturity and dependence as biological facts. The dominant approach was based on the idea of the “natural growth” (Jenks, 1982): the adulthood was seen as the period of life of achievement of full rationality, while the childhood was the period of training in order to reach that full potential. The naturalness of children is strictly connected to their universality: in fact, the child represents a first step into the path from simplicity to the complexity of thoughts the adults can reach, from their irrational to their rational behavior. In the nineteenth century, the concept of “savage”, primitives tribes was associated to childhood: for example, Tylor (1871) stated he could apply ‘the often-repeated comparison of savages to children as fairly to their moral as to their intellectual condition’. The child development started to be considered in Western societies as connected with biological and social development, like their use of language, their interactions and their way to play, all indicative factors of their developmental progress (James & Prout, 2015, p.10). The irrationality of children seems to decrease the more they become mature, evolving their thoughts from “primitive” and simplistic to complex and sophisticated ideas: this concept was well constructed and explained by the work of Jean Piaget on child development (Walkerdine, 1984). The Piagetian approaches come to dominate the work on child cognition, leaving very little space to the earlier positions that were linking the cognitive development to the child’s social experiences (Light, 1986). For Piaget, child development follows a certain scheme with predetermined steps that will eventually lead to the achievement of adult rationality. Within this structure, children result to be marginalized for waiting to overcome this temporary stage of their life, finally acquiring cognitive skills and entering in the social world of the adults. The work of Jean Piaget inspired many future studies about childhood, like the work of Urwin (1985) about child rearing practices and the educational thinking and practice of Walkerdine (1984). This work was also assimilated in the social understanding of children in everyday reality, for example in the way we perceive certain children’s behaviors as a phase that it’s gonna pass and evolve in something else, as part of a wider picture in the general development of the person, and that find their justification in biology (James & Prout, 2015, p.11). In the late years of ‘900, Tonkin (1982) realizes there is confusion between two definitions of what constitutes a subject: on one hand, the individual as an instance of the species and, in the other hand, the person as an instance of society: this confusion lead to fail the explanation of the process for which the individual “acquires personhood”. As Jenks (1982) stated, the social transformation from child to adult doesn’t necessarily have the same timing of the physical growth as it’s usually taken for granted in traditional ideas of socialization.

THE DETACHMENT FROM THE MOTHER

Since from the first days after the birth, the infant has and shows basic biological needs, which lead to a strict attachment to the figure of the mother, especially in their first months of life. This stays as a biological necessity until the infant is ready to separate from the mother (Zornado, 2001, p.5). The rise of technology, though, seems to have anticipated the arrival of the moment of detachment: through tools such as rubber nipples, cribs, intercoms etc. a premature detachment from the mother was developed, carrying with it an emotional and physical deprivation. Detachment involves here a strong connection with the feeling of abandonment (Zornado, 2001, p.5). Baby formula, nurseries and other tools that are meant to facilitate this process of detachment, actually influences significantly the development of the child (Rabin, 1980). This phenomenon of detachment has been widely spread for a large period of time, but it didn't reach every corner of the planet. As Jean Liedloof (1977) highlighted in *The Continuum Concept*, other cultures have very different ways of approach to the concept of "us", including the adult and the child as the self and the other; in Occidental societies, the dualism is way more remarked and it shows a gap between subject and object. Detachment parenting is felt strongly in the Western societies at the point to become an ideological certainty, for which the child is blamed and never the adult, and influences heavily the Western reality and history at the point to interpret it as a series of responses to this emotional but also physical deprivation that the adult inflicts to the child and consequentially the child inflicts to others, like a never ending circle (Zornado, 2001, p.5).

CHARACTER STRUCTURE OF A CHILD

The childhood period of our life, for the relevance it has in our social and cognitive development, has a great influence on the kind of adults we will become, determining our future interactions with the others. The structure of the character can be interpreted as the ideology of child rearing in pedagogy put into practice for the individual through the physical and emotional everyday reality (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman, 1951). The character structure can be understood and correlated to the idea of unconscious for Freud. The character structures we form are real to us, in a sense that we take the ideas we have about ourselves as realities: the character structure is then another way to describe how "false consciousness" is represented by ideology (Lowen, 1958) these views are some dominant perspectives in the field of psychology and the psychological understanding of childhood more than in social and cultural terms. This is also formed by the repressed affect from childhood: it can in fact lead to rigid and masochistic tendencies, where the masochist interprets the world as it was trying to take off their independence, is feeling angry and resentful very often, due to the pressure of submission felt from the society since childhood (Zornado, 2001, p.10). These feelings,

however, are mostly denied in the attempt to deny all the feelings felt as a child, hence the adult's life is determined by the dominant ideology. Not wanting to feel the rage is connected to the fear of losing the mother, that is in reality lost already in childhood age, and it doesn't influence the will to be seen by her and gain from her what the infant really needs: attachment, contentment and well-being (Zornado, 2001, p.12). Regardless of which character structure is the most present in the personality, every individual maintain relationships in a way that correspond, despite the clear domination of one or two character structures on the others. They all develop as a compensatory behavior and as a direct result of the original child detachment and its consequences in their mind and body (Zornado, 2001, p.12). Indeed, character structures come from the ideological notions apprehended through the years of childhood in the pedagogical teaching that we are not to be understood as our body, feelings and ideas as a intersected system, rather that we are "ideas of ourselves", and feelings and bodies are subordinated to that and must be taken under control in order to not interfere with our own ideas of ourselves; but while body and ideas are divided, the perception of the reality assume a dualistic perspective: as the ideas to be "good" or "bad" is forming, children understand that their behavior can be good or bad, and they can be, as well, good or bad, and this dichotomy split the consciousness and the ideas of reality we have, creating strong oppositions like the "self" and the "others" (Zornado, 2001, p.12). In this wide picture come also the Freudian superego, the judging side of ourselves that condemn our behaviors and make us feel shameful, constantly comparing the opposing sides are self and others. The concept of split mind is thus to be understood and interpreted not as two different minds but one mind that reads the reality in pairs, dichotomies, oppositions. This dualistic perception brings disconnection and fragmentation between oneself and the other people and environments (Zornado, 2001, p.12). The split mind bring people to project their rage and deprivation to the outside, into their human relationships. The self is, at this point, far from any "other" reality, like a poor person, or a homosexual person, or a member or whatsoever minority that the self wants to "punish" with the same treatment they received as a child, structuring a hierarchical relations with the adult (Miller, 1990). Only at the moment in which we "can thoroughly realize that crying, sulking, self-doubt, apathy or rebellion were correct human responses to incorrect treatment, [one's] whole feeling about [oneself] - as the wrong one - changes appropriately" (Liedloff, 1977).

RE-CONSTRUCTING THE FIGURE OF THE CHILD

In the field of sociology, children and childhood are examined only within some defined and limited topics, such as family and school for example (Alanen, 1988, p.54). Both of these topics are actually very centered in the life of a child, considering the Occidental society as a

familiarized and educated one. Moving some steps from the studies of Ennew, she separates children from adults and give a precise definition of family as a nucleus formed by protected children and protecting adults (Ennew, 1986). The child is also kept distant from the job-related realities, since a child requires to be protected also from work. This way of thinking brings out a triangular configuration of what the life of a child in Western society is, being the three main aspect the non-social childhood, family as the only context for the child and socialization: this triangulation presents the figure of the child as excluded from the society, with only the family as external environment, giving them the rights to be protected, fed and cared but without the possibility of autonomy. When the institution of the family comes to modify its form, it results to be evaluated negatively for the child and their socialization, and it leads to several prejudices and pressures towards families that should follow a strict moral conduct (Alanen, 1988, pp.54-55). In “The sociology of childhood”, Jenks (1982) affirms that children are constituted in social theory. Despite their almost total absence as real life children in social science researches, they are present as a theoretical figure. As the image of the child is constructed as different and opposite from the adult, paradoxically this figure exist inevitably only in relation with the adult, as much as the adult is impossible to define if not in relation with the child, thus the difference actually indicates the identity of each. The child is hence determined only as different from something – someone – else and it’s only imagined focusing on the process to overcome this distance. The figure of the child stays negatively defined, meaning defined by what is not but is going to be, by what will be in the future rather than what is in the present, being the goal to reach, as adult, the full potential of socialization, passing through the whole process to become a social being (Alanen, 1988), but, as authors like Thorne (1987) and Speier (1976) will point out, the socialization framework carries some issues, like bringing out the ideological point of view of the adult. The concept of socialization originally carried a strong moral sense, as the society in which there is socialization is the civilized one, where the “unsocial” nature of the human beings is suppressed. In the perspective of socialization, the child is automatically presented as uncivilized and in need to be socialized by social forces (Alanen, 1988, pp.57-58). The process of socialization is also interpreted from the point of view of the society’s institutions that help to represent the child as a passive object, victim of influences external to them. This idea was surpassed by other methodologies that show how children can make their own social relation even at the earliest years of their life (Goode, 1986). Being social actors also means that they are now agents of their own lives, thus it becomes methodologically wrong to present children as innocent victims, not even if in reality they appear to be very much victim of the context they are living in (Alanen, 1988, p.60). This new vision of childhood move the perspective of the life of a child from the micro-socialization within their family to a real

social life with all the relationship this implies, having to considerate childhood, from now on, in structural terms (Qvortrup, 1985). The conventional idea of socialization is finally challenged in favor of a re-consideration of the socialization meant as a process: the new understanding of socialization brings this concept to a new level, being the core the construction and not anymore the internalization.

CH 3: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE REFUGEE CHILD IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

In the last chapter it has been analyzed in depth the figure of the refugee, its definition and its role in the societies and countries of arrival as well as the consequences of the phenomenon of migration, and the frames media mostly use to represent them. Now, I would like to reduce and specialize our niche to the figure of refugee child and its representation in the public discourse. Based on the UN Refugee Agency's data, at the end of 2020 there were thirty five million forcibly displaced minors (for minors we refer to children under eighteen years old), and between 2018 and 2020 one million babies were born as refugees.² As the adults, children as well are forced to move due to conflicts or natural phenomenons; they mostly travel with their parents or a member of their family, often trying to achieve a family reunification, but it's not always like that: there are also unaccompanied minors, which are by definition children under eighteen years old which are moving without the company of a parent or a legal adult who is supposed to take care of them, leaving them alone in their journey,³ but it is not easy to gather precise data on unaccompanied minors because different methods and definitions are used to asset the issue, which is even more complicated due to the increase of trafficking and disappearances from reception centers (De Block & Buckingham, 2007).

GLOBAL CHILDREN: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO REALITIES

In both cases, accompanied and unaccompanied children, they play a extremely relevant role in the process of migration and transnational living (De Block & Buckingham, 2007, pp.34-35). They are strongly impacted by the experience both of the journey and of the process of integration in the host country because they are the first category to actually experience the new society through school and generally educational programs; they are – in most of the cases – the first members of the family to learn the new language and cultures and try to import it inside their family. As they grow up, they feel very attached to the country they have lived and stayed for most of their lives, but somehow they still feel connected to the original country as well, thanks to the tradition and culture that perpetuate and was taught through the older family members. Impersonating this role in the middle between the country of origin and the host country, between the old and the new culture and the old and the new language, we can understand how children assume a central position in the process of migration, creating a symbolic “bridge” between the two different realities. Even though they are the actors of this extremely complicated and delicate path of integration, and experiencing

² <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

³ <https://www.unhcr.org/3d4f91cf4.pdf>

probably more than anyone else the internal conflict and dilemma between cultural maintenance and cultural change, still they are poorly represented and taken into account when it comes to data and statistics (De Block & Buckingham, 2007, p.36).

Regarding the media coverage, they are mostly represented in a simplified duality of “victims in the leaving or vandals in the settling” (De Block & Buckingham, 2007, pp.36-37). Truth to be told, it is difficult to identify a defined group of “migrant children” and this might lead to these simplified perspectives about them. They are, in fact, mostly characterized by the heterogeneity due to their different religions, languages, ethnicity, age (we all know how much can change between an infant and a teenager, nevertheless they are both under the macro-umbrella of the term “minors”) and so on. This heterogeneity leads to complications while gathering data and information because every category is not exhaustive enough or can be blurred, thus they are often not separated from the adults when it comes to analysis of materials and statistics, which brings to the marginalization or invisibility of migrant children; if then we also try to cross the understudied topic of migrant children itself with the topic of media coverage, our resources decrease even more.

SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN TURKEY

There are some studies though related to this topic that can support this thesis. One of them wishes to analyze the position of Syrian refugees children crossing or hosted in Turkey through media -particularly the printed one- (Akgül Gök & Gökçearsan Çifci, 2017, p.233), thus we will move our steps from this research. Due to its geographical location, historically speaking Turkey has always had masses and masses of people passing through the country. It has always been a transit country since it's located between Europe and Asia and it's also very close to the Arabic countries: a very strategic position for migration flows. A large number of asylum seekers comes from Syria, especially since the Syrian civil war happened, and it's still increasing. Most of them are women and children, who were incredibly affected by the war. Mass media (especially printed media) influence greatly how people perceive the asylum seekers situations and problems, in both positive and negative ways; the issues refugee children are having are represented as well as the opinions and comments of politicians regarding their status. The representation of children and their rights is generally affected by how they are viewed from the perspective of the dominant culture, and this shape the attitude and the opinions society has towards them (Ardıç Çobaner, 2016). Based on this knowledge, Fulya Akgül Gök and Elif Gökçearsan Çifci (2017) have analyzed the news of three major newspapers in Turkey concerning Syrian refugee children, one pro-government newspaper, one liberal newspaper and another one from the opposition. In order to analyze how the Syrian refugee children were represented in these media, it was used the method of

content analysis. Through the qualitative analysis method it was underlined in which condition was the physical, psychological and economical status of these refugee children, as well as their social and cultural positions. After gathering 164 news articles and skimming them, it was noticed that most of the news published regarding Syrian children were referring to social content, but also educational content was very present; the newspaper criticizing the government also published many political contents (Akgul Gok & Gökçearsan Çifci, 2017, p.236). Mostly, the newspapers were talking about the difficulties these children face and struggle with daily: they have anxiety and are marginalized due to the fact that they can't speak the local language, hence this creates an educational gap between local children and them in scholar contexts. They also suffer the consequences of the economical problems of their families due to the living conditions they have in the host country as refugees (Akgul Gok & Gökçearsan Çifci, 2017, pp.236-239). All these factors can contribute to put the children in a condition of abuse and neglect: there were also reported cases of prostitution and marriage of children as negative impacts caused by the war and different crimes against humanity. This has happened also in the contexts of life in the camps, even though the camps seems to be a safer place for refugee children compared to the life outside the camps. Still, even in the contexts of the camps the issues these children are facing are numerous: harassment, sexual abuses, forced early marriages. Their safety is also put in discussion due to the natural catastrophic events that has happened in camps, such as fires that put in danger the life of all the refugees. Probably these reasons influence the refugees' preference to live outside the camps, despite it has been reported that basic human rights are provided inside the camps (Middle East Strategic Research Center, 2014). Children outside the camps are particularly affected by the lack of security and the economical struggles, and again even more exposed to abuses and neglect (Akgul Gok & Gökçearsan Çifci, 2017, pp.240-245). These circumstances came to affect also their social conditions, being often marginalized and having to work or being forced to work since a very early age in places which are clearly not suitable for children in order to try to improve their economic conditions. As we can observe, the negative circumstances refugee and asylum seekers children are exposed are, unfortunately, countless. In the light of the arrival of such a big flow of Syrian refugees, negative reactions have been registered in the host country, and also the local children had to suddenly adapt and start to share their educational environments with refugee children: this brought some angry Turkish citizens to ignore the rights of these children to be educated and has caused them traumas due to the psychological impact. Despite these dark scenarios, there are also been some positive news concerning Syrian refugee children in Turkey, like "motivational events, supporting activities and educational aid", but overall more than half of the news were reporting negativities and difficulties these children face, especially articles

about abuse and neglect were very common. In all of the newspapers examined, despite their different political angle, children were generally represented as victims and suffering, and it was also empathized that more precautions have to be taken in order to protect them. After all, it's not the first time Syrian refugees were represented in negative conditions such as diseases, poverty, starvation, lack of education, violence, exploitation and death (Ardıç Çobaner, 2016). It is also relevant to underline that the correlation between reasons and results of the children's conditions was not found in these articles, and neither the background data (Akgul Gok & Gökçearsan Çifci, 2017, p.245), but again it is really rare for the refugee children to find space in media, they are rarely – and poorly – represented, and the focus is mostly on crimes, accidents or violence (Gencel Bek, 2011).

REFUGEE CHILDREN IN CANADA

Another – similar - representation we find about refugee children is the one of risk identity (Bryan & Denov, 2011). In fact, refugees are often seen as “risky” elements in the societies, even if they have never violated the law (Ericson & Haggerty, 1997), and children are no exceptions. Being a refugee child also means having a dual identity, the refugee one and the child one, two parts that come to contrast with each other being the child with such innocence and purity but also the refugee represented as evil-doing invader, hence the children can't escape to be the protagonists of public discourses such as irregular migration and security. Practically, these children will be represented and seen as risky personalities despite their rights to be protected and their vulnerability (United Nations, 1989). The perceived risks individuated by Stephan, Diaz-Loving and Duran (2000) that can have discriminatory action – or inaction – are four: the realistic threats (related to politics, economy and society), the symbolic threats (related to cultural beliefs), the inter-group anxiety (the sum of the symbolic and the realistic threats) and the negative stereotyping (or implied threats); all of them are manifests of a perceived risks instead of an actual one (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). In the research of Catherine Bryan & Myriam Denov (2011), 34 people were interviewed, 17 young people (all of them being arrived in the country of Canada as unaccompanied minors or separated children) and 17 stakeholders (social workers, psychologists, researchers, NGOs' representatives etc.): from the qualitative research conducted it emerged that in the host country the refugee was portrayed as opposite of Canadian and migrant youth – but also youth in general - were represented as dangerous and threatening, mostly delinquent, hence two main discourses came up from these interviews: the anti-refugee discourse and the anti-youth discourse (Bryan & Denov, 2011, pp.248-250). Within the anti-refugee discourse we find the main binary distinction between “deserving” and “undeserving” refugees, recently including in the last group even people who have reached Canada through legal and regulated

channels; politicians have been labeling the undeserving refugees as “profiteers” as to underline an illegal nature of the journey and the persons and to undermine their requests of asylum. Focusing on the children, the immigration policy in Canada does not allow children to sponsor their own families, but despite that during the interviews it was strongly present the belief that separated children are “bullet children”, meaning being sent in the country as first in order to secure that the rest of their families, parents and siblings will have a secure migration journey, and this status as potentially bullet children made them identified as risky children. Stakeholders also declared that separated children were mostly very rational and mature, as little adults, and with great decision-making skills, but the idea that they could have come just to “open the way” to their family members make them untrustworthy and compromise their claims for asylum, which does not do justice to all the cases of separated children that migrated not for their families but for themselves and their own needs. Another consideration important to make is that, for their status of children itself, they are going to follow the instructions received by their parents or families - it’s very rare for a kid to follow their own decisions without an adult’s suggestion; ignoring this simple but very important fact, it becomes easier to judge the asylum seekers children as bullet children and thus differentiating them from the Canadian children, representing them instead as just any other irregular - adult - migrant. So while separated children are discredited for being adult-like, they are also discredited for being children (Bhabha, 2001). Being affected by the anti-refugee discourse, separated children are also affected by different security measures, and they are also seen as suspicious since at this very early age they are already seeking for their own better life conditions (Bryan & Denoy, 2011a pp.250-254); a part from the children whose parents arranged the journey, there are also children without parents or families on their back, hence they have to organize and arrange the whole migration path by themselves: for this reason, they are perceived mostly as adults, consciously violating the law to achieve better survival opportunities, capable of their own agent decisions but at the same time not trustworthy due to their status of children. In the specific case of girls as separated children, they are often taken in detention for a “protective” measure: young girls are indeed perceived as more vulnerable than young boys, even in the context of separated asylum seekers children. They are mostly being detained due to the suspect of trafficking and sometimes, based on the testimony of one stakeholder, they are also detained with their smugglers or traffickers, or sometimes they are released back to their trafficker. In the case of Canadian children and teenagers, on the other hand, the detention happens for different reasons than the ones for the separated children, and this is a consequence of the perceived differences between the two groups of youth, one of them racialized and stereotyped thus without big controls, implicitly defining who is worth of rights and citizenship and who is not. The

stereotypes about separated children are indeed many, being described and labeled mostly as “less important” than their Canadian peers, dirtier and untrustworthy, despite their attempt to integrate and fit into the new society. In these circumstances, there are some young people that end up in criminal activities, due to the social inequalities that they have to experience and their failed attempts to integrate and being treated with equity, and these specific cases create negative stereotypes around the figure of the separated child in general, though extrapolating them from all the circumstantial factors and making it look like a “natural” act (Gabbidon, 2010). Exploring more in depth the frame of the anti-youth discourse, the refugee status is this time taken less in consideration compared to the young age of the subjects. Youth in Canada is considered more and more delinquent by the sociopolitical context (Reid, 2005); this perception is surely influenced by the wide media coverage on the subject of youth crime in Canada (Faucher, 2009) and the fact the Canada tends to consider youth, as Schissel (1997) stated, more connected to criminality than as a resource for the country, especially in some specific cases based on the origin of the person, like black people, aboriginal or generally any refugee child (Tyyksa, 2009). Again, we found stereotypes based on social inequalities that interdict with the integration and settlement of refugee children in the Canadian society (Ighodaro, 2006). The process of “racialization” of the anti-youth discourse penalize separated children, especially the ones with African origins, either they have been involved in criminal activities or not; all of them becomes vulnerable to the stereotypes of risk and danger, being racialized and criminalized. Here, the gender plays a big part: girls are in general considered more at risk, while boys being the risk itself; these net distinction allows girls to be more likely hosted in foster families as considered vulnerable and in need of help. The boys, on the other hand, are considered dangerous and more threatening thus it’s difficult for them to be located in foster families (Bryan & Denoy, 2011a, pp.257-258). For this reasons it’s important for them to learn how to best interact with police and authority figures taking in consideration their perceived risk – even when it’s not real – especially if they have troubles with the languages of English or French. When confronted by policemen, the most useful and efficient strategy is to ignore them in order to scale back the effects of the anti-youth discourse. Besides being perceived as dangerous and criminals by the authorities, these children are also perceived as such by the local population of Canadians: in many cases, this creates a sense of insecurity, isolation and loneliness that is present in most of the experiences of the refugee children (Bryan & Denoy, 2011b), and also a sense of binomial internal dilemma in these children: the true self as opposite as the perceived self from the others, with all the negative stereotypes included, so much that some children decide to spouse the perceived image of themselves getting closer to criminal and illegal realities in order to be paradoxically accepted by the society (Bryan & Denoy, 2011a,

p.260). This study, highlighting the two main discourses of anti-refugee and anti-youth that are affecting refugees and in general separated children, put the attention of how this figure is still constructed as risky and problematic, and how this narrative informally justifies the discriminatory behaviors maintained towards them.

THE CASE STUDY OF ALAN KURDI

A case study that is necessary to mention when talking about the public discourse of refugee children is the death of the 3 years old Kurdish kid Alan Kurdi – already mentioned in the first chapter - drowned and then found dead in the Turkish coasts on September 2015, which photo has been seen all over the world. For the public discourse his story - and particularly his death - has been a pillar case in the field, since the image shocked so powerfully the entire world population. Even if the picture does not present signs of blood or mutilations, on the contrary, the kid looks like he could be sleeping if it wasn't for the context, the image still results very touching, transmitting all the purity and innocence of a little child in a context of death and silent desperation. The corpse represent the dualism of human and inhuman, life and death, culture and nature (Cielemecka, 2015). Nilüfer Demir, the photojournalist that took the photograph of the dead body of Alan Kurdi, stated that taking this photo was for her the only chance to “express the scream of his silent body” (Griggs, 2015), and we can't say if, at the moment the photograph was taken, she understood the importance of that photographic material that was soon to become viral and sadly famous in every corner of the world. The resemblance of this picture with a sleeping child recalls the Western cultural association between death and sleep and the description of death as a “long, final sleep” almost as to say that dead bodies are still somehow alive (Ruby, 1995), but mostly this image shakes the Western culture because, freezing the moment of the consequence of their actions, the European Union, hunted by the media that repeatedly shows and talk about this image, is called to respond of their responsibilities about migration flows, human trafficking, humanitarian aid, violence and carelessness at the European borders (Papailias, 2019). Very quickly the narrative about the responsibilities of the European Union was outdated by the ethical dilemma that this photograph brings with itself, hence if it's correct or not to show the death of such a young refugee child (Aucther, 2017). Soon the circulation of the image brought up a dialogue about the moral and ethics in sharing it and how much this results to be manipulative or narcissistic (O'Neill, 2015). Some newspapers argued that a warning trigger was necessary while others wanted to finally repress it. The attempts of “deleting” the image like it was unseen were contrasting the more spontaneous and quick gesture to share (Papailias, 2015, pp.1055-1057). The debate was moving from the concept of dehumanization in the spectacularization of the death of the little Alan Kurdi and if hiding the image was a

way to forget and obscure what happened to him and to so many other refugees; of course it's not easy to answer to this debate and take a side, but the questions this case raised invited people to reflect on the rights of anyone's image while alive and also after death. The spectacular circulation of this picture caused feelings of grieving and mourning through social media, especially in the Occidental society. Thanks to the digital era it's very easy to empathize with people we don't know in real life, even if we don't share anything with them, nor the country nor the religion nor the interests, and that was a case where people from all over the world related to the pain of the family of this kid just making a connection with their own young members in their families, sons or nephews ("it's the same age of my son" etc.), making the merely observers become witnesses of the occurrence. Witnessing is strongly connected to the act of relating to images: the Kurdi images were indeed not observed anymore from the big audience but produced and spread through the network. The world-wide emotions felt for the photo of Alan Kurdi reinforced and gave a general confirmation to the discourse of victimhood already presented in the first chapter.

ANTI-REFUGEE AND ANTI-CHILDREN DISCOURSES

As we observed through this chapter, although the studies about migrant children in public discourse are not many, the material we analyzed helped us having a clearer idea of the representation of the migrant children. In most scenarios, despite the figure of the child is generally portrayed with purity and innocence, the transversal refugee discourse that enters in the scene tends to defame the image of children, making them undeserved of trust, liars are even closer to criminal activities – not really considering if this may be true or not-, in some cases even with a strong element of agency but always seen under a negative light – as organizing a migration pathway with the intent and knowledge of violating the law. The anti-refugee discourse takes over when compared to the child discourse, and the characteristics usually attributed to the frame of adult refugees are also tried to be attributed to the refugee children, sometimes successfully. The portrait of victimization resurfaces when children have to face very difficult and extreme situations such as child abuse, early age marriages, neglect or even death: in the worst scenarios, refugee children seem to regain the aura of purity and they are suddenly detached by any kind of responsibility and guilt.

CH 4: CONCLUSION

The topic of migrant children is not an easy subject to analyze: there are indeed two main discourses that come to converge, because none of the aspects that characterize their identity cannot be ignored: as discussed in the third chapter, the phase of childhood has a profound influence in the cognitive development of a person (Light, 1986) and a child cannot have the same treatment and hold the same kind of responsibilities of an adult in the decisions and the actions they make. Despite that, when the identity of a child come to meet the identity of a migrant, refugee or asylum seeker in the same person, the argument becomes more complicated and it's difficult to represent this category in every aspect of their reality, without leaving aside a part of what means to be a migrant child: for that reason, specific narratives and frameworks are spread and draw a certain image of the subjects that are not representing the reality as a whole but only certain sides of it. As analyzed in the first chapter, migrants are a hot and delicate subject in media (Chouliaraki, Georgiou & Zaborowski, 2017), every old and new media is speaking about it and there are so many variables to take in consideration when reading the information coming from a specific medium, such as the country of origin, the political beliefs, the social and the economic influences this medium can have, everyone of these factor can modify the way migrants are perceived and described and told to the public. For example, we saw that for Russian media there are four main discourses that are used to speak about migrants, which are the security, humanitarian, integration and nationalist discourses (Moen-Larsen, 2020), that tend to divide the opinion of the people in two main ideas – migrant as a person in need to be helped and migrant as an unwanted threat in their own country, - while for the European media we focused on two main aspects of how migrants are represented, which are the kind of visibility they gain from media (Chouliaraki & Stolic, 2017) – visibility as biological life, empathy, threat, hospitality and self-reflexivity - and the voice they have (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017), meaning the chance to speak for themselves in media or, on the contrary, how much they are “spoken” about, deprived by their own agency. For the Australian media, the idea of “othering” was represented very strongly, especially using a certain type of expressions and words that influence the common view and perception, like “boat people” and “unwanted invaders” (Parker, 2015). The media were sharing a message of negativity in the representation of migrants and were promoting the idea of “keeping them out”, which is even more felt in the case of Australia because the whole country is an island hence the media could play with the image of migrants as enemies coming from the sea. This negative representation is actually shared with the British media, but while Australian media wanted to “keep them out”, the British’s ones wanted to “remove

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them” (Parker, 2015), as expelling someone who has already arrived in the country and need to be sent away. All these scenarios from different countries remark the main dichotomous labels that migrants from everywhere have to face: being seen as victims or as threats. In both of the cases, they are represented in an idealized way, deprived from the right to have a voice and to speak about themselves, not taking in consideration the agency and the personality and the story and the culture and the journey of these people (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). Too many variables are deliberately ignored. When it comes to migrant children, unfortunately, these projections do not change much: mostly, the frameworks used for refugee children are full of negative elements, both in the case of picture of victimized children and in the case of threatening children. There are two main anti-discourses that emerge to light, the anti-youth discourse and the anti-refugee discourse (Bryan & Denov, 2011, p.250), interpreting negatively both of the main facets of the identity of a migrant child; furthermore, when compared, the anti-refugee discourse takes over the child discourse, prioritizing the characteristics more connected to their story as migrants more than to their story as kids, attributing the frames that are usually referred and used for adults refugees also to refugee children. There are few occasions in which migrant children are also represented in a positive light, as a connection between their family and the hosting country, participating in event or activities of utility for the society, etc. But the main representations we had the chance to observe through this literature review were certainly the ones with negativities, either for migrant children involved in criminal activities or for migrant children being victimized, even though the portrait of victimization emerge mostly only when these kids have to face very challenging and extreme circumstances, for example in the camps or in the streets, when they are living contexts of abuses, early age marriages, neglect, excessive suffering and physical pain or death. Dramatically impressive is the study case of Alan Kurdi that we examined thanks to the work of authors such as Ruby, Auchter and Papailias. The clamour reached for the photo of Nilüfer Demir was an incredibly important element to analyze in the field of media representation of migrants in general and of migrant children especially. In these extreme scenarios in which migrants kids are death or suffering or abused, media from all over the world, despite their different political influences, seem to agree to give the children back the aura of purity and innocence – usually characteristic element of children – that the identity of refugee or migrant or asylum seeker took away from them, as if, for the fact of being emigrated, their agency would be relevant even in case of minor age and they should take responsibility for their own actions and decision to leave their own country and for the whole trip and every consequence that it brought on them, implying that they should feel guilty about that. Hence, as to give an answer to our initial research question, we could summarize saying the migrant children can be represented in public discourse in different

ways, but there are a few that stand out being the most common and used from every media despite of the country or their political orientations, which are surely the victimization of the child being forced to stay in extreme life conditions, thus still seen in a negative light, and the threatening representation due to the convergence of the anti-refugee discourse and the anti-youth discourse. The idea of migrant child framed as victim as it was stated in my research hypothesis is thus present, even though is not the only one and not even the main discourse present in the different media. This conclusion is based on the result of the literature review that I went through this dissertation, based on all the sources analyzed through the different chapters, but for future researches it would be undoubtedly interesting to conduct some interviews specialized on the topic and giving space to the migrant children's voice, analyzing through qualitative research – it would be stimulating to have more and new material on the subject, in order to gain more knowledge on this important phenomenon and how migration flows can affect the personal development during the phase of childhood.

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